UCF

Political Science MA Graduate Program Handbook

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Political Science MA

Together, the Graduate Student Handbook and your graduate program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The Graduate Student Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. Your program handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in your specific program. While both of these handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the Graduate College.

The central activities and missions of a university rest upon the fundamental assumption that all members of the university community conduct themselves in accordance with a strict adherence to academic and scholarly integrity. As a graduate student and member of the university community, you are expected to display the highest standards of academic and personal integrity.

Here are some resources to help you better understand your responsibilities:

- Academic Honesty
- Academic Integrity Training - Open to all graduate students at no cost
- Plagiarism

Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the M.A. program of the Department of Political Science and congratulations on your acceptance to the graduate program! I very much hope that you will enjoy your journey through the graduate program as you are completing your degree. The experience is both challenging and rewarding. The program differs from the undergraduate program in many ways and I hope you will value the necessary intellectual collaboration with the program faculty as you are progressing through the program and completing your degree. You are expected to take responsibility for completing all the different parts of your degree program and to work in close collaboration with the graduate advisor and, as you prepare to write your M.A. thesis, your thesis advisor, or if you choose the non-thesis option, the faculty member supervising your research paper.

The Master's program will prepare you for your future goals in several ways. Course work will guide you to relevant topics, readings, and research methods and provides the corner stone of your graduate education, especially during your first year. However, you are encouraged and expected to go beyond assigned readings and think creatively about pertinent and important research topics as you complete your course assignments. The course work will familiarize you with the relevant topics and debates that you will build on in your own research. Furthermore, you will be required to engage in substantial writing assignments as well as statistical analysis during your course work.

The program will also prepare you to conduct your own research. To complete your degree, you are required to either write a Master's thesis or to complete additional course work and complete a research paper. The process of writing an M.A. thesis is challenging – it is a major piece of original research that requires a research proposal you will need to defend and get approved by your thesis committee, careful planning through a research design, an extended literature review, and appropriate analysis. The non-thesis option also requires an original research paper that has many of the characteristics of the thesis but on a smaller scale. Both options will exceed the demands of your undergraduate research experience as well as that of writing term papers for your graduate seminars. Early planning and close collaboration with faculty members are crucial in getting your research

projects completed in a timely manner. This intellectual collaboration can be one of the most fruitful experiences of your graduate career at UCF.

I assure you that the departmental faculty and staff will be of assistance to you to succeed in the program. I also encourage you to take advantage of opportunities outside of class to participate in the intellectual life of the department and the university. You are expected to make the intellectual and personal commitment that is necessary to complete graduate degree and to uphold the academic and ethical standards of UCF and the discipline of Political Science. If you have any questions or problems, make sure to ask for advice – we expect graduate students to be actively engaged in their education and to be proactive in seeking information, advice, and help. Dr. Michael Mousseau, the Graduate Program Coordinator, is your first stop in seeking help but other faculty members, including myself, are also available and will provide assistance. Read this manual carefully along with other notices that come to graduate students in order to minimize delays in graduating. Good luck in your career as a graduate student!

Dr. Kerstin Hamann

Professor and Chair

Mission Statement

The University of Central Florida offers a Master of Arts in Political Science degree program that is designed to accommodate a range of professional and intellectual needs. These include: (1) preparing students to enter positions in government and the private sector in which the ability to comprehend, influence, and respond to government policy is critical; (2) preparing students, through the M.A., for pursuit of a Ph.D. degree in political science or International Studies at other institutions; and (3) providing a well-rounded substantive curriculum for secondary school teachers seeking higher degrees and for teachers in community colleges.

Advising and Mentoring

Advising and mentoring are two very important elements in a graduate student's career, and it is essential that appropriate advising, supervision and mentoring be provided to students as soon as they begin the program. Graduate students typically receive guidance from two advisors with distinct roles. The program advisor provides guidance on overall academic requirements, program and university policies and procedures, while the thesis/non-thesis advisor serves more as a mentor providing guidance on research, professional guidance and socialization, and other areas of academic and professional interest.

Program Advisor

The departmental Graduate Program Coordinator serves as the program advisor for all graduate students especially during their first few semesters. The program advisor helps students identify which courses to enroll in during their first semesters, advises them on their program of study, and is responsible for all program-related matters. The program advisor is the only one who can authorize course substitutions or any other exceptions to the program of study as specified in the graduate catalog. The program advisor needs to be consulted prior to students planning their comprehensives and needs to sign all forms relating to completion of the program. The program advisor needs to be consulted to ensure that the student progresses appropriately through the program of study.

The thesis/non-thesis chair supervises the student's progress towards completion of the thesis or non-thesis, discusses the research necessary to complete the thesis, and may also be involved in mentoring the student's professional development, for example through attendance at professional conferences. In many ways, the chair serves as the intellectual mentor to the student. Students must select a chair from the departmental faculty; the

Graduate Program Coordinator can assist them in identifying an appropriate chair if the student so chooses. Generally, chairs have substantive expertise in the area that the student will write on. Frequently, students identify potential chairs during the first two semesters of their course work as they take courses in areas of interest. It is a good idea to think about potential thesis/non-thesis topics and chairs early on in the graduate career while enrolling in courses. Students should begin to consult with faculty members about chairing their thesis or non-thesis while they are finishing up their course work to facilitate a smooth transition from taking classes to planning their thesis or non-thesis research.

In some circumstances, the selected chair may find it impossible to see the student through to completion of the thesis/non-thesis. In that case, the student, with the help of the Graduate Program Coordinator, may select a different chair.

Satisfactory Academic Performance

Satisfactory performance involves maintaining the standards of academic progress and professional integrity expected in a particular discipline or program. Failure to maintain these standards may result in termination of the student from the program. If the student is in violation of any of the rules of professional integrity, the Graduate Committee can make a recommendation to the College of Sciences to revert the student to non-degree status.

The university requires that students must maintain a graduate status GPA of at least 3.0 or higher in order to maintain graduate student status, receive financial assistance, and qualify for graduation. The graduate status GPA is the cumulative GPA of graduate courses taken since admission to the degree program. This graduation requirement for a minimum 3.0 GPA in all graduate courses completed since admission into the graduate program cannot be waived. The policy can be found at ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4 > General Policies > Academic Progress and Performance.

Students are also required to maintain a 3.00 GPA in all coursework included in the program of study. Be aware that a B- (2.75) does negatively impact a GPA. While students are allowed to have six hours of C (2.00) grades or lower (including U and I) in their program of study, this is the limit. Grades of D+ and lower will count against the graduate GPA and those courses cannot be used toward completion of the degree requirements.

A program or graduate status GPA below 3.00 at the end of any semester will result in a student being placed on probation. The student is given the next nine hours of their program coursework to improve their GPA to 3.00 or better. While in this status, a student is eligible for tuition support and employment in a graduate position; however, the program may discontinue either of these until the student resolves their status.

Exceeding 6 hours of C or lower grades or a program GPA or 2.00 or lower may result in dismissal from the program. The program of study must include at least 33 credit hours of post-baccalaureate, graduate course work (5000-level or higher) and at least half of the program of study must be at the 6000 level. For a full description of course requirements for a master's program refer to the section on Course Requirements in the most current Graduate Catalog.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Master's students must complete at least 21 semester credits at UCF (Main or regional campuses). For completion of the degree, courses older than seven years cannot be applied toward a graduate program of study. In order to allow courses older than seven to be applied toward the program of study, the student must file a petition.

Full Time and Continuous Enrollment

Full-time graduate status is nine (9) hours during the Fall and Spring Semesters and six (6) hours during the summer semesters, until regular graduate course work is completed.

Students who have completed all of their course requirements and are enrolled into three hours of thesis are considered full-time for fellowship, employment and tuition waiver purposes. Once a student has begun work on their thesis or non-thesis, he or she must be continuously enrolled in thesis course work.

Requirements that need to be met for federal loan eligibility override graduate full-time requirements. A student may be held to other enrollment requirements, as defined by financial awards, veteran status, employment, or other outside agencies.

For further information, refer to the section on Full-time Enrollment at the UCF Graduate Catalog.

Seven-Year Rule

The student has seven years from the date of admission (prerequisite, articulation, and foundation courses are exempt) to the master's program to complete the degree. For more details, refer to the section on Time Limitation for Degree Completion in the most current catalog at ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4.

Transfer Coursework

All transfer coursework must be at the graduate level, have a grade of B- or better, and must be approved by the Graduate Program Director. Transfer coursework is limited to 9 hours. For more details transfer coursework, refer to the section on Transfer of Credit in the most current catalog.

Incomplete Grades

An Incomplete grade may be assigned when a student is unable to complete a course due to extenuating circumstances and when all requirements can clearly be completed within a reasonable time. For more details, refer to the section on Incomplete Grades in the most current catalog at catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201 > Academic Progress and Performance > Incomplete Grades.

Incomplete grades are not counted as satisfactorily completed courses and are not recognized as such by Graduate Studies for fellowship purposes or by Financial Aid. Students on financial assistance must check with the Financial Aid office to see if the receipt of an incomplete grade will affect their financial award.

Withdrawal Policy

If a student decides to withdraw from a course, they must do so by the semester's withdrawal deadline. In doing so, the student is still liable for tuition and fees for the course. For a semester's withdrawal deadline, refer to the Academic Calendar: calendar.ucf.edu/2018/.

Petitions and Grievances

It is the student's responsibility to be informed of graduate policies and procedures; however, should a student wish to request an exception to a university or program policy, he or she must file a petition that outlines the nature of their request. Normally, petitions are presented to the graduate program's coordinator and/or committee,

the college's Director of Graduate Services and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Council for consideration.

Should a student wish to file a grievance, he or she should first review UCF's Golden Rule (goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/) and the Academic Grievance Procedures in the Graduate Catalog (catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201).

Curriculum

Please visit the Graduate Catalog to see the current curriculum for our program.

Timeline for Completion

Steps to Completion

In order to finish your graduate degree, you will have to complete several components, or milestones, in the program. These steps are sequential though there might be some overlap in time.

1. Core Coursework and Electives (three semesters to complete for full-time students)
2. Comprehensive Exam (after the Core courses are completed)
3. Research and Writing of Thesis/Non-thesis
4. Defense of Thesis/Non-thesis

1. Coursework

First, you will complete the required coursework. This work will consist of 12 hours of core courses and 15-21 elective hours. Students may pursue up to 6 hours of internship for elective credit with approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Core courses

Your required core curriculum is outlined below. With some exceptions, each required course is offered once per year, either in Fall or Spring. The Department typically does not offer core courses during the Summer. Students often use Summer to take an elective if one is offered or to pursue independent study with faculty who consent to advise them. It is strongly recommended that you take the required courses at the first opportunity they are offered. Students will not be allowed to take their comprehensive exams (see below) until they have completed all of their core courses.

Elective courses

The graduate catalogue specifies courses that may be used to fulfill the restricted elective requirements. The Graduate Program Coordinator must approve substitutions for these electives. That is, if you are planning on taking a course outside of the list of approved electives, you must contact the Graduate Program Coordinator and ask for permission.

Students often use their coursework to begin to develop a thesis or non-thesis topic. Sometimes you will discuss a topic in class that sparks your interest, or you begin to think about related topics. Feel free to discuss your interests in possibly developing a topic early on with the professor teaching the class.

2. Comprehensive Exams

All candidates for an MA degree must take a comprehensive written examination. The exam is given once each semester. The exam will involve critiquing and analyzing a journal article in the student's area of interests within political science and will also involve analysis and interpretation of data. Students will not be allowed to take their comprehensive exams (see below) until they have completed all of their core courses.

3. Research and Writing of Thesis/Non-thesis

A. <u>Writing the Non-thesis Research Paper</u>. The non-thesis option is designed for students who are not planning on applying to PhD programs, or who otherwise do not wish to make the substantial research and writing commitment required for writing a full thesis. The student must complete an approved article-length independent research paper (minimum 8,000 words inclusive or 25 pages). The project/paper must have a component of original, independent research; it cannot be a literature review or research design only. The project/paper can be a product of a graduate research seminar and/or independent study paper. Generally, full-time students who start in the fall and take six credits of coursework in the summer will complete their non-thesis requirements during the fall of their second year in the program.

Once students have settled on a topic and recruited a research paper chair, they will need to find one additional member of their research paper committee. The research paper committee needs to sign the Non-thesis Request form. Students are expected to submit a complete draft of the paper to the committee at least three weeks prior to the Graduate Thesis/Dissertation Defense Deadline of the semester they intend to complete the project. Consult with the graduate program assistant for multiple deadlines that vary by semester. The committee will then make recommendations to the student on ways to improve the paper. The student must submit the final paper to the program assistant no later than the last day of classes of the semester the student intends to complete the project. The research paper committee recommends final approval or disapproval of the research paper.

B. <u>Writing the Thesis</u>. The thesis option is designed for students who are planning on applying to PhD programs, or who otherwise wish to gain the substantial experience involved in research and writing a full thesis. While some students have a general idea what they would like to write their thesis on early on in the program, other students develop ideas as they progress through their classes. It is always a good idea to discuss your ideas early with the professors that have expertise in that area. Sometimes students write a seminar paper that sparks their interest and develops into a thesis idea. Generally, full-time students begin to enroll in thesis hours at the beginning of their second year in the program. Generally, full-time students who start in the fall and take six credits of coursework in the summer will complete their thesis during their second year in the program.

Once students have settled on a topic and recruited a thesis chair who will advise them throughout the thesis process, they will need to find two additional members, at least one of which needs to be from their department, to form a thesis committee (see thesis committee guidelines below). The thesis committee needs to sign the thesis committee approval form.

The student will then write a research design proposal, which will be formally presented to the thesis committee and other faculty and graduate students at a thesis proposal hearing. The committee will then make recommendations to the student about the direction of the thesis. Upon acceptance by the committee, it will become a part of the student's permanent file. Guidelines for the proposal are included in the handbook below. The thesis chair supervises and guides the student through the thesis progress and provides ongoing feedback. The completed thesis must be submitted to the thesis committee at least two weeks prior to the date of the thesis defense, and sometimes earlier based on the discretion of the thesis chair.

Further details on the expectations for a thesis and tips on writing a thesis are outlined below.

4. Defense of Thesis/Non-thesis

A. <u>Non-thesis defense</u>. The student will present their research paper publically at a department research colloquium or other public academic forum such as paper presentation at an academic conference. The student will indicate the venue the paper will be presented in the Non-thesis Approval form submitted early in the semester the student intends to complete the project, and the venue must be approved by the program director.

If the paper is to be presented at a department research colloquium, the presentation will be scheduled during the week ending on the Graduate Thesis/Dissertation Defense Deadline for the semester. During paper presentations, which are generally scheduled for one-half hour, the student will give a brief summary of the paper topic, methodology, and findings. The committee members will then ask questions about the thesis. They then

decide on whether the paper is acceptable or whether revisions are required. After the defense, the student is responsible for revisions if requested, collecting Non-thesis Approval form signatures from the committee members, and for completing the graduate student exit survey in the departmental office. The defense is open to the public, but attendees can participate in the discussion only with consent by the non-thesis chair. The non-thesis must be evaluated by and receive formal confirmation of completion from the Graduate Committee, the graduate coordinator, and the department chair.

B. <u>Thesis defense</u>. Once the thesis is completed, all committee members have had the opportunity to provide feedback on the entire thesis and have agreed that the student is ready, the student will then orally defend the thesis. The student will need to coordinate the thesis defense date and time with the thesis chair and the thesis committee members. Students are expected to submit a complete draft of the thesis to the entire committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The student also needs to submit an approved abstract and defense announcement to the departmental program assistant, who will distribute the defense announcement. A thesis should be completed and ready for submission to the thesis committee early on in semester in which the student intends to defend the thesis.

During the defense, which is generally scheduled for one hour, the student will give a brief summary of the thesis topic, methodology, and findings. The committee members will then ask questions about the thesis. They then decide on whether the thesis is acceptable, whether revisions are required. The student is expected to discuss the details of expectations for the defense with the thesis advisor. After the defense, the student is responsible for revisions if requested, collecting thesis approval form signatures from the committee members, and for completing the graduate student exit survey in the departmental office. The defense is open to the public, but attendees can participate in the discussion only with consent by the thesis chair.

Degree Plan of Study

A student's plan of study will be drawn up early in their first semester. Students should also contact the Graduate Program Director if any questions on their plan of study or registering for courses come up. Any exceptions to the plan of study have to be agreed on in advance by the Graduate Program Director. Once the plan of study is finalized, the student is required to seek approval for any deviations from that plan from the Graduate Program Director. Such deviations from a previously agreed plan of study may result in a delay in the expected graduation date.

For more information, refer to the section on Plan of Study in the most current catalog at catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=235 > General Graduate Policies > Plan of Study.

Examination Requirements

Comprehensive Exam

All candidates for the MA degree must take a comprehensive written examination. Students will not be allowed to take their comprehensive exams until they have completed all of their core courses, and you must be registered for at least one graduate credit hour in the semester you take the comprehensive exam.

The exam is designed to demonstrate proficiency in research methods and will consist of two parts. Part I will involve the critique of an article from a political science journal. The article will be assigned by the department's Graduate Methods Committee in consultation with the student and where possible will be based on the student's substantive areas of interest. Part II will involve questions based on data analysis.

The examination will be offered once each fall, spring and summer semester. Dates will be set by the department. Students register to take the examination **at least six weeks prior** to its scheduled date.

Students not passing any part of the examination may take this part a second time within one calendar year on the dates that comprehensive exams are regularly scheduled. However, no student will be allowed to take the examination more than twice.

Thesis Requirements: Research and Writing of the Thesis/Non-thesis

Non-Thesis Option

The student must complete 6 additional credit hours of course electives in their respective areas. Thesis hours, if already taken, will not count for course credit for the 6 additional credit hours of coursework.

The student must complete an approved article-length independent research paper (minimum 8,000 words inclusive or 25 pages). The project/paper must have a component of original, independent research; it cannot be a literature review or research design only. The project/paper can be a product of a graduate research seminar and/or independent study paper. The student will present their research publicly at a department research colloquium or other public academic forum such as paper presentation at an academic conference. The project/paper must be evaluated by and receive formal confirmation of completion from the Graduate Committee, the graduate coordinator, and the department chair.

Paper Committee

A master's student's research paper committee must consist of at least two members and be approved by the College of Graduate Studies. Of the two members, the chair must be an approved graduate faculty member in your program. In case of a split decision by the committee, the Graduate Program Director will decide pass/fail.

Adjuncts, visiting faculty, courtesy appointments or qualified individuals from outside the university may serve as the second member or co-chair of the committee, but may not serve as the chair. If there are co-chairs, one must satisfy faculty qualifications for serving as a chair of a dissertation advisory committee. The other co-chair must satisfy the minimum requirements for serving as a member of a dissertation advisory committee. Qualifications of additional members must be equivalent to that expected of UCF faculty members. UCF faculty members must form the majority of any given committee.

Thesis Option

University Dissertation Requirements

The College of Graduate Studies Thesis and Dissertation page contains information on the university's requirements for dissertation formatting, format review, defenses, final submission, and more. A step-by-step completion guide is also available on Thesis and Dissertation Services Site.

All university deadlines are listed in the Academic Calendar. Your program or college may have other earlier deadlines; please check with your program and college staff for additional deadlines.

The following requirements must be met by dissertation students in their final term:

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis and Dissertation Release Option form well before the defense
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline

- Submit final dissertation document by final submission deadline

Students must format their dissertation according to the standards outlined in Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse. Formatting questions or issues can be submitted to the Format Help page in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site. Format reviews and final submission must be completed in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site. The Dissertation Approval Form is also available in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site.

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation Workshops each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the dissertation process to fully understand the above policies and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at editor@ucf.edu.

Thesis Committee

A master's student's thesis committee must consist of at least three members and be approved by the College's Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Of the three members, two must be approved graduate faculty members in your program, one of whom must serve as the chair of the committee.

Adjuncts, visiting faculty, courtesy appointments or qualified individuals from outside the university may serve as the third member or co-chair of the committee, but may not serve as the chair. If there are co-chairs, one must satisfy faculty qualifications for serving as a chair of a dissertation advisory committee. The other co-chair must satisfy the minimum requirements for serving as a member of a dissertation advisory committee. Qualifications of additional members must be equivalent to that expected of UCF faculty members. UCF faculty members must form the majority of any given committee.

For more details about the Thesis Committee, please refer to the UCF Graduate Catalog: catalog.ucf.edu/index.php?catoid=4

Thesis Enrollment

Prior to enrollment into XXXX 6971 Thesis, your thesis committee must be reviewed and approved by Graduate Studies. This form can be found online at ww2.graduate.ucf.edu/ETD_Student_Services/.

To be considered full-time, thesis students engaging in thesis research must be continuously enrolled in **three hours** of XXXX 6971 every semester, until they successfully defend and submit their thesis to the University Thesis Editor. This enrollment each semester reflects the expenditure of university resources.

Master's Thesis Research Design Proposal Guidelines

Each MA student should submit a research design proposal to their thesis committee for approval during the **first semester that a student signs up for thesis hours**. The student will make a formal presentation of their thesis proposal to their committee. This hearing will be open to all faculty and other graduate students.

The proposal for a thesis is essentially an outline of the research— similar to an architectural blueprint for building a house. The clearer the plan, the more timely and successful the completion of the house. And the clearer the plan, the more likely it is that it will be approved by your thesis chair and committee, with a high probability that the final product will also be accepted. A well-developed, acceptable proposal, therefore, is a kind of personal contract between you the student, and your committee.

Certainly the challenge lies—as usual—in deciding exactly what topic you want to propose! It is true that some fortunate students may be offered a specific topic or problem to pursue by a mentor whose preferences agree with the student's own. But more often, your job is to come up with a specific topic or research question that

shows promise for extended study. Do not worry if a topic does not suggest itself to you immediately. Be ready and willing to try out a number of possibilities to see how they develop. How do you "try out" a topic? By doing a topic analysis.

How to do a Topic Analysis. This is really a simplified proposal form that includes the following parts:

1. Problem, hypothesis, or question;
2. Importance of research;
3. Significant prior research;
4. Possible research approach or methodology;
5. Potential outcomes of research and importance of each.

Analyzing a potentially useful topic in this step-by-step way forces you to look at it objectively and precisely within 2-4 pages. Here are some points to watch for:

1. If you are unable to write your topic in either the form of a hypothesis or a clear statement, you need to refine and clarify the topic. It must be stated specifically, not in vague, imprecise terms.
2. You will need to be able to justify what you are doing and prove that it is worthy of your time and energy. It is always handy if you can quote a major authority who is stating a need for the research. But if you do not have an authority on hand, try to demonstrate that your research is in some way significant to a major activity.
3. Be sure you have a reasonable (if not exhaustive) grasp of what has been done before. This will help support #2.
4. Extremely important part! Exactly how do you plan to approach the research? Try to explain as precisely as possible, and include an alternative methodology. This part may still be in rough form, but it should indicate the likely nature of your approach.
5. This will be important in assessing the worth of your topic. For example, let's say you might propose the use of a questionnaire to collect evidence. You would then need to analyze the results of the questionnaire. Your potential outcomes (speaking generally) might be a positive correlation between two factors, a negative one, none at all, or unsatisfactory responses. Perhaps only one of these outcomes could lead to a thesis. That result could suggest the need for a different approach to the issue, which in turn could lead you down a more productive path.

Once you have settled on a topic, you are now in the happy position of writing the first draft of your formal research design proposal. This is an expansion of the topic analysis and will be your final work plan, so it will probably end up being anywhere from 15 to 25 pages. So this is a substantive piece of work you will be producing. Again, here is a generally accepted proposal with an idea of expected page length:

Section of Proposal	Page Length
Summary	1-2
Hypotheses, problem or question	1-3
Importance of topic	1-2
Prior research on topic	3-5

Research approach/methodology	2-5
Limitations and key assumptions	2-5
Contribution to knowledge	1-2
Description of proposed chapters	2-3

Section 1 through 4

The first four sections are about the same as those in your topic analysis, only amplified and refined. The prior research section in particular must be more comprehensive, although you may certainly summarize your report of prior research if there is a great deal of it. Your actual thesis will be the obvious place to go into more detail.

Section 5

The research approach or methodology section should be explained explicitly. For example, what questions will you include on your questionnaire? If your work includes an experiment, what apparatus will you use, what procedures will you follow, what data do you intend to collect, and what instruments will you use in data collection? Remember even a qualitative research design (such as a case study) requires a methodological approach. List any major questions yet to be decided.

Section 6

In the limitations section make clear what your study will not attempt to do.

Section 7 and 8

The contributions section will simply be more detailed than in your topic analysis, and your chapter descriptions should be as specific as possible. Just remember this is a proposal, so keep descriptions brief, and try to highlight the structure of each chapter. Most theses follow a standard chapter format:

1. *Introduction (*general problem area, specific problem, importance of topic, research approach, limitations, key assumptions, and contribution to research)
2. *Description of what has been done in the past* (a.k.a. literature review; this documents that your own research has not already been covered.)
3. *Description of the research methodology* (how your research was conducted).
4. *Research results* (what you found out).
5. *Analysis of the results* (explains the conclusions that can be drawn from data, and implications of a theory).
6. *Summary and conclusions* (emphasize the results obtained and contribution made. Outline suggestions for further research)

With this general framework in mind, along with the specific characteristics of your own thesis, you can define your chapters clearly for your formal proposal.

Program of Study

A student's program of study will be drawn up early in their first semester. Students should also contact the Graduate Program Coordinator if any questions on their program of study or registering for courses come up. Any exceptions to the program of study have to be agreed on in advance by the Graduate Program Coordinator. Once the program of study is finalized, the student is required to seek approval for any deviations from that plan from the Graduate Program Coordinator. Such deviations from a previously agreed program of study may result in a delay in the expected graduation date. A program of study consists of the following course work, a total of 33 credit hours.

Core Requirements—12 Credit Hours

- POS 6736 Conduct of Political Inquiry (3 credit hours)
- POS 6746 Quantitative Methods in Political Research (3 credit hours)
- Choose two of the following core courses.
- POS 6045 Seminar in American Politics (3 credit hours)
- INR 6007 Seminar in International Politics (3 credit hours)
- CPO 6091 Seminar in Comparative Politics (3 credit hours)
- POT 6007 Seminar in Political Theory (3 credit hours)

Electives—15 to 21 Credit Hours

Students taking the non-thesis option are required to complete 21 credit hours of elective credits. Students taking the thesis option are required to complete 15 credit hours of elective credits. All graduate seminars are 3 credit hours. Electives can be viewed at http://www.graduatecatalog.ucf.edu/Content/Courseslist.aspx?Department=POLS.

With the approval of the Graduate Committee, other 5000-level or 6000-level courses may qualify as cognate electives. Students must meet all course prerequisites before enrolling in electives offered outside the Department of Political Science. Approval for substitution of approved electives must be obtained prior to enrollment. Students can take 7000-level courses only with instructor's consent.

Thesis Option—6 Credit Hours

Students enroll in 6 thesis hours. Students must be enrolled in at least 1 thesis hour per semester up to and including the semester in which the thesis is defended.

Graduate Research

Students are strongly encouraged to attend professional development opportunities offered at UCF, such as the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning's GTA workshops, which all students can apply for regardless of whether or not they receive an assistantship (for information, see fctl.ucf.edu/).

There are other resources available to assist graduate students. The University Writing Center (uwc.cah.ucf.edu/) is available for consultations with any type of writing assignments, from term papers to the Master's thesis.

Students are encouraged to present their research at UCF's Graduate Research Forum during Student Research Week, generally held in March or April. For more information on the Graduate Research Forum visit graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-research-forum/ or UCF Student Research Week and researchweek.ucf.edu/.

If students do truly outstanding work on a research project, their advisor or instructor for the course might encourage them to submit their paper to a professional conference. Applying for a conference and finalizing a conference paper should be done in close consultation with the project advisor or course instructor. However, conference presentations are not part of the degree plan of study.

Students are bound by UCF's Golden Rule (see goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/), which contains Student Rights and Responsibilities including regulations on academic honesty, plagiarism, and codes of conduct. If a student is found to be engaged in plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, this can result in dismissal from the program.

Graduate students are encouraged to take advantage of the workshops on thesis and dissertation formatting, library research, and other workshops organized by the Graduate Student Association (see facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/).

Travel Support for Conference Presentation

The College of Graduate Studies offers a Graduate Presentation Fellowship that provides funding for master's, specialist, and doctoral students to deliver a research paper or comparable creative activity at a profession meeting. Students must be the primary author and presenter. More information can be found on the graduate studies website: graduate.ucf.edu/presentation-fellowship/

Graduate Students Travel Funding is available to pay transportation expenses for graduate students who are delivering a research paper or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting. Contact the Student Government Association at 407-823-5648 or at facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/ for more information.

Human Subjects

If the student chooses to conduct research that involves human subjects (i.e. surveys, interviews, etc.), he or she must gain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to beginning the study. For access to the IRB submission form and sample consent forms, please visit the Office of Research website: research.ucf.edu/ > Compliance > UCF IRB Webpage > UCF-IRB Principal Investigator's Manual

If the student chooses to conduct research that involves animal subjects, he or she must gain Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval prior to beginning the study. For access to the IACUC submission forms, please visit the Office or Research website: research.ucf.edu/ > Compliance > UCF IACUC Webpage > Animal Use Approval Form

If you have questions regarding human or animal subjects, please contact an IRB Coordinator, at (407) 823-2901.

Ethics in Research

Researchers in every discipline have a responsibility for ethical awareness as the status of the profession rests with each individual researcher. It is important to be honest and ethical in conducting research as well as in taking classes. The ethical collection and use of information includes, but is by no means limited to, the following: confidentiality, accuracy, relevance, self-responsibility, honesty, and awareness of conflict of interest. The University of Arizona's Code of Research Ethics provides our students with guidelines for responsible practice in research. This code of ethics can be found here: facultygovernance.arizona.edu/sites/facgov/files/code-of-ethics-research.pdf

Patent and Invention Policy

UCF has three fundamental responsibilities with regard to graduate student research. They are to (1) support an academic environment that stimulates the spirit of inquiry, (2) develop the intellectual property stemming from research, and to (3) disseminate the intellectual property to the general public. UCF owns the intellectual property developed using university resources. The graduate student as inventor will according to this policy share in the proceeds of the invention.

The full policy is available online from the Graduate Catalog: catalog.ucf.edu/index.php?catoid=4 > Policies > General Policies > Patent and Invention Policy.

Financial Support

Depending on available funding, we offer several Graduate Teaching Assistantships to first- and second year students. Graduate Teaching Assistants are generally expected to support faculty members in a variety of ways in their teaching efforts. Assignments may vary by semester. Most GTAs are funded by university tuition waivers and departmental funds. Occasionally, additional students are funded or partially funded by external grants, and the student on these lines will primarily work with the faculty member holding the grant.

In order to ensure that support is received on time, applicants are encouraged to apply by the priority deadline and to stay in close contact with the department's Office Manager for timely completion of all necessary paperwork. Students are also encouraged to register early for classes in time to process tuition waivers. Support from the department will cover no more than the minimum hours required for the students to complete their degree; if the student takes additional hours, no support will be provided for these additional hours.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply to fellowships available from the university as well as from outside sources for financial support (see catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=238)

See Funding for further information.

International Students

Several types of employment are available to international students, including on-campus employment. For more information about the types of employment available to international students, and the requirements and restrictions based on visa-type, please see the International Affairs and Global Strategies' website: global.ucf.edu/international-students-scholars-and-professionals/international-students-and-scholars/f-1-students/.

Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

For complete information about university assistantships and tuition waivers, please see the UCF Graduate Catalog: catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=238.

To be employed and to maintain employment in a graduate position, the student must be enrolled full-time and meet all of the training requirements and/or conditions of employment.

To be awarded and continue receipt of a tuition waiver, the student must be enrolled full time and either employed in a graduate position (GTA, GRA, GA), receiving a University fellowship, or (if employed off-campus) employed is a position where payment is processed through Graduate Studies.

Master's students can be offered tuition support for a maximum of four semesters, excluding summer semesters.

GTA Training Requirements

If the student is hired in the position of Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant or Graders, there are training requirements that must be met in order for the contract to be processed. Associates and Assistants must complete a minimum two-day training and an online GTA Policies and Procedures Module. Associates must also have completed at least 18 hours of graduate courses in the discipline they will be teaching. Students who are employed as Graders are required to complete the online legal module. These services are offered by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) and more information can be found at the following

website: fctl.ucf.edu/ > Events > GTA Programs. More information about the requirements is available at graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-teaching/.

International students who will be hired in GTA positions must be proficient at speaking English. This is determined by successfully passing the SPEAK test with a score of 55 or better. This test (also known as the Oral Proficiency Exam) is administered during the GTA orientation by the Center for Multicultural and Multilingual Services (CMMS).

GTA Performance Assessment

At the completion of each semester the student is employed as a GTA, the student's performance will be evaluated by the faculty advisor. These assessments will be used to review strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment.

Graduate Student Associations

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is UCF's graduate organization committed to enrich graduate students' personal, educational and professional experience. To learn more or get involved, please visit facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/.

For individual department or graduate program organizations, please see program advisor.

Professional Development

Students may pursue up to 6 hours of internship for elective credit with approval of the Graduate Program Director.

Students are encouraged, but not required, to submit their research to Political Science conferences and to peer-reviewed journals. Students' academic advisors will alert students who have produced particularly outstanding research in their courses or on their thesis to existing opportunities. Students are also encouraged to join the American Political Science Association and join the subfield sections relevant to their research, which will familiarize them with ongoing trends and discussions in the discipline. Furthermore, students are encouraged to engage in professional development opportunities by writing book reviews for journals.

The department offers a Brown Bag Seminar series where faculty members present ongoing research. All graduate students are encouraged to attend these presentations and discussions. The schedule is available from the departmental Program Assistant.

Instructor Training and Development

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) promotes excellence in all levels of teaching at the University of Central Florida. They offer several programs for the professional development of Graduate Teaching Assistants at UCF.

- **GTA Training** (mandatory for employment as a GTA)
  This training provides information and resources for students who will be instructors in a two-day workshop. The seminars cover a variety of topics, including course development, learning theories, lecturing, and academic freedom. Those interested in additional training can also attend an optional training session that normally follows the mandatory training.
- **Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program**
  This certificate program (12-weeks) consists of group and individualized instruction by Faculty Center staff and experienced UCF professors. Textbooks and materials are provided.

For more information, visit the UCF Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning's website at fctl.ucf.edu/ > Events > GTA Programs or phone 407-823-3544.

Pathways to Success Workshops

Coordinated by the College of Graduate Studies, the Pathways to Success program offers free development opportunities for graduate students including workshops in Academic Integrity, Graduate Grantsmanship, Graduate Teaching, Personal Development, Professional Development, and Research. For more information and how to register, please visit graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/.

Graduate Research Forum

Sponsored by the Division of Graduate Studies, the Research Forum is an opportunity for students to showcase and their research and creative projects and to receive valuable feedback from faculty judges. Awards for best poster and best oral presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition.

The College of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Student Association invite all UCF students, community, and employers to attend the Graduate Research Forum. For more information, contact researchweek@mail.ucf.edu.

Graduate Excellence Awards

Department of Political Science Outstanding Master's Thesis Award

Each year, students can submit a portfolio for nomination of Department, College and University level awards of excellence. These are intended to showcase student excellence in academic achievement, teaching, research, leadership, and community service.

These awards include the following:

- Award for Outstanding MA Thesis (Department)
- Pollock-Ellsworth Award for Excellence in Methods in an MA Thesis (Department)
- Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant (College of Sciences)
- Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching (College)
- Award for the Outstanding MA Thesis (College)

For the nomination process and eligibility criteria, see the College of Graduate Studies website graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/.

Other

For information about the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) thesis and dissertation awards, see their website: csgs.org/ > Awards.

For grant-proposal writing resources: uwc.cah.ucf.edu/.

Job Search

Career Services and Experiential Learning

Graduate career development issues are unique and include evaluating academic and nonacademic career choices, discussing graduate school effect on career choices, as well as learning, evaluating, and refining networking and interviewing skills. Whatever your needs, the offices of Career Services and Experiential Learning offer services and resources to aid in the career exploration and job search of Master and Doctoral students in every academic discipline. To learn more, visit their website at career.ucf.edu/.

For specific services or resources provided by the academic program, please contact the graduate program director or academic advisor.

Forms

- **College of Graduate Studies Forms and References**
  A complete listing of general forms and references for graduate students, with direct links, may be found here.
- **Graduate Petition Form**
  When unusual situations arise, petitions for exceptions to policy may be requested by the student. Depending on the type of appeal, the student should contact his/her program adviser to begin the petition process.
- **Traveling Scholar Form**
  If a student would like to take advantage of special resources available on another campus but not available on the home campus; for example, special course offerings, research opportunities, unique laboratories and library collections, this form must be completed and approved.

Useful Links

- Political Science Website
- College of Sciences
- College of Graduate Studies
- Academic Calendar
- Bookstore
- Campus Map
- Computer Labs
- Counseling Center
- Financial Assistance
- Golden Rule Student Handbook
- Graduate Catalog
- Graduate Student Association
- Graduate Student Center
- Housing and Residence Life
- Housing, off campus
- Knights Email
- Learning Online
- Library
- NID Help
- Pathways to Success
- Recreation and Wellness Center
- Register for Classes
- Shuttles Parking Services
- Student Health Services

- [Thesis and Dissertation (ETD)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [UCF IT](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

Grad Faculty

Asterisk = has previous committee experience, which qualifies the person to serve as vice chair

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