

Sanford School of Public Policy Duke University



Duke | SANFORD SCHOOL of
PUBLIC POLICY



PhD Student Handbook 2025-2026

This handbook is a living document, regularly reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy and relevance. Readers are encouraged to confirm specific details with the Director of Graduate Studies, as this handbook may not reflect all current policies or decisions.

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GLOSSARY

CAPS — Counseling and Psychological Services

CDSA — Compute and Data Services Alliance for Research (Duke resource for computational and data-driven research)

CITI — Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (required research ethics certification)

Comprehensive exam (comps) — A qualifying exam assessing mastery of core material before dissertation research

DGS — Director of Graduate Studies

DGSA — Director of Graduate Studies Assistant

Dissertation defense — The final oral defense and evaluation of the completed dissertation

Dissertation proposal (prospectus) — A formal presentation of the planned research topic and methods prior to dissertation work

Fellowship — Competitive financial support awarded to graduate students for study or research

GPSC — Graduate and Professional Student Council (represents graduate student interests)

GRW — Graduate Research Workshop

IRB — Institutional Review Board (reviews research involving human subjects)

MA — Master of Arts

MSTP — Medical Scientist Training Program

PhD — Doctor of Philosophy

PI — Principal Investigator

Preliminary Examination (Prelim) — **Required for admission to PhD candidacy. At Sanford, the examination consists of a written dissertation proposal and its oral defense before the dissertation committee.**

RA — Research assistant

RAship/TAship — Paid assistantship providing funding and tuition support through research or teaching duties

RCR — Responsible Conduct of Research

Sanford — Sanford School of Public Policy

TA — Teaching assistant

TGS — The Graduate School

UPEP — University Program in Environmental Policy

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended for current PhD students and graduate faculty, and prospective applicants to the Public Policy PhD Program. Subjects not covered herein, or those under review, are to be handled provisionally at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies.

This handbook is only one source of information. **Students are responsible for knowing the university guidelines and requirements as described annually in the Graduate School Bulletin.** In addition, the DGS Manual for Directors of Graduate Studies contains necessary information (sometimes in more detailed and specific form than is presented here) regarding all aspects of graduate study at Duke. See the [DGS Manual](#) on the Duke University website for more information.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The PhD in Public Policy is an interdisciplinary scientific research degree. By design, the program couples rigorous grounding in a core discipline with exposure to broader perspectives and training in the communication skills required to convey scholarly insight to non-specialists. Graduates of the program are prepared for academic positions in public policy and other policy-oriented schools, as well as for openings in disciplinary departments with an applied orientation. Graduates are also prepared for professional positions in domestic and international public agencies, research organizations, and policy consulting firms.

The program requires a two-course sequence in theories of public policy and coursework in three other social science disciplines. Students designate a disciplinary concentration, such as economics, political science, sociology, or psychology, as well as a policy focus, such as social policy, environmental policy, globalization and development, health policy, child development and social policy, or social and behavioral determinants of health.

STUDYING PUBLIC POLICY AT DUKE

The PhD in Public Policy program at Duke enables students to be mentored by Duke's top-rated faculty members in public policy and Duke's departments of economics, political science, sociology, and psychology and neuroscience, among others, all on the beautiful Duke campus. Duke University is located in Durham, North Carolina, close to both Chapel Hill (and UNC-Chapel Hill) and the state capital, Raleigh, in the dynamic Research Triangle area. Durham is a four-hour drive or 45-minute flight from Washington, DC.

Duke's PhD in Public Policy is distinguished by its truly interdisciplinary nature; the program offers a unique balance of depth in a discipline such as economics, political science, sociology, or psychology and the opportunity to focus on a particular policy area such as social policy, global policy, or health policy. The Sanford School is a national and international leader in the dynamic field of public policy studies, with numerous interdisciplinary centers exploring vital policy questions in the field and in the classroom. Members of our faculty are experts in fields ranging from aging, education, and the environment to international affairs, media and democracy, and welfare reform. In addition to working with Duke's world-class faculties of public policy, economics, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, PhD students interact with leading scholars from Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke's Fuqua School of Business, and Duke's law and medical schools.

The Public Policy PhD program prides itself on supporting small cohorts of PhD students in collaboration with allied social science fields, with PhD students receiving individual faculty attention in courses and in research. Students additionally have nearly seamless access to wide-ranging opportunities in academic training, teaching, and research across the university.

CORE REQUIREMENTS AND BASIC INFORMATION

GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements have been taken from the website of the [Duke University Graduate School](#). Please always consult the Graduate School website regarding policies, procedures, deadlines, and forms to ensure you are using the most up-to-date information possible. Information published by the Duke University Graduate School supersedes the information below about Graduate School requirements.

Formal Requirements

The formal requirements for the PhD degree are as follows:

1. payment of six semesters of full-time tuition (or five if credit for previous graduate work has been approved)
2. major and related courses
3. English language proficiency
4. training in the Responsible Conduct of Research
5. a supervisory committee for the student's program of study
6. continuous registration
7. preliminary examination
8. dissertation
9. application to graduate
10. final examination
11. deposit of dissertation

Major and Related Work

The student's program of study normally demands substantial concentration on courses in the major department, plus coursework in related minor fields as determined by individual programs.

English Language Proficiency

All international students whose native language is not English must enroll in English language courses as determined by the English language placement exams administered during Orientation, unless formally waived from this requirement by the Graduate School upon certification of competency in English. These courses must be taken during students' initial year at Duke. For more information, see the [English Language Support Program website](#).

Responsible Conduct of Research

This section introduces key research compliance concepts and requirements that doctoral students are expected to understand and follow, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB),

the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), and the Principal Investigator (PI) role. Definitions of these and related terms are provided in the Glossary.

All doctoral students at Duke University are required to complete a series of training sessions in the [Responsible Conduct of Research](#). For students in the social sciences, a **total of 12 hours** of training must be completed. Half of this requirement (6 hours) is satisfied by participating in a mandatory orientation during the fall of the first year. The remaining 6 hours of training must be completed by attending three RCR forums (a schedule is provided at the beginning of each semester) by the end of the student's third year.

Committee to Supervise the Program of Study

As early in a student's course of study as is practicable **and not later than two months before the preliminary examination**, the Director of Graduate Studies in the major department will nominate for the approval of the Dean a supervising committee, using the appropriate form. The committee consists of at least four members, with one member designated as chair. This committee should include at least two graduate faculty members of the Public Policy PhD program faculty, and at least one member, usually from outside the department, who serves as the Minor Area Representative. The majority of committee members must be from Duke University. This committee, with all members participating, will determine a program of study and administer the preliminary examination.

Residence

The minimum residence requirement is one academic year of full-time registration at Duke (that is, two consecutive semesters of full-time tuition).

Time Limits

Ordinarily a student registered for full-time study should pass the **preliminary examination** by the end of the third year. A student who has not passed the examination by this time must file with the Dean of the Graduate School a statement, approved by the Director of Graduate Studies in the major department, explaining the delay and setting a date for the examination. Except under unusual circumstances, extension will not be granted beyond the middle of the fourth year.

The **doctoral dissertation** should be submitted and accepted within two calendar years after the preliminary examination is passed. Should the dissertation not be submitted and accepted within four years after the examination, the candidate may, with the approval of the committee and the Director of Graduate Studies, petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an extension of up to one year. If this extension is granted and the dissertation is not submitted and accepted by the new deadline, the student may be dropped from candidacy. The student must then pass a second preliminary examination to be reinstated as a candidate for the degree. In such cases, the time limit for submitting the dissertation will be determined by the Dean of the Graduate School and the candidate's committee.

Ordinarily, credit is not allowed for graduate courses (including transfers) or foreign language examinations that are more than six years old at the date of the preliminary examination. Similarly, credit will not be allowed for a preliminary examination that is five years old at the date of the final examination. In cases of exceptional merit, however, the Dean of the Graduate School may extend

these limits. Should the five-year limits be exceeded, the student's department must submit to the Dean specific requirements for revalidating credits or examinations.

Preliminary Examination

A student is not accepted as a candidate for the PhD degree until the preliminary examination has been passed. A student must be registered during the term in which the student takes the preliminary examination. In the summer a preliminary examination may be scheduled only between the opening and closing dates of the summer session. Successful completion of the preliminary examination requires at least three affirmative votes and no more than one negative vote. The sole exception to this policy is that a negative vote cast by the chair of the examining committee will mean a failure on the examination. A student who fails the preliminary examination may apply, with the consent of the full supervisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School, for the privilege of a second examination to be taken no earlier than three months after the date of the first. The original committee must conduct the second examination. Successful completion of the second examination requires the affirmative vote of all committee members. Failure on the second examination will render a student ineligible to continue a program for the PhD degree at Duke University.

The Dissertation

The dissertation is expected to be a mature and competent piece of writing, embodying the results of significant and original research. For requirements and all information for submitting an electronic dissertation, visit the [Theses and Dissertations web page](#) on the Duke University website. The dissertation must be completed to the satisfaction of the professor who directs the dissertation, members of the student's advisory committee, and the dean of the Graduate School.

Review the [current semester graduation deadlines](#) for the semester in which you plan to graduate.

The electronic dissertation must be submitted to UMI/ProQuest and the format accepted at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the student's examination.

All doctoral dissertations are published electronically through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Authors may copyright them if they wish. Abstracts are published in Dissertation Abstracts International.

If copyright is desired, an additional fee of \$65 is charged.

Apply to Graduate

Students must apply to graduate in DukeHub one month before the dissertation is presented and no later than the dates listed under [Graduation Deadlines](#) on the Duke website.

This application should indicate the approved title of the dissertation and be approved by both the Director of Graduate Studies of the student's major department and the professor who directs the dissertation.

The Final Examination

The final examination is administered by all members of the supervising committee. The final oral examination shall be primarily on the dissertation; however, questions may be asked in the

candidate's major field. The exam normally continues at least two hours, but not more than three. Except in unusual circumstances approved by the Dean, a final examination will not be scheduled when the university is not in session. A student must be registered during the term that the student takes the final examination.

Successful completion of the final examination requires at least four affirmative votes and no more than one negative vote. If the committee conducting the examination includes the minimum of four examiners, a single negative vote fails the candidate. The sole exception to this policy is that a negative vote cast by the chair of the examining committee will mean a failure on the examination. A student who fails the final examination may be allowed to take it a second time, but no earlier than six months from the date of the first examination. Permission to take the second examination must be obtained from the professor who directed the dissertation and from the Dean of the Graduate School. Failure to pass the second examination renders the student ineligible to continue work for the PhD degree at Duke University.

Deposit of Electronic Dissertation

After passing the examination, candidates make changes requested by the examining committee and formatting changes requested by the Graduate School to the electronic dissertation that was submitted initially. The Graduate School will be notified that you have revised your dissertation and you will receive an email when your dissertation has been accepted. All dissertations must be accepted before the final submission deadline for the semester in which the student intends to graduate, or 30 days from defense date, whichever is sooner.

Commencement

Graduation exercises are held once a year, in May, when degrees are conferred on and diplomas are issued to those students who have completed requirements by the end of the spring. Those who complete degree requirements by the end of the fall or by the end of a summer term receive diplomas dated December 30 or September 1, respectively. There is a delay in the mailing of September and December diplomas because diplomas cannot be issued until they are approved by the Academic Council and the Board of Trustees.

PUBLIC POLICY PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

General Outline

The Public Policy PhD requirements are determined by the Sanford School of Public Policy. Detailed information about each of the following requirements is available below. The Public Policy PhD program requires students to:

1. Complete a two-course public policy core course sequence: Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy (PUBPOL 901) and The Political Economy of Policymaking (PUBPOL 902).
2. Complete disciplinary theory and research methodology requirements in one of the following areas:
 - a. Economics
 - b. Political science
 - c. Sociology

- d. Psychology
3. Complete a DGS-approved course of study focusing on a particular policy area.
4. Complete a second-year empirical research manuscript.
5. Pass a comprehensive exam, no later than September 30 of the third academic year in residence.
6. Complete a one-semester research seminar leading to the dissertation proposal (PUBPOL 908).
7. Complete the equivalent of 13 courses (minimum), equaling 39 credits. Please see checklist below.
8. Attain candidacy (dissertation) status, including meeting qualifying requirements and passing the preliminary exam, by the end of the third year as dictated by the Graduate School.
9. Pass a final examination, which consists of an oral defense of a dissertation to an approved supervisory committee. This is typically completed by the end of the fifth year.
10. Regularly attend and participate in the Graduate Research Workshop, an informal setting suitable for the presentation of preliminary work by students, and other seminars or job talks given within Sanford or other departments, schools, or universities.

The 13 (minimum) required courses – 39 total credits:

1. Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy (PubPol 901)
2. The Political Economy of Policymaking (PubPol 902)
3. Microeconomics 1 (Economic Concentrators take Econ701, all others take PubPol 810)
4. Microeconomics 2 (Economic Concentrators take Econ 705, all others take PubPol 811)
5. Disciplinary concentration 1 – Research Methods
6. Disciplinary concentration 2- Research Methods
7. Disciplinary concentration 5 – Subfield Elective
8. Policy area elective 1
9. Policy area elective 2
10. Policy area elective 3
11. non-concentration social science 1
12. non-concentration social science 2 for disciplinary concentration of Economics OR Elective for disciplinary concentration of Political Science, Sociology or Psychology
13. Dissertation proposal seminar 1 (PubPol 908)

*At least two of the disciplinary subfield/policy area/non-concentration social science electives must fulfill policy area requirements.

Download the Public Policy [Course Tracker rubric \(Excel file\)](#) to support completion of course requirements.

Students are also expected to register for and participate in the weekly Graduate Student Workshop, scheduled on Fridays, 10:45-11:45 AM.

Public Policy PhD Core Courses

All students in the PhD program take a common set of public policy courses that reflect the interdisciplinary and applied nature of the degree. These courses are intended to introduce students to a core theoretical literature about the nature of political, economic, and social institutions and

systems, approaches to modeling how policy interventions translate into policy outcomes, and frameworks for normative evaluation of both processes and outcomes. Students are highly encouraged to seek input on course selection from their designated advisors in the Public Policy department and other faculty in their disciplinary department. All students are required to satisfy the policy core course requirements. These are:

Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy (PUBPOL 901):

A one-semester course to be taken in the first semester of the program intended to introduce students to a core set of social science ideas relevant to public policy. These include theories of individual as well as collective action, institutions, and governance—all of which draw from economics, political science, sociology, or psychology. The goal of the course is to provide students with a broad framework for evaluating market and community function as well as failures, identifying possible policy interventions, and predicting how such interventions translate into outcomes. Consent of department required.

The Political Economy of Policymaking (PUBPOL 902):

The Political Economy of Policymaking introduces students to normative and political frameworks for evaluating public policies and governance processes. The course draws on theories from political science, political economy, economics, and other social science disciplines to provide students theoretical and analytical tools to understand the political economy of the policy process. The course will pay particular attention to the political and institutional dynamics shaping the evaluation of policy problems and solutions, theories of policy stability and change, mass and elite influence on policymaking, bureaucracy, and policy implementation, and the feedback effects of public policies. Consent of department required.

Qualifying Requirements

Throughout their course of study in Duke's PhD in Public Policy program, doctoral students must be in good academic standing according to the Graduate School requirements and are required to meet specific qualifying requirements before beginning full-time work on a dissertation. Failure to meet any of these requirements may result in dismissal from the PhD in Public Policy program.

Qualifying requirements for the Public Policy PhD program include:

- Per the Graduate School guidelines, satisfactory performance in the core public policy and disciplinary departmental courses, defined as a 3.0 GPA or better average for each semester.
- Passing a **comprehensive exam** that encompasses an evaluation of the PhD student's knowledge of a disciplinary concentration and policy area focus as required by the Sanford School. (See description of comprehensive exam on the following page.) This exam is typically taken at the beginning of year 3.
- Passing a **preliminary exam**, a defense of a dissertation prospectus, at the end of year 3, as dictated by the Graduate School.

PhD student Timeline		
	Sanford School requirements	The Graduate School requirements
1st Year	None	Minimum semester GPA 3.0
2nd Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a second-year paper • Create a reading list for the comprehensive exam • Construct comprehensive exam committee • Complete oral and written components of the comprehensive exam 	Minimum semester GPA 3.0
3rd Year		Minimum semester GPA 3.0 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct preliminary exam committee (DGS approval) • Pass preliminary exam (defense of a dissertation proposal)
4th Year	Dissertation research	
5th/6th Year	Dissertation research	Dissertation defense

Second-Year Paper

As part of the Public Policy PhD program, all students are required to complete a second-year paper by the end of the summer following their second year in the program. This paper must be empirical in nature and demonstrate the student’s ability to formulate a research question, implement a rigorous empirical strategy, and engage with relevant scholarly literature.

The second-year paper may be developed as part of the requirements for another course during the second year, provided it meets the necessary standards. Regardless of its origin, the paper must be submitted for review to the student’s faculty committee, who will evaluate its quality and approve it as fulfilling this program milestone.

Successful completion and approval of the second-year paper is a component of the comprehensive examination process and is required for continued progress in the program.

Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam consists of three components: (1) an empirical research paper requirement, typically satisfied by the submission and subsequent revision of a paper written for a second-year course, (2) a written test or journal-length literature review manuscript, and (3) an oral follow-up with the exam committee. The oral component should be seen as an opportunity to request further explanation, to clarify answers provided on the written exam, or to begin the process of translating mastery of a relevant literature to identification of research questions for the dissertation. The exam encompasses an evaluation of an individual’s knowledge of a disciplinary concentration and a policy area focus. Exams are individually designed to test whether a student has achieved a sufficient mastery of their field to warrant granting them the independence to pursue

their own research agenda. In the Public Policy PhD program, a “field” may connote some combination of disciplinary subfields and policy areas of interest.

Note: Passing the comprehensive exam is a prerequisite for taking the preliminary exam at the end of the 3rd year. The preliminary exam is a defense of a student’s dissertation prospectus.

Exam Committee

Each student will have a three-person comprehensive exam committee to conduct and assess the examination. The student will be responsible for selecting a committee chair to oversee the development of the exam and two additional committee members with expertise in the student's disciplinary concentration and policy area focus, subject to approval by the director of the PhD program. At least two committee members will have a primary appointment in the Public Policy department. Each student will work closely with the exam committee to determine the focus of the exam and to identify a body of knowledge that the student will be responsible for mastering.

Specific Requirements and Deadlines

Statement of Academic Purpose: Each student must submit a 1-2 page Statement of Academic Purpose that constitutes a coherent, concise summary of the individual's academic plan. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Public Policy PhD program, this statement should seek to make detailed connections between a student's disciplinary concentration, disciplinary subfield, and policy area focus. The statement is not a dissertation proposal, but rather a reflection upon the rationale for the student’s body of coursework that can guide the program director in appointing and charging an appropriate comprehensive exam committee.

For students in the 2nd year of the program, the statement must be submitted to the PhD program coordinator no later than November 1.

Reading List: After the Statement of Academic Purpose is submitted and the exam committee is appointed, it is the responsibility of the student to meet with members of the committee to discuss compiling a list of readings, subjects, and/or concepts that the student will be expected to know for the exam or read for the manuscript. Ideally, this list should be completed and approved by all members of the exam committee and the Program Director before **April 1**. However, it is strongly encouraged that students consult with their exam committees before the end of the fall semester of the second year to identify any gaps in a student’s preparation that could be filled by coursework in the spring semester.

Second-Year Paper: Students consult with their committee members to identify a research paper suitable for satisfying the second-year paper requirement. In the event the student is not engaged in research writing for any second-year classes, it is expected that the student will produce such a paper independently or in the context of an independent study under the direct supervision of an exam committee member. The second-year paper is to be submitted to the exam committee by the last day of the spring semester. Committee members will provide comments on the draft to the student in a timely manner, no later than May 31. The student is responsible for providing a revised version of the paper to committee members by the end of the first day of classes for fall semester in a student’s third year of study.

Administration of the Written Exam: If the written examination is selected by the student, it will be administered in a single eight-hour session. Students are permitted to bring only a clean paper copy of their reading list, without annotations. The exam is typed on electronic bluebook software that precludes access to the internet or to the hard disk of the computer in use. This exam should be completed by the end of the first day of classes for the fall semester in a student's third year of study.

Literature Review Option (replaces the written exam): Instead of an eight-hour written test, students will be allowed to write a journal-length manuscript that reviews and synthesizes a literature and/or makes a theoretical contribution to a field. The manuscript should indicate mastery of literature, and the author should synthesize and critically examine a field of research. The intent is to help students grow these research skills and add to their academic accomplishments/vita.

Declaration of Written Exam or Literature Review: Each student and the faculty research mentor must **declare which option will be pursued by April 1** through an email to the DGS and DGSA that copies the research mentor and indicates which option will be pursued, along with a tentative manuscript title if the manuscript option is chosen.

For students electing the manuscript option, they should consult with all committee members well ahead of the deadline about the topic, readings, and thesis. The deadline is the same as for students electing the written exam option: The oral exam must be scheduled for at least one week after turning in the manuscript, and all components must be completed no later than two weeks after the first day of classes.

Administration of the Oral Exam: The oral examination occurs no later than one week after the written exam of the student's third year in residence and no later than two weeks after the first day of classes. The oral exam is typically scheduled for 90 minutes, which incorporates time for the committee to deliberate. The committee may ask the candidate about their second-year paper, the candidate's responses to written exam questions or the literature review, or any other topic germane to assessment of the candidate's preparedness to pursue an independent research agenda.

Assessment: Successful completion of the comprehensive exam requires a passing vote from all committee members. If the vote is split (2:1), the DGS will decide whether the student will pass the exam. In the event of a failure, the student will be permitted one retake to be scheduled no later than the end of the fall semester of their third year in residence.

Evaluation Rubric: Comprehensive Examination			
Criteria	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Above Expectations
Candidate demonstrates a mastery of the theoretical concepts and methodological tools associated with a social science discipline such as economics, political science, sociology, or psychology and neuroscience.			
Candidate demonstrates an ability to critique the work of researchers studying their chosen			

policy area, including researchers adopting varying disciplinary perspectives.			
Candidate demonstrates a wide-ranging knowledge of the history and issues of the field.			
Candidate demonstrates a specialist knowledge of a research area, encompassing both a policy specialization and a disciplinary perspective.			
Candidate communicates convincingly in oral and written forms for a professional audience.			

Note: Students who cannot complete all components of the comprehensive exam by two weeks after the first day of classes in the fall semester of their third year should ask the DGS for an extension.

Deadlines for 2nd year:

- November 1—Statement of Academic Purpose (submit to DGS and DGSA)
- April 1—Reading list (submit to DGS and DGSA)
- April 1—Declaration of written exam or literature review (submit to DGS and DGSA)
- May (last day of spring classes)—Second-year paper (submit to exam committee)
- Summer—Schedule written and oral exam dates with your committee
- August (end of first day of classes in fall semester of third year of study)—Final draft of second-year paper due, and deadline for literature review/written exam completion
- Late August/early September—Oral exam must be completed no later than one week after the written exam and no later than two weeks after the first day of classes in the fall semester in third year of study

Dissertation Proposal

In the autumn of their third year, students take a dissertation proposal workshop (PUBPOL 908). Approximately one-third of the workshop consists of guided discussions of topics in professional development, including methods of identifying research questions, strategies for securing research support, writing for an interdisciplinary audience, oral presentation strategies, and navigating the peer-review process at academic journals and scholarly presses. Two-thirds of course sessions consist of student presentations. Students begin the academic year by making general presentations regarding their fields of interest, then move over the course of the semester to identify a specific dissertation topic.

All students are required to prepare a dissertation proposal. The proposal should describe a research project in detail sufficient to permit an evaluation of both its merit and feasibility. The dissertation proposal is expected to include a statement of the research question, a thorough discussion of how answering this question will advance existing academic literature, and a statement of the prospective consequences of the research findings for policy. The proposal should identify the methods to be used and data sources from which data will be procured for use in the course of answering the research question.

Preliminary Exam: Dissertation Proposal Defense

The defense of the dissertation proposal constitutes the **preliminary exam**. A student is not accepted as a candidate for the PhD degree until the preliminary exam has been passed. **The student is required to submit the dissertation proposal to all members of the PhD committee at least two weeks before the preliminary exam.** The preliminary exam consists of an oral defense of the dissertation proposal, which may incorporate an evaluation of the depth of dissertation area knowledge and the research methodologies to be used in the dissertation.

The voting to pass or fail the student at the preliminary examination, and to allow or deny a re-examination, will be by written ballot. Passing the preliminary examination requires at least four affirmative votes and not more than one negative vote. If the chair of the committee casts a negative vote, the student will not pass the examination. The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for submitting the Preliminary Examination Report form to the Graduate School, and for ensuring that all preliminary exam committees understand and follow the correct Graduate School procedures. Should the student fail, they may apply, with the consent of the examining committee and the Associate Dean, for the privilege of a second examination to be taken no sooner than three months after the date of the first. The original committee must conduct the second examination. For the student to pass this second examination, the committee's vote must be unanimous. A second failure will render the student ineligible to continue in the doctoral program.

Students are generally expected to have defended a dissertation proposal (the oral defense constitutes the **preliminary exam**) by the end of their third year. Normally, in years four and five, students work on their dissertations, defending their dissertations by the end of the fifth year.

The Dissertation

The dissertation is the culmination of the PhD program and must demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct original, independent, and policy-relevant research. It should make a significant contribution to the field of public policy through innovation in theory, method, or application. A successful Public Policy PhD dissertation must constitute a significant contribution to policy-relevant knowledge, either through innovative application of social science methods to policy problems, or by innovation in theory or methods appropriate for addressing public policy problems.

At Duke, dissertations may take one of two forms:

1. Monograph (book-style): a single, unified document presenting a comprehensive study; or
2. Article-based dissertation: typically this takes the form of three substantively related and policy-relevant research papers linked by a common theme.

The chosen format must be approved by the chair(s) of the dissertation committee and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Previously published or co-authored papers may be included if the student's independent contribution is clearly identified and approved by the chair(s) of their dissertation committee. Doctoral students frequently co-author research articles with their advisors or other faculty. The standard expectation in the public policy program is that no more than one chapter of a student's dissertation may reflect such co-authored work. This presumes that a dissertation consists of a minimum of three chapters. This restriction does not apply to work co-authored with fellow

students; however, it is expected that joint work between two or more students will be submitted as part of only one dissertation. Any deviation from this norm must be approved in advance by the DGS. Students must be the lead or primary author on any co-authored work and should confirm co-authorship and publication policies early with their co-authors, the chair(s) of their committee, and any other faculty advisors involved with the work.

The dissertation should be submitted and accepted within two years after passing the preliminary examination. If not completed within four years, the student may petition the Dean of the Graduate School—through the committee chair and DGS—for a one-year extension. Failure to submit by the extended deadline may result in dismissal from candidacy. Reinstatement requires passing a new preliminary examination, with a new time limit set by the Dean in consultation with the committee.

Students must complete the “Apply to Graduate” process in DukeHub for the intended graduation term. Applications do not carry over, so students must reapply if graduation is delayed.

All dissertations must be submitted electronically in accordance with the Graduate School’s [Theses and Dissertations](#) guidelines and deadlines.

The basic [requirements for preparing and submitting the dissertation](#) are prescribed on the [Theses and Dissertations](#) page of the Duke website. For more specific aspects of form and style, the student is advised to use *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian or other approved manuals of style.

Quick Reference: Dissertation Requirements

Requirement	Description/Policy
Purpose	Demonstrate original, independent, and policy-relevant research that contributes significantly to the field of public policy.
Format Options	1. Monograph (book-style): a single comprehensive study; or 2. Article-based: typically three related research papers tied together by a common theme.
Advising Reminder	Students should consult their advisor and DGS early about publication, co-authorship, and format expectations for their disciplinary track.
Approval	Format and content must be approved by the dissertation committee and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).
Published or Co-Authored Work	May be included if the student’s independent contribution is clearly stated and approved by the committee. The student must be the lead or primary author on any co-authored paper.
Timeline	Normally submitted and accepted within 2 years after the preliminary exam; must be submitted within 4 years, unless a 1-year extension is granted by the Dean of the Graduate School.
Extensions	Petition through committee chair and DGS to the Dean of the Graduate School. Students not completing the dissertation by the new deadline may be dropped from candidacy and must retake the preliminary exam to be reinstated.
Graduation Application	Complete the “Apply to Graduate” process in DukeHub for the intended semester. Reapply if graduation is delayed.

Submission Format	Must be submitted electronically following the Graduate School's Theses and Dissertations guidelines and semester deadlines.
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The Dissertation Committee

Students are expected to develop and defend their PhD prospectus and their dissertation before a dissertation committee. The committee will be selected by the student in consultation with the primary advisor. Dissertation committee selection can start as early as the second year of the program and typically comes together by the third year. Committee composition and invitation should occur early enough such that faculty advisors can guide the student's program of courses and support the research topic for the dissertation.

The committee consists of at least four members, with one member designated as chair. The chair (or at least one of the co-chairs) must be a faculty member with a primary appointment at the Sanford School and an appointment with the Graduate School. This committee should include at least two graduate faculty members of the Public Policy PhD program faculty and at least one member, usually from outside the department, who serves as the Minor Area Representative. The majority of members must be from Duke University. At least one member of the committee must represent the student's minor or related area; at least three must represent the major. This committee, with all members participating, will determine a program of study and administer the preliminary examination.

Members of the committee are drawn from the graduate faculty of Duke University. Not all faculty at Duke Sanford School are members of the graduate faculty of Duke University. Please be sure to check that faculty under consideration for the dissertation committee have a formal appointment with the Graduate School.

The committee must be appointed and approved by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School **at least two months before the student's preliminary examination**. The Director of Graduate Studies recommends the committee's composition to the Dean by means of a [committee approval form](#) provided by the Graduate School.

The date of the Associate Dean's signature on the committee approval form serves as the official date of record for committee approval. The Director of Graduate Studies and/or the student is responsible for notifying the members of the committee of their appointment and for scheduling all examinations.

Normally, the same committee administers both the preliminary and the dissertation examinations. The procedure for establishing the original committee should be followed in making any necessary changes in a student's committee. All such changes in a committee must be formally approved by signature of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School before the exam takes place, or the exam may be invalidated.

Occasionally, requests to appoint persons not on the full-time graduate faculty—especially members of the graduate faculties of the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State University—are approved by the Associate Dean. A person not on Duke's graduate faculty should be appointed an ad hoc member for a term that corresponds to the projected duration of the committee service. Please contact the DGSA, who will use the forms available from the Graduate School.

Final Examination: Dissertation Defense

The Director of Graduate Studies sends a notice of the time, place, date, student's name, title of dissertation, and names of the committee members to the Graduate School **at least two weeks before the scheduled examination (dissertation defense)**. An initial version of the dissertation manuscript must be submitted to the Graduate School by this deadline as well. The Final Examination Certificate will not be released by the Graduate School until this notification is received from the Director of Graduate Studies and the student has brought the dissertation to the Graduate School for a format check. **Members of the doctoral committee should have at least two weeks prior to the defense to read the dissertation.**

The final examination is administered by the student's supervising committee. Successful completion of the final examination requires at least four affirmative votes and not more than one negative vote. If the committee conducting the examination includes more than four examiners, the candidate fails if two adverse votes are cast by members of the committee or if a single adverse vote is cast by the professor supervising the dissertation. A single adverse vote by a member of the committee other than the supervising professor does not prevent a candidate from passing, unless the person casting the negative vote records a protest in writing within three days with the Dean of the Graduate School for submission to the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty. After hearing the members of the committee state the reasons for and against passing the candidate, the Executive Committee shall decide the matter. In all cases, the certificate carries a complete record of the vote as cast, and, if passed, the dissertation bears only the signatures of the committee members voting affirmatively.

Questions asked on the final examination should concern the candidate's dissertation and related matters. The examination is oral and normally continues at least two hours, but not more than three. The decision on whether the candidate has passed the examination should be by written ballot. If all members vote affirmatively, they sign their names on at least the acid-free and the first copy of the dissertation title page, on the acid-free and first copy of the abstract title page, and on the certificate of examination to the Dean (doctoral exam card). These signatures signify that the latter is an abstract of the dissertation suitable for publication in Dissertation Abstracts. The final examination certificate should be returned promptly to the Graduate School office, either by the student or by the chair of the student's committee.

A committee that finds the candidate has passed except for minor revisions should sign the dissertation examination certificate and abstract, with the understanding that the supervisor will see and approve the revisions before the dissertation is submitted to the library. The student has up to one month after the examination to make changes in the dissertation requested by the committee. If the student needs longer than one month for making these changes, the student may request an extension, stating the reason for the delay and specifying the date the dissertation will be returned. The period of one month after the examination for returning the final copies of the dissertation and all required forms cannot apply if the examination occurs just prior to the end of the summer session or the fall or spring semesters. At those times the corrected dissertation and required forms must be returned immediately to meet specified deadlines for the awarding of degrees. If, at the end of the semester or term, the student cannot meet the specified deadlines, the student will be required to register for the ensuing term or semester in which the degree will be awarded.

Remote Participation for the Preliminary Exam and/or the Dissertation Defense

All members of the approved committee must participate in the examination and are expected to be present. The candidate, the chair, and the majority of the committee must be present in person. If there are four members, one member may participate remotely. In a five-person committee, two members may participate remotely.

Permission for committee members to participate remotely will be requested by the Director of Graduate Studies. It must be approved by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School prior to the exam. The remote participant will follow the instructions for remote participation (usually by submitting a short letter on university letterhead indicating the remote participant's vote for the exam).

If a committee member fails to appear for a defense and previous agreement for remote participation has not been secured, the exam must be rescheduled.

Graduation Deadlines

The following dates from spring 2024 are examples of typical graduation-related deadlines:

- February 1—Deadline to apply to graduate
- March 20—Deadline for initial submission of a student's electronic doctoral dissertation
- April 3—Final deadline for dissertation defense
- April 17—Deadline for final submission of electronic dissertation

See the [Graduation Deadlines](#) on the Duke website for current graduation-related deadlines.

Approval from Advisor

PhD candidates and master's candidates writing a thesis: Before the Graduate School can release your examination certificate, the Graduate School must receive an advisor letter and a defense announcement via email (gradacademics@duke.edu). The advisor letter must be sent by the student's advisor and needs to state that the advisor has read the student's dissertation or thesis and that it is complete and ready for defense. The defense announcement must be sent by the program's Director of Graduate Studies Assistant.

Non-thesis master's candidates: An advisor letter must be submitted to the Graduate School via email (gradacademics@duke.edu) no later than the deadline for completion of the Apply to Graduate process in DukeHub. The letter must be sent by the student's advisor and needs to state that the student is ready to graduate.

Preparing to Graduate

PhD and master's students are required to complete the Apply to Graduate process in DukeHub for the semester in which they plan to graduate. There is no penalty if you apply to graduate and do not graduate during that semester. However, the form data does not carry over from one semester to the next, so you will be required to re-apply for the next graduation.

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Note: If you require special characters in your name on the diploma, contact Academic Affairs (gradacademics@duke.edu).

DISCIPLINARY CONCENTRATION TRACKS

The Public Policy PhD program is interdisciplinary and also designed to ensure that students have a rigorous grounding in a particular core disciplinary tradition. Students designate a disciplinary concentration when applying to the program. They must opt to concentrate in economics, political science, sociology, or psychology.

A minimum of five courses in a discipline is required. Students take theory (a minimum of two courses) and basic research methods courses (a minimum of two courses) in their disciplinary department. Students are expected to meet appropriate qualifying or preliminary standards in their disciplinary concentration or subfield as would be required of a PhD candidate in that discipline. Economics concentrators may, in certain circumstances, receive waivers from meeting the qualifying standards in core microeconomic theory or econometrics courses via the master's-level theory and methods course sequences.

Public Policy PhD students are also expected to gain knowledge in the other core disciplines. Thus, students are also required to take at least one course outside of their concentration.

POLICY AREA FOCUS

In addition to gaining strength in a particular disciplinary tradition, Public Policy PhD students acquire depth in the policy area in which they will write a dissertation. Students take a minimum of two courses in a policy area to fulfill this requirement. Students may opt to take an independent study or an individual “readings course” to fulfill one or more of these requirements. Every student develops a plan of study to be approved by both the Public Policy Director of Graduate Studies and the student's faculty advisor that satisfies the policy area requirement and prepares the student for the comprehensive exam.

Students typically focus on policy areas in which Duke has particular strength. These areas of strength can be discerned by reviewing the interests of the [Sanford faculty](#). Students are at liberty, however, to select a policy area of their choosing, subject to approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students who have a primary interest in environmental policy should apply to the University Program in Environmental Policy, a joint doctoral program of the [Nicholas School of the Environment and the Sanford School of Public Policy](#).

ECONOMICS TRACK REQUIREMENTS

Public Policy PhD students with a disciplinary concentration in economics must complete the following PhD-level or substantively equivalent master's-level courses within the Economics Department:

PhD Core Courses:

- ECON 701: Microeconomics I – PhD microeconomics requirement

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- ECON 705: Microeconomics II – PhD microeconomics requirement
- ECON 703: Econometrics I – Research methods requirement
- ECON 707: Econometrics II – Research methods requirement

With the approval of the student’s advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), the following master’s-level sequence may be substituted:

- ECON 601: Microeconomics I Analysis I
- ECON 608: Econometrics I
- ECON 613: Macroeconomic Analysis I
- ECON 620: Game Theory with Application of Economics
- ECON 640: Industrial Organization I

Students should consult with the DGS and their faculty advisor to determine whether the PhD-level or master’s-level sequence best aligns with their background and research goals. In all cases, students must demonstrate competency equivalent to the PhD economics core.

Applied Microeconomics encompasses many fields, including Development, Environmental, Family, Health, Industrial Organization, Labor, Population, and Public Economics. The field exam committee would then be dictated by the topic of the field paper and the combination of the courses taken. Students who wish to major in an Applied Microeconomics field have some flexibility in their choice of courses but must obtain explicit approval of their course plan from the DGS.

For a major in **Econometrics**, Econometrics III must be one of the courses comprising the nine graded credits (or three courses on average).

Course structure in the Economics Department for the second year and beyond: After the first year, many (but not all) of the upper-level courses in Economics are divided into half-semester “modules.” The purpose of this structure is to allow students to better align coursework with their research interests. By their nature, modules only count for 1.5 credits, and students must complete enough of them to fulfill their graded course requirements. Module courses are all currently listed under special topics course numbers ECON 881-890.

[See the Department of Economics website for modules, seminars, and workshops.](#)

POLITICAL SCIENCE TRACK REQUIREMENTS

(Note: An update is in process.)

Public Policy PhD students with a disciplinary concentration in Political Science must meet Political Science departmental requirements for research methods courses and departmental requirements for one of the Political Science major fields. However, qualifying standards, including preliminary examinations, are determined by the Public Policy department and described elsewhere in this handbook.

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Core coursework: To meet the departmental research methods requirements, students must complete a minimum of two courses. Public Policy PhD students are encouraged to follow the requirements for the Political Science PhD, which offers these two introductory courses:

- POLSCI 630: Probability and Basic Regression
- POLSCI 631: Introduction to Deductive & Analytical Approaches to Political Phenomena (Game Theory)

Depending upon a student's background and research goals, other methods courses may be substituted for one of these courses with the approval of the faculty advisor and DGS.

Please see the [Political Science course list](#) for graduate courses.

Students must also complete a minimum of three courses, including the field seminar, in one of the following [major field areas](#):

- Normative Political Theory and Political Philosophy
- Political Behavior and Identities
- Political Institutions
- Political Economy
- Political Methodology
- Security, Peace & Conflict

For a more detailed description of the major fields and coursework, visit the [Political Science department website](#).

PSYCHOLOGY TRACK REQUIREMENTS

(Note: An update is in process.)

Public Policy PhD students with a disciplinary concentration in Psychology can choose to specialize in one of these areas or create specialty foci of their own, with the guidance of their advisory committee. The most relevant subfields include:

- Developmental psychology
- Clinical psychology*
- Social psychology

*Students selecting the psychology concentration will not be able to complete training to become clinicians, but many of the Psychology and Neuroscience faculty members with expertise in health psychology are included in this group. The Psychology department also offers training in cognition and cognitive neuroscience, and systems and integrative neuroscience.

The following courses, all in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, constitute the curricular requirements for this concentration:

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- PSY 718: Research Design
- PSY 767: Applied Correlation and Regression Analysis

Depending on students' substantive interests, they are required to select three of the following theory courses:

- PSY 727: Theories of Developmental Psychology [taught each year]
- PSY 722: Advanced Cognitive Development [taught every other year]
- PSY 721: Social Development [taught every other year]
- PSY 707: Models of Intervention and Prevention [taught each year]
- PSY 705: Adult Psychopathology [taught each year]
- PSY 706S: Health Psychology Intervention [taught every other year]

SOCIOLOGY TRACK REQUIREMENTS

(Note: An update is in process.)

Public Policy PhD students with a disciplinary concentration in Sociology can choose to specialize in one of these areas or create specialty foci of their own, with the guidance of their advisory committee. The most relevant subfields include:

- Economic sociology
- Medical sociology
- Population studies
- Race
- Religion
- Social networks
- Social psychology
- Stratification

The following courses, all in the Department of Sociology, constitute the curricular requirements for this concentration:

- SOC 710: Classical Sociological Theory
- SOC 711: Contemporary Approaches to Sociological Explanation
- SOC 722: Social Statistics I
- SOC 720: Survey Research Methods OR a different methods course approved by your advisor and required by the student's specialization

For a more detailed description of the subfields and coursework, visit the [Sociology department website](#).

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC POLICY PHD COURSE TRACKS

All Public Policy PhD students, regardless of disciplinary concentration or policy area focus, will generally spend their first two years of the program taking classes—a combination of public policy

core courses and electives. Students usually spend their third year writing and defending their dissertation proposal, supported by enrollment in PUBPOL 908. The fourth and fifth years are typically devoted to writing and defending the dissertation. Below are illustrative paths to provide a better idea of what the five years at Duke will encompass.

Note: Students often exceed minimum credit requirements (39), and so do the sample tracks below.

Sample Path 1: Disciplinary Concentration in Economics, Policy Focus in Development (42-45 credits)

	Fall	Spring
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy ○ Microeconomics I ○ Econometrics I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Political Economy of Policymaking ○ Microeconomics II ○ Econometrics II
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development Elective ○ Economics Subfield Elective ○ Economics Concentration Elective ○ Political Science Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development Readings Course ○ Economics Subfield Elective ○ Sociology or Psychology Elective
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Comprehensive exam on Economics and Development Policy</i> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop II (if needed) ○ <i>Preliminary examination, including defense of dissertation proposal</i>
Year 4	Write dissertation	
Year 5	Complete and defend dissertation	

Sample Path 2: Disciplinary Concentration in Political Science, Policy Focus in Governance and Institutions (42-45 credits)

	Fall	Spring
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy ○ Microeconomics I ○ Political Science Research Methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Political Economy of Policymaking ○ Microeconomics II ○ Political Science Research Methods ○ Governance and Institutions Elective
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Political Science Subfield Elective ○ Political Science Concentration Elective ○ Economics Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governance and Institutions Readings Course ○ Political Science Field Elective ○ Sociology or Psychology Elective
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Comprehensive exam on Political Science and Development</i> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop II (if needed) ○ <i>Preliminary examination, including defense of dissertation proposal</i>
Year 4	Write dissertation	
Year 5	Complete and defend dissertation	

Sample Path 3: Disciplinary Concentration in Sociology, Policy Focus in Social Policy (42–45 credits)

	Fall	Spring
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy ○ Microeconomics I ○ Sociology Research Methods ○ Sociology Theory Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Political Economy of Policymaking ○ Microeconomics II ○ Sociology Research Methods ○ Social Policy Elective
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Policy Elective ○ Sociology Subfield Elective ○ Sociology Field Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Policy Readings Course ○ Sociology Subfield Elective ○ Political Science Elective
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Comprehensive exam on Sociology and Social Policy</i> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop II (if needed) ○ <i>Preliminary examination, including defense of dissertation proposal</i>
Year 4	Write dissertation	
Year 5	Complete and defend dissertation	

Sample Path 4: Disciplinary Concentration in Psychology, Policy Focus in Social Policy (42–45 credits)

	Fall	Spring
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy ○ Microeconomics I ○ Research Design ○ Social Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Political Economy of Policymaking ○ Microeconomics II ○ Applied Correlations Regression Analysis ○ Psychology Elective
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sociology Elective ○ Psychology Elective ○ Social Policy Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Policy Elective ○ Psychology Elective ○ Political Science Elective
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Comprehensive exam on Psychology and Social Policy</i> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dissertation Proposal Workshop II (if needed) ○ <i>Preliminary examination, including defense of dissertation proposal</i>
Year 4	Write dissertation	
Year 5	Complete and defend dissertation	

ALLIED AND JOINT DEGREE OFFERINGS AND REQUIREMENTS

Allied and joint degree admission is available only through the standard Graduate School application process at the time of admission. Students must indicate their intent to pursue a joint degree when applying to Duke University. *Earlier cohorts of students who did not have the option to select a joint degree at the*

time of application were permitted to apply internally during the program's initial rollout; however, this process is no longer available.

Students admitted to the joint degree program must meet all academic and administrative requirements of both participating departments. Applicants are encouraged to consult with both departments' Directors of Graduate Studies early in the admissions process to confirm current requirements and expectations.

MEDICAL SCIENTIST TRAINING PROGRAM (MSTP)

The Duke Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) is a dual-degree MD/PhD pathway that prepares physician-scientists to integrate clinical training with advanced research. MSTP students pursuing the PhD in Public Policy through Sanford engage in interdisciplinary work at the intersection of medicine, health systems, and policy, applying evidence-based research to improve health outcomes and promote equity in healthcare. The program is jointly supported by the Duke University School of Medicine and Sanford School of Public Policy. For more information, visit the [Duke MSTP website](#).

UNIVERSITY PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY (UPEP)

The Duke University Program in Environmental Policy (UPEP) PhD is a five-year program for intense research training, combining disciplinary specialization in economics or political science with an emphasis on understanding policy settings and the precise nature of the problem we hope to solve with policy.

The program is jointly administered by Sanford and Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment. While there is much overlap in the requirements between the two programs, there are some distinctions (e.g., no comprehensive exam requirement for UPEP students). For detailed information on the UPEP PhD program, see the [UPEP Student Handbook](#).

POLITICAL SCIENCE JOINT DEGREE PROGRAM AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(Note: An update is in process.)

Core coursework: See the Political Science [department website](#).

Sanford Public Policy and Political Science Joint PhD Program Course Requirements					
	Course	Course Name		Course	Course Name
Year 1					
Fall	POLSCI 630	Probability and Basic Regression	Spring	POLSCI 631L	Introduction to Deductive & Analytical Approaches to Political Phenomena
	PUBPOL 901	Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy		PUBPOL 902	The Political Economy of Policymaking

		Elective or Field Course			Elective or Field Course
Year 2					
Fall	POLSCI 748 or 732	Introduction to Causal Interference or Research Design and Qualitative Methods	Spring	POLSCI 748 or 732	Introduction to Causal Interference or Research Design and Qualitative Methods
		POLSCI Field Course			POLSCI Field Course
		Non-POLSCI Course			Non-POLSCI Course
Year 3					
Fall	PUBPOL 908	Dissertation Proposal Seminar	Spring		Non-POLSCI Course
		POLSCI Field Course			

See the Political Science [department website](#) for Political Science PhD requirements.

Note: Students will complete the following 13 (minimum) required courses—39 total credits:

- Set of core Public Policy courses (901, 902, 908)
- Required disciplinary concentration courses in Political Science (630, 631L, 748, and 732)
- A minimum of three courses (nine credits) including the field seminar, in one of the following [major field areas](#):
 - Normative Political Theory and Political Philosophy
 - Political Behavior and Identities
 - Political Institutions
 - Political Economy
 - Political Methodology
 - Security, Peace & Conflict
- Three non-concentration social science courses. One course will be completed in the concentrations of economics, sociology, or psychology.

PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE AND SANFORD PUBLIC POLICY JOINT PhD PROGRAM COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(Note: An update is in process.)

Core coursework: See the Psychology and Neuroscience [department website](#).

Psychology and Neuroscience and Sanford Public Policy Joint PhD Program Course Requirements					
Year 1					
	Course	Course Name		Course	Course Name

Fall	PUBPOL 901	Individual and Collective Choice and Public Policy	Spring	PUBPOL 902	The Political Economy of Policymaking
		Psychology and Neuroscience Core I			Psychology and Neuroscience Core II
		Psychology and Neuroscience First Year Seminar			Psychology and Neuroscience First Year Seminar
Year 2					
Fall	PUBPOL	New PUBPOL Methods	Spring	PUBPOL	Experimental Design for Behavioral and Social Sciences OR Qualitative Methods (PhD level)
		Psychology and Neuroscience Core III			Psychology and Neuroscience Core IV
		Stat/Methods Course			Stat/Methods Course
		TAship or Practicum/Elective			TAship or Practicum/Elective
Year 3					
Fall	PUBPOL 908	Dissertation Proposal Workshop I			
		Stat/Methods Course			

One of the three stat/methods courses for Psychology and Neuroscience could be micro-economics (PUBPOL 810, which is a required core course for Public Policy); a second microeconomics course (PUBPOL 811), causal inference, and other advanced statistics courses are also available to fill additional required statistics/methods requirements in Psychology and Neuroscience if desired by the student.

In areas of overlap between the Major Area Paper requirement in Psychology and Neuroscience and the comprehensive exam requirements in Public Policy, the requirements for both departments could be fulfilled with the same paper/oral defense and a committee made up of members from both Psychology and Neuroscience and Public Policy, the details of which would need to be worked out between the two departments/areas. Psychology and Neuroscience practicums could be designed to facilitate interaction with faculty from Sanford.

PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIOLOGY JOINT DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

(Note: An update is in process.)

Core coursework: See the Sociology [department website](#).

1st Year Fall	1st Year Spring
1 st Year Proseminar (SOC 701) Stat I (SOC 722) Logic of Inquiry (SOC 720S) Classical Theory (SOC 710) or PUBPOL 810 PUBPOL 901	1 st Year Proseminar (SOC 701) Stat II (SOC 723) Research Practicum (SOC 721S) Contemporary Explanations (SOC 711) or PUBPOL 811 PUBPOL 902
1 st year exam (two essays/lit reviews in two areas chosen by student and read by faculty in sociology)	
2nd Year Fall	2nd Year Spring
2 nd year paper seminar (SOC 702)	2 nd year paper seminar (SOC 702)
PUBPOL 810 or Classical Theory (SOC 710)	PUBPOL 811 or Contemporary Explanations (SOC 711)
Qualification in two areas is required by Sociology (policy can be one). For students originating in policy: Comps to be taken before the beginning of 5 th semester. For joint policy/sociology students, comps will consist of 1 st year exam (two essays/lit reviews), a polished version of the second-year paper, and an oral exam in which the lit reviews in the two areas chosen by the student and the second-year paper will be discussed.	
3rd Year Fall	3rd Year Spring
Public Policy Dissertation Seminar PUBPOL 908	
Dissertation proposal (preliminary exam) by end of third year (Graduate School requirement)	
Any Semester	
2 advanced methods electives 4 sociology/policy electives (at least two must be in sociology)	

COLLEGE TEACHING CERTIFICATE OPTION

PhD students planning to pursue a faculty career in higher education have the opportunity to obtain a Certificate in College Teaching as they continue to work toward the PhD degree. The program prepares students to teach and gives them a formal record of their ability to do so, making them more competitive when applying to positions that involve teaching. More specifically, the program provides sustained, systematic pedagogical training based on the best current practices in teaching and learning, as well as guidance on the appropriate use of instructional technologies and the systematic assessment of student learning outcomes. Besides this systematic training, the program includes reflective teaching practice through peer observation and practical experience in the development of teaching materials suitable for use in applying for teaching positions after graduation.

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The three major requirements of the Certificate in College Teaching are:

- Coursework
- Teaching experience and observation
- Online teaching portfolio

The program requirements take about a year to complete and may be pursued along with other PhD-related work. Upon completion, the certificate will be listed on the transcript as an officially endorsed Duke University Graduate School certificate.

For more information, see the [Certificate in College Teaching page](#) on the Duke website.

MASTER'S DEGREE OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

PhD students in good standing become eligible to receive an MA in Public Policy upon successful completion of the **comprehensive exam**, typically administered at the beginning of a student's third year in residence. Students who elect to exit the PhD program, or who fail one or more qualifying requirements up to and including the comprehensive exam, may be eligible to earn an MA in Public Policy, under the conditions described below.

OPTION 1: NON-THESIS MASTER'S DEGREE

Students enrolled in the PhD Program in Public Policy who have met all coursework requirements and successfully passed the comprehensive exam may apply for an MA in Public Policy as they continue to work toward the PhD degree. Students interested in obtaining the MA must apply to receive it and bring the necessary forms to be signed by the comprehensive exam committee. Receipt of the MA in Public Policy precludes students from obtaining master's degrees in any other area during the course of their doctoral studies.

Coursework

Students must pass at least **10** three-credit graduate courses. These courses must include the following:

- PUBPOL 901
- PUBPOL 902
- 2 courses in research methods
- 2 courses in a disciplinary subfield within Economics, Political Science, or Sociology (see course planning requirements)
- 2 Public Policy electives in a specific policy area (500 level or above)

Completion Exercise: Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam is designed to assess a student's mastery of existing scholarly work in an area delimited by traditional disciplinary subfield and policy area and is taken at the beginning of a student's third year in the PhD program. The comprehensive exam will consist of three components: (1) a paper to be initially submitted in advance of the exam, with a revision due on the date of the written exam, (2) a written exam or literature review that will prove mastery of the reading materials, and (3) an oral follow-up with the three-member examination committee. The

paper and written test/literature review collectively serve the role of a completion exercise, and the oral follow-up serves as the defense of this completion exercise. The standard for passing the comprehensive exam at the MA level is intended to be lower than the standard for passing at the PhD level; thus, the comprehensive exam committee may simultaneously deliberate (a) whether a student has met the standard to continue in the PhD program in good standing and (b) conditional on failing to meet this threshold, whether the student has met the requirements to receive the MA degree. For more specific information regarding exam content, preparation, and assessment see the comprehensive exam requirements listed elsewhere in this PhD Student Handbook. **Students must register to graduate in DukeHub and their advisor must submit a letter to the Graduate School stating that they are ready to graduate.** Please see [Milestone and Graduation Information and Deadlines](#) on the Graduate School website for more details.

OPTION 2: “ACCELERATED” MA

The proposed “accelerated” master’s degree for Public Policy PhD students draws heavily from similar degrees available to PhD students in the Political Science, Economics, and Sociology departments at Duke. The option is primarily intended for those students that have completed the majority of the coursework for the doctoral program but were unable to meet one or more specific qualifying requirements, or for those students who have elected to leave the program voluntarily.

Students interested in pursuing option 2 must obtain approval from the DGS of the Public Policy PhD program prior to the oral defense of the MA project.

Coursework

The course requirements for option 2 are identical to those for option 1 above. Students must pass at least **10** three-credit graduate courses. These courses must include the following:

- PUBPOL 901
- PUBPOL 902
- 2 courses in research methods
- 2 courses in a disciplinary subfield within Economics, Political Science, or Sociology (see course planning requirements)
- 2 Public Policy electives in a specific policy area (500 level or above)

Completion Exercise: MA Project

Students who elect to leave the program before the administration of the comprehensive exam, or those who fail to complete an earlier qualifying requirement, must complete an MA project in lieu of the comprehensive exam. The MA project should demonstrate the student’s ability to collect, interpret, and analyze pertinent material on a research problem. Ideally, the MA project will be a paper of approximately 20-30 pages, double spaced. Students may choose to expand upon a term paper to fulfill this requirement. Student projects will be completed under the supervision of a faculty advisor. The project will be the principal topic of a final oral examination conducted by the advisor and two other Public Policy faculty members and scheduled to meet posted [Graduate School deadlines for master’s examinations](#).

MA EN ROUTE TO PHD IN OTHER DISCIPLINES OR SCHOOLS

Students actively enrolled in the PhD program may pursue one master's degree en route to the PhD, including in a different discipline, without being charged for an additional 30 units of graduate credit. However, this option is limited to master's degrees conferred by the Graduate School and subject to specific conditions. The master's degree may be offered by a school in the Graduate School other than Sanford, provided that (1) the school offers an en route master's degree, and (2) the school has approved the awarding of the degree concurrently with the PhD. In practice, this option typically applies to disciplines closely related to the student's primary concentration (e.g., economics, political science, psychology, or sociology). Requirements for earning the degree vary by school, so students are encouraged to contact the relevant school directly for guidance. (For Economics, some information is available in the following section of this handbook.)

If a student wishes to pursue a concurrent MA in another discipline, that degree will be awarded only after the final doctoral term, concurrently with the PhD. The student will incur full tuition charges if they do not complete the PhD but still wish to receive the concurrent master's degree. If the student is pursuing more than one MA degree (including the public policy one), they will be charged tuition for the additional 30 course credits required for the second MA degree.

MA IN ECONOMICS EN ROUTE TO THE PHD

PhD students at the Sanford School of Public Policy who wish to pursue an MA in Economics en route to the PhD can do so without incurring additional tuition, provided they meet all program and Graduate School requirements. There are two parts to the process: Part 1, to be completed after the student successfully finishes their preliminary examination (usually during or after the spring semester of their third year); and Part 2, to be completed in the semester in which the student intends to graduate. The following steps outline the process:

Step 1: Meet with the Director of Graduate Studies (Economics)

Students should first schedule a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies for the MA in Economics program to discuss their academic background and plan of study. This meeting is to determine whether the student's coursework align with the requirements for the MA in Economics and to confirm which completed or planned courses will count toward the degree. During this time, you can also discuss if any of the field classes' writing assignments (usually a research proposal) can count toward the portfolio requirement.

Step 2: Complete MA in Economics Requirements

To be eligible for the degree, students must complete the core requirements of the MA program, including graduate-level coursework in microeconomic theory, econometrics, and economics field courses (such as development, applied microeconomics, labor economics, etc.). PhD-level field courses (800-level) may be used to fulfill these requirements with approval from the Director of Graduate Studies for the MA in Economics.

Step 3: Prepare Application Materials for the Graduate School (Part 1)

Students must complete Part 1 of the Graduate School's "Intent to Pursue a Concurrent Master's Degree in Another Discipline En Route to the PhD" form. This includes:

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- A written rationale explaining the intellectual relationship between the PhD in Public Policy and the MA in Economics.
- Two letters of recommendation from Duke faculty—one from each department. This will be the DGS for Economics and the DGS for the PhD in Public Policy program.
- Completion of Part 1 of the form with all necessary approval signatures.

Step 4: Submit to the Graduate School for Review

The completed Part 1 form and supporting documents should be submitted to the Graduate School (gradacademics@duke.edu) for review by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. If approved, the application will be recorded for final review during the student's graduation semester.

Step 5: Plan for Graduation and MA Portfolio

In the semester the student plans to graduate, they must:

- Submit Part 2 of the Graduate School form.
- Highlight in their transcript the 30 credits to be counted toward the MA.
- Apply for graduation in both programs via DukeHub.
- Submit a written portfolio to fulfill the MA in Economics completion requirement. The portfolio guidelines and deadlines are provided by the Economics program each semester.

Useful links:

- [The Graduate School's page with information on the MA en route to the PhD](#)
- [Parts 1 and 2 of the form](#)
- [The Economics department's information page for the MA in Economics](#)
- [MA in Economics coursework checklist](#)
- [MA in Economics portfolio requirements](#)

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL AID

Duke University and the Sanford School of Public Policy are committed to supporting Public Policy PhD students for five years through a combination of scholarships, fellowships, research or teaching assistantships, and stipends, *provided that* students maintain good standing in the academic program.

In addition to tuition, fees, and health insurance, students will receive a 12-month stipend in the amount determined annually by the Sanford School in consultation with the Duke Graduate School. In order to receive this stipend, PhD students in Public Policy will be required to work in research, teaching, or graduate assistantships according to their year of study:

- **Year 1:** Full fellowship, no work requirements.
- **Years 2 & 3:** 19.9 hours/week RAship for the year or TAship for each semester.*
- **Years 4+:** Dissertation fellowships or full-time (19.9 hours/week) assistantship as an RA or TA.

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* PhD students in years 2 and above without other support will serve as a TA or RA for each semester without other external support. The maximum number of hours per week for TAs or RAs is 19.9. TAs are expected to spend 5 hours toward the fixed costs of being a TA (attending class and completing readings), and the remaining 14.9 hours will be a mix of activities supporting the instructor of record.

Students receive 12-month funding and must fulfill summer work requirements to obtain the full stipend level. PhD students in Public Policy receive 12-month funding during their guaranteed funding period (Years 1–5), which includes summer support.

First- and second-year PhD students do not have a summer work obligation. Beginning in the third year, students are expected to engage in research or other academic work during the summer as part of their funding support. Students are strongly encouraged to seek RA opportunities and apply for the Graduate School's competitive fellowships and external funding. TA opportunities are limited during the summer term. Students should consult with the DGS regarding the availability of graduate assistant positions.

Starting in Year 3, students are expected to apply for all applicable sources of external funding to support their dissertation research. However, we strongly encourage *all* students to seek fellowships from external sources, which can offer generous multiyear support packages.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Graduate School covers the tuition and fees for a PhD student's first five years. After that, students are responsible for tuition and fees, and most students obtain external or departmental funding that helps cover those costs. The Graduate School also covers health insurance for years 1-6 if students choose the Duke student medical insurance plan. [Visit the Statistics section](#) of the Duke website to see the typical time to completion for your degree program. [More details on financial support for PhD students](#) can also be found on the Duke website.

Stipend support for the 2025-2026 academic year (12 months) is \$42,500.

The Graduate School also supports students with the following:

- Internal fellowship awards
- Medical expense assistance program
- Childbirth and adoption accommodation
- Childcare subsidy
- GradParents study group
- Professional development
- Short-term loans

For more information about financial support for PhD students at Duke, visit the [Financial Support](#) page of the Duke website.

FELLOWSHIPS

The Sanford School offers special fellowships including the following:

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- The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Doctoral Fellowship on Philanthropy, Media and Democracy
- The Joel L. Fleishman Civil Society Ph.D. Fellowship

Application deadlines for these usually occur in the spring.

The Graduate School awards internal fellowships each spring. These fellowships can be very generous. Students have been recipients of the following internal awards:

- Chancellor's Scholarship
- Dean's Graduate Fellowship
- James B. Duke Fellowship
- University Scholars Fellowship
- Dissertation Research Travel Award: Domestic and International
- James B. Duke International Research Travel Fellowship
- Ottis Green Fellowship for PhD Students in Humanities and Social Sciences
- Katherine Goodman Stern Fellowship
- Summer Research Fellowships for Third-Year PhD Students and Beyond
- Conference Travel Awards
- Bass Instructional Fellowships

For more information about Graduate School fellowships, visit the [Find Funding](#) page of the Duke website.

In addition to awards available through the university, applicants are urged to compete for national and foundation awards available for graduate study. The [Find Funding](#) page of the Duke website lists awards available from a variety of federal and private sources, as well as awards funded by the university.

External awards, which are prestigious and a valuable acknowledgment of a student's intellectual project and promise, typically replace departmental or Graduate School awards. Visit the [Office of Research Support website](#) for detailed information about external financial awards.

FUNDING FOR THE SIXTH YEAR

PhD students who secure funding from a source other than the Sanford School have the option to "bank" that externally funded semester or year and use it to fund one or both semester(s) in their 6th year. This requires a one-to-one correspondence with the eligible semester or year banked. The option to bank does not apply to summer funding nor to cumulative savings to the Sanford School budget over the course of several semesters.

The 2025-2026 estimated cost of attendance for PhD students in years 4+ can be found [on the Duke website](#).

What counts as external funding?

- Funding from a non-Duke grant for a semester(s)
- Duke funding that is not from the Sanford School budget

What are the criteria in order for funding to count?

- The external funding must cover 100% of the Sanford School's obligation to the PhD student.
 - Tuition 12 months: \$33,862 (Years 1-3)
 - Tuition 12 months: \$4,680 (Years 4+Stipend 12 months: \$42,500)
 - Fees
 - Other:
 - Tuition remission rate: 33.8%
 - PhD student fringe benefit rate: 10.1%
- Note that funding for an RAship from another school or department at Duke does not qualify as external funds that can be used toward "banking" for the sixth year.

Additional 6th-year funding options include Duke University's Graduate School [Sixth Year Tuition and Fee Scholarship](#). This does not include stipend support.

SUPPLEMENTAL EMPLOYMENT DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Duke Graduate School regulations govern student compensation for any academic year employment obtained outside the standard graduate awards budget system. For example, if a student is on an external fellowship and wishes to supplement that income with TA or RA work, that is permissible in some cases. **In every case, the DGS must approve the arrangement.** The DGS possesses the sole authority to determine whether earnings from such work will be offset by a reduction in the stipend amount.

Any student wishing to pursue this type of supplemental arrangement should take the following steps in exactly this order:

1. Fully read and comprehend the Graduate School's regulations governing supplemental employment.
2. Fully read and comprehend any regulations provided by the external institute or agency providing fellowship funds.
3. Obtain the written permission of any such institute or agency to seek supplemental employment, if any permission is required.
4. Approach the DGS to obtain written permission to seek such supplemental employment. The student will be expected to demonstrate their compliance with steps 1 through 3.
5. In the event said written permission is granted, seek such supplemental employment. Prospective employers should be made aware that they will be expected to cover the costs of compensation from resources at their disposal, not from PhD program funds.
6. Once a suitable employment arrangement has been identified, return to the DGS for final approval.

Students receiving unsolicited offers of employment in exchange for supplemental pay during an academic year should immediately inform the offering party of these regulations and proceed through these six steps exactly as outlined.

Requests to approve supplemental employment arrangements that do not conform to this protocol will be denied.

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This protocol does not apply to students who do not receive funding through the standard graduate awards budget system.

SANFORD SCHOOL FUNDING FOR RESEARCH-RELATED EXPENSES

The Public Policy PhD program provides limited financial support for research and professional development through the Sanford School PhD Small Grant Award. Students may apply for up to \$1,000 per academic year (July 1 to June 30) to support conference travel, supplemental training programs, or research-related expenses such as data, software, books, or survey costs.

All enrolled PhD students who are in good academic standing are eligible to apply for small grant funding each academic year. Unused award funds **do not** carry over to the next academic year.

Small grant funds may be used for:

- Conference registration fees and travel expenses
- Research-related materials such as books, software, or data
- Survey costs and other approved research-related expenses
- Hiring a student tutor to support coursework or skill development essential to academic progress (for example, tutoring for required economics courses)

Students are encouraged to contact the PhD program office with any questions regarding eligibility or allowable expenses.

Students must submit an application through the designated Qualtrics form **at least 45 days before** the planned event or purchase (for example, apply by mid-September for a November conference). Applications must be submitted **before any purchases are made**, as expenses incurred prior to approval are not eligible for reimbursement.

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis by the DGS and are subject to the availability of funds. Students will be notified of the decision by the program office following review. [Submit application here](#).

GRADUATE SCHOOL CONFERENCE TRAVEL AWARD

Once you pass the preliminary exam (dissertation proposal defense), you are eligible and encouraged to apply for the Graduate School Conference Travel Award. You may only receive this award once during the fiscal year (July 1-June 30). The Sanford School will cover 30% **above** the allotted travel award of your reimbursements. If applying for Graduate School funding, make sure you follow their instructions for the application and for reimbursement, which can be found on the application form on the [Conference Support](#) web page.

Send Graduate School Conference Travel Award applications **at least one week before the Graduate School deadline** which is 30 days before the conference to ensure a chance to receive the travel award. All travel receipts should be uploaded at least 30 days after the conference to ensure reimbursement.

STUDENT EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Reimbursements for other approved expenses are issued **after the event or purchase**.

- **First-year students:** Reimbursements are processed via paper check mailed to the address on file. **Within 10 days** of the event or purchase:
 - Complete the [Travel Expense Form](#).
 - Combine all receipts into **one PDF**.
 - Email both to the DGSA.
- **Second-year students and beyond:** Reimbursements are processed through [Concur](#) and issued via direct deposit.

All reimbursed trips and expenses must be pre-approved by the Director of Graduate Studies or the DGSA.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND EXPECTATIONS

Students in the Sanford PhD program annually elect a number of officers to represent the PhD student body in a variety of capacities. These representatives serve as interlocutors with Duke, the Sanford School, and the DGS and DGSA, as well as organizing both academic and social programming for the PhD student body.

Elections for offices are managed by the outgoing Executive Committee representatives (see below) during the transition to a new academic year. All elected officers are nominated during an open nomination period, which should be held in early July. Each student may nominate as many individuals as there are seats available (for each office), and may submit self-nominations. After the nomination period ends, nominees should be contacted individually by the outgoing Executive Committee representatives and invited to accept or decline their nominations. An election should then be held by secret ballot in late July or early August to fill any contested seats, after which the outgoing Executive Committee representatives should announce the full slate of student leaders for the coming year.

OFFICES AND ROLES

The following section lists each type of student leadership office, the number of seats to be filled in each academic year, the roles and duties of each office, and the expected time commitment.

<i>Office:</i>	Representatives to the Executive Committee
<i>Seats:</i>	Three
<i>Roles:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. These officers represent the PhD student body by relaying students' questions and concerns to PhD program leadership (DGS, DGSA, Sanford deans, etc.) and guide constructive processes for finding solutions. Representatives can be proactive in soliciting questions and concerns from the student body to enhance their student experience at Duke, or they can respond to issues as they arise. In this capacity, representatives should coordinate check-in meetings with the DGS and DGSA at least once per semester.2. Representatives should also coordinate with other student leadership both inside and outside the program. This includes coordinating regularly with Graduate and Professional Student Government representatives (see below) to serve as a conduit between the students and the PhD program leadership, coordinating planning and strategy meetings with other Sanford student leadership such as the Undergraduate

Public Policy Union and the MPP Student Council (at least once per semester), and coordinating meetings of the Executive Committee (at least 1-2 times per semester).

3. Representatives are responsible for moderating the pps-phd@duke.edu listserv.

4. Representatives are responsible for managing desk assignments in the PhD workspace. This includes confirming that graduated students have cleaned out their desks, assigning desks to incoming first-year students, and facilitating desk relocations (as space allows) among current students. Note that Sanford-advised UPEP students should also be provided with a desk assignment, and all other UPEP students should be given an opportunity to request a desk assignment if space allows. At least one desk must remain open for shared use as needed by those who do not have an assigned desk.

5. At the end of each academic year, representatives should coordinate with outgoing volunteers and the respective incoming cohorts to identify students to fill various volunteer roles for the next academic year (see Volunteer Roles below).

6. Representatives are responsible for coordinating the annual nominating process and election of officers, as defined above.

Time: The time commitment for this role is generally low (fewer than 3 hours per month on average) but tends to be ad hoc, due to responding to requests from the PhD students, the DGS/DGSA, Sanford administrators, Duke administrators, or other student groups.

Office: **Representative(s) to the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG)**

Seats: One or two

Role: 1. These officers represent the PhD student body at the General Assembly, the main legislative body of GPSG. The representatives vote on behalf of the student body on different resolutions, including managing how student fees are spent.

Time: The time commitment for this role is, at minimum, six GPSG meetings per semester, of approximately 2 hours each.

Office: **Representative to the Sanford Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI)**

Seats: One or two

Role: 1. These officers represent the PhD student body on Sanford's Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI), a committee that seeks to improve and sustain diversity, equity, and inclusion at Sanford. In this capacity, the representatives serve as a conduit for student concerns and needs related to these priorities.

Time: The time commitment for this role varies from year to year, depending on the activity of the CDI.

Office: **Social Chair(s)**

Seats: One or two

Role: 1. These officers are responsible for organizing occasional social events for the student body and program. These can include happy hours, picnics, hikes, game nights, sporting events, and more.

Time: The time commitment for this role varies from year to year based on the enthusiasm of both the chair(s) and the student body, but the social chair(s) should endeavor to organize a minimum of two social events per semester.

The above elected officers comprise the PhD Program Executive Committee, and should meet as a group at least once per semester to coordinate their activities on behalf of the student body and program.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

In addition to the elected officers, several volunteer roles help organize some key programming for the student body. These volunteer roles are expected to be filled by members of specific cohorts; as needed, the Executive Committee should help coordinate finding volunteers to fill these roles.

Function: **Summer Lunches**
Cohort: Rising 3rd-year students
Expectations: Rising 3rd-year students are responsible for organizing occasional (weekly or biweekly) informal lunches or other meet-ups during the summer months for program students who are based in Durham. These lunches help keep the student body connected during the summer, when many students are typically engaged in individual research and there is generally much less programming to bring the student body together on a regular basis. Rising 3rd-year students are expected to organize summer lunches on a rotating volunteer basis.

Function: **Graduate Research Workshop (GRW) Coordinators**
Cohort: 4th-year students
Expectations: Up to three volunteers from the 4th-year student cohort are responsible for coordinating GRW for both semesters of the academic year. GRW occurs every Friday during the fall and spring semesters from 10:45 to 11:45 AM and provides an opportunity for students to present and receive feedback on their work. Each student in the program (except for 1st-year students) is expected to present at GRW at least once per year, or to present at a similar venue such as a conference or other seminar. Each semester, the GRW coordinators are responsible for surveying the student body prior to the start of the semester, seeking volunteers to present for each GRW date (in either 30-minute or 60-minute slots); determining and publicizing the GRW schedule for the semester; contacting each presenter in advance to obtain details about their presentation; emailing information about each presentation to the pps-phd@duke.edu listserv on a weekly basis; sending specific invitations to particular faculty members upon presenter request; assisting each presenter with audio-visual setup; introducing each presenter and keeping time for each session; and coordinating with the DGSA to provide coffee/tea for each session. Additionally, at the end of the regular academic year, the outgoing GRW coordinators should work with the incoming 4th-year cohort to identify the next year's coordinators and pass on procedures and materials to the new coordinators.

Function: **Sanford PhD Peer Mentoring Program**
Cohort: Any 3rd- or higher-year students
Expectations: This program is intended to connect 1st- and 2nd-year students with an advanced student peer who can serve as a point of contact, provide helpful advice, and offer general support as early-stage students begin their graduate careers and learn to navigate Sanford/Duke. The program should be coordinated by up to three students

from the 3rd-, 4th-, 5th-, or 6th-year cohorts. These coordinators should survey the student body in the late summer to identify volunteers from among the upper-year cohorts to serve as peer mentors, and should then match each 1st- or 2nd-year student with a mentor. Mentors are expected to meet with their mentee(s) at least once or twice per semester, and to serve as a general point of contact as needed throughout the year. Sanford provides funding support in the amount of \$20 per person per semester for mentor-mentee lunches, coffees, or similar meet-ups. At the end of the academic year, the outgoing coordinators should identify volunteer coordinators for the next academic year, and pass on procedures and materials to the new coordinators.

Function: **Union Stewards**

Cohort: Any

Expectations: Union stewards serve as points of contact between the PhD student body and the union. The union stewards are expected to field concerns from the student body regarding workplace conditions, stay informed about the union's action plans and represent the Sanford PhD students in strategic planning, and help build a strong membership base within the student body. Two individuals will serve as union stewards in any given semester, ideally from different cohorts and disciplines.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Public Policy PhD students are expected to follow the Sanford School of Public Policy Code of Professional Conduct: <https://sanford.duke.edu/about-us/values-principles/sanford-school-public-policy-code-professional-conduct/>

In addition, PhD students are members of the Graduate School of Duke University and are governed by the Standards of Conduct and Judicial Procedures of the Graduate School: <http://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/academic-policies-and-forms/standards-conduct>

Behaviors prohibited by the Graduate School and Duke University: <https://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/academic-policies-and-forms/standards-conduct/prohibited-behaviors>

Judicial Code and Procedures: <https://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/academic-policies-and-forms/standards-conduct/judicial-code-and-procedures>

Student Grievance Procedures: <https://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/academic-policies-and-forms/standards-conduct/student-grievance-procedures>

Reporting Harassment, Discrimination, and Other Concerns: An Interactive Guide for Graduate School Students: <https://projects.gradschool.duke.edu/reporting/>

WITHDRAWAL, LEAVE OF ABSENCE, AND REINSTATEMENT

WITHDRAWAL—VOLUNTARY

If a student wishes to withdraw from the Graduate School for any reason, the student must send written notice to both the Director of Graduate Studies in the student's department and to the Associate Dean prior to the date of anticipated withdrawal. Students may request subsequent reinstatement to the Graduate School. If reinstated, the student must pay the continuation for all the terms not registered plus a \$200 reinstatement fee. A student who has successfully completed a minimum of one semester of graduate study before the completion of a graduate program may, with the approval of the major department, be issued a Certificate of Graduate Study.

WITHDRAWAL—INVOLUNTARY

A grade of "F" in a major course normally occasions withdrawal from a degree program. Students are also administratively withdrawn from the Graduate School for failure to pay their debts to the university. Such withdrawal normally occurs in the early part of a semester. The Director of Graduate Studies will be informed of students from the department who have not cleared their Bursar's account and be given a date by which they will be withdrawn if their bills remain uncleared. When a student is withdrawn from school for failure to pay debts to the university, the student will not be allowed to attend classes, to receive stipend payments, or to function as a student in any fashion. Any student so withdrawn may not be registered in the Graduate School again until (1) all debts to the university have been cleared, and (2) reinstatement has been requested by the department and approved by the Dean. A reinstatement fee will also be charged.

Students may also be administratively withdrawn for failure to comply with the State of North Carolina immunization laws. Students may obtain immunization forms from the Student Health Clinic.

Finally, all students who have placed into English language proficiency courses and who fail to make satisfactory progress in their English proficiency requirements during their initial year of residence may not be allowed to register for a second year. In that case, they may be administratively withdrawn no later than the first day of classes in what would be their third semester at Duke (normally, the end of August for students matriculating in the preceding fall semester).

TUITION AND FEE REFUNDS AFTER WITHDRAWAL

After withdrawal from the Graduate School, refunds are made according to the schedule printed in the [Bulletin](#). Tuition or other charges paid from grants or loans will be restored to those funds, not refunded to the student or carried forward.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A leave of absence differs from voluntary withdrawal in that the student granted a leave is ensured a place in the graduate program if the student returns to Duke within the time limit specified. Leaves of absence may be granted because of:

- a. medical necessity;
- b. full-time employment at Duke University;

- c. acceptance of an external award judged likely to benefit the student as an individual but not related to degree requirements; or
- d. other reasons approved by the Associate Dean.

Students who request a leave of absence must obtain the endorsement of the Director of Graduate Studies, as well as that of their major professor. All requests for a leave of absence must be submitted to the Associate Dean for consideration before the first day of classes in a semester. No fees are charged to students who are on a leave of absence, but time limitations on degree requirements and time schedules for the completion of incomplete coursework are not waived during a leave. Only students who have completed at least one semester at Duke are eligible to request leaves of absence.

A leave of absence may be granted for a period of time no longer than one calendar year. Before the end of the period of time granted for a leave of absence, the student must notify the Associate Dean and the Director of Graduate Studies of the student's intention to resume graduate study.

Non-U.S. citizens with a student visa typically cannot take a leave of absence, since doing so jeopardizes their student visa status. Although the International Office cannot advise students about the academic validity of a leave request, non-U.S. students with student visas would be well advised to check with a representative of the International Office before submitting a leave of absence request to the Graduate School.

REINSTATEMENT

Students who fail to register continuously in the Graduate School, who do not return to school after an approved leave of absence, who have been withdrawn for failure to pay tuition and fees, or who have been withdrawn for failure to comply with the State of North Carolina immunization law or the Graduate School English proficiency requirement must seek reinstatement before they can be enrolled again. To be reinstated, the student must send a letter to the Director of Graduate Studies for endorsement before it is forwarded to the Dean for approval. The student must, as a condition of readmission, pay a reinstatement fee as well as "continuation" fees for all semesters not covered by a leave of absence before any subsequent registration can be accepted.

PARENTAL LEAVE (BEYOND THE GRADUATE SCHOOL'S 9-WEEK MINIMUM PARENTAL ACCOMMODATION)

This policy for Sanford School of Public Policy graduate students supplements the Graduate School's 9-week minimum [parental accommodation policy](#), available on the Graduate School website.

For the purpose of this parental leave policy, each year is considered to consist of three 14-week periods:

- Fall TA/RA
- Spring TA/RA
- Summer Assigned Work/RA

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Breaks between these 14-week periods are disregarded for the purpose of this policy because they never have work requirements.

Given that the timing of the need for parental accommodation often is unpredictable, the Sanford School distinguishes cases where leave aligns or does not align with those 14-week periods (subsequently referred to as “semesters”) as follows:

- If a PhD student is scheduled to TA or RA in Semester N and their need for leave begins at the start of the semester or during the break preceding the semester, then the student will receive leave for the whole 14-week Semester N (no work requirement until the following semester starts).
- If a PhD student is serving as a TA or RA during Semester N and their need for leave begins during the semester, the student will receive credit for non-trivial work done during Semester N (X weeks). Given no work requirements during the break periods, in the following semester (Semester N + 1) the student will receive X weeks of leave and will be required to work 14 – X weeks. The 14 – X weeks of work in Semester N + 1 may be accomplished through RA work or through work assigned by the program, similar to summer assigned work.

APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES

Required courses: A student may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for permission to substitute coursework taken elsewhere for courses required by the department.

Preliminary examination/dissertation proposal defense: This examination is subject to Graduate School rules, specified in the [Bulletin](#), regarding both the requirement that it be taken within three years of matriculation and the procedure for a petition for a second attempt in case of failure on the first. Students wishing to petition for an extension of the Graduate School-imposed deadline must submit a written statement to the Director of Graduate Studies, who will then decide whether to forward the petition to the Dean of the Graduate School for formal approval. This statement must explain the reason for the delay and propose a specific date for the examination, and provide space for the signature of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Other matters: Appeals and grievances on other matters can be made by written appeal to the full faculty, either through the Director of Graduate Studies or through the Steering Committee for the Public Policy PhD program. For further grievance procedures, see the [Bulletin of the Duke University Graduate School](#).

TRAVEL REGISTRY AND RESTRICTED REGIONS

During the course of study, PhD students may travel abroad for program-related or personal reasons. Conferences, workshops, and jobs offer students extended opportunities for study, research, and professional development outside of the U.S.

The Duke University International Travel Policy requires that all graduate/professional students enter their travel plans in the Duke Travel Registry if a trip abroad will be funded by, sponsored by,

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or entails earning credit to be transferred to Duke or used to earn a Duke degree. This university-wide policy applies to graduate/professional students in all programs at any of Duke's schools, institutes, departments, programs, and labs and went into effect March 1, 2017.

In addition to registering, graduate/professional students planning to visit a destination on Duke's Restricted Region List must also sign and remit a High Risk Travel Waiver-Release form to the Travel Policy Administrator prior to departure. The Waiver-Release form will be tailored for the individual, noting the student's travel dates and destination, and it will include the most up-to-date travel warning or alert. To begin the Waiver-Release process, go to Duke University's [Travel Registry page](#) and follow instructions there.

Registration information is considered confidential and will only be used in the event of an emergency.

Even if a student's international travel destination is not included in the RRL, it is strongly recommended that the student register the trip. In the case of an emergency, the information provided in the trip registration form can help Duke administrators locate you and coordinate support and evacuation services, if needed.

The [Restricted Regions List \(RRL\)](#) is a list of destinations deemed unsafe for travel by Duke University. Restriction decisions are made by the Provost based on recommendations from the Global Travel Advisory Committee (GTAC). GTAC assesses safety and security by reviewing information from the U.S. State Department, International SOS, other governments' foreign affairs departments, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. GTAC also consults with Duke faculty and staff who are identified as having research or travel experience in the destination being reviewed. The RRL is updated whenever specific conditions warrant, and it is reviewed twice a year in its entirety. Further, any member of the Duke community can ask for a GTAC review of a destination or a review of a planned activity. To sign up for RRL and travel-policy-related announcements, email your request to globaltravel@duke.edu.

DUKE STUDENT RESOURCES

CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Duke University offers a wide range of services and programs to support graduate students' health, wellness, identity, and community engagement. In addition to resources within the Sanford School, PhD students have access to university-wide centers that promote physical and mental well-being, inclusion, and community engagement (e.g., Student Health, CAPS, Student Disability Access Office, Women's Center, DukeReach, International House, Center for Multicultural Affairs, Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, Center for Sexual & Gender Diversity). For a full list of campus resources and graduate-specific support, see [Duke Student Affairs](#) and the [Graduate School – Student Life](#).

BUILDING FACILITIES INFORMATION

PhD students have access to Sanford School facilities 24/7, with certain areas following normal business hours. For building maintenance, housekeeping, or copy machine issues, submit a request via the [Sanford Maintenance Request form](#) or contact the help desk at ppshelp@duke.edu or 919-

613-7400. Student cubicles/offices are assigned annually in Rubenstein Hall, and rooms for meetings or events can be reserved through the [25Live](#) system using your NetID. Parking and guest parking information is available through [Duke Transportation Services](#). Other campus amenities include the Saladelia Café in the Sanford building and student mailboxes in Rubenstein Hall. For AV equipment requests, contact the help desk at ppshelp@duke.edu.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Sanford School of Public Policy follows the broader Duke University Emergency Operations Plan and maintains its own emergency management team to respond to accidents, severe weather, security incidents, and other campus-wide emergencies. In any crisis, community members should first contact the **Duke University Police Department** by dialing **9-1-1 for emergencies** or **(919) 684-2444 for non-emergency assistance**, use the [LiveSafe app](#), or contact the Sanford School emergency notification email at PPS-emergency-mgmt@duke.edu. Stay aware of your surroundings, know evacuation routes and storm shelter locations, and download the LiveSafe app for real-time alerts. For full details, visit the [Duke Emergency Management website](#) and the [Sanford School Emergency Plan](#) (Duke login required).

SANFORD COMMUNICATIONS

The Sanford School Communications Team supports branding, media relations, event promotion, website content, and social media for the school. For general inquiries, email ppscomm@duke.edu. Faculty, staff, and students can find resources such as logo guidelines and templates on the [Duke Brand Guide](#), request event listings or room reservations through [25Live](#), and stay informed through the weekly SNAPshot newsletter and Sanford's social media channels ([Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#)). For assistance with media inquiries, design approvals, or communications support, contact sanford.events@duke.edu.

IT AND COMPUTATIONAL SERVICES

The Sanford School provides network storage, computing resources, and classroom technology support for students, faculty, and staff. Duke also offers extensive IT services and software resources through the [Duke Office of Information Technology \(OIT\)](#).

Network & Access

Connect to the secure **Dukeblue** wireless network using your NetID and password. For off-campus access or remote lab use, see instructions on the [Sanford IT FAQs](#) page (Duke login required).

Support & Assistance

For classroom technology, AV, or computer issues, contact the Sanford IT help desk at ppshelp@duke.edu or **919-613-7400 (option 2)**. For general Duke email, network, or software issues, contact the **OIT help desk** at help@oit.duke.edu or **919-684-2200**.

Printing & Software

Use Duke's ePrint system for printing in Sanford and Rubenstein Hall. Free and discounted software—including Adobe products, Stata, Microsoft Office, and research tools—is available through [Duke Software Licensing](#).

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Security

Duke provides [multi-factor authentication](#), [Box cloud storage](#), and [1Password](#) password management for secure access and data protection. For additional information, visit the [Sanford IT Support site](#) (Duke login required).

Research Management Tools

Duke University Libraries provide access to tools that help organize research notes, manage citations, and format bibliographies. These include:

- **EndNote**—A powerful desktop reference manager that integrates with Microsoft Word to insert and format citations automatically in thousands of styles (APA, MLA, Chicago, and more). Learn more and download it from the [Duke Libraries EndNote guide](#). For Public Policy and Political Science support, contact Duke librarian Ryan Denniston at ryan.denniston@duke.edu.
- **RefWorks**—A web-based alternative to EndNote that offers many of the same citation and collaboration features, accessible from any browser. Create your account at the [Duke Libraries RefWorks guide](#).

You can explore and compare additional tools on the [Citing Sources & Citation Tools](#) page and find more research support at the [Duke University Libraries Research Support site](#).

Computational Resources

Duke's [Compute and Data Services Alliance for Research \(CDSA\)](#) is an institutional investment in improving and increasing research computational and data services to support innovative research. This multi-year, faculty-driven program has dedicated personnel and budget to improve computational and data services across [identified priorities](#) that allow scholars to focus on their research.

Among other resources, the CDSA provides students with access to the [Duke Compute Cluster \(DDC\)](#). The DCC is a general-purpose high performance/high-throughput installation, and it is fitted with software used for a broad array of research projects. Duke PhD students now receive an annual **no-cost** allocation of computing and data storage resources on the DCC. These available resources are designed to allow researchers to process data sets too large for an average computer. PhD students can [request their free allocation](#) on the DCC website.

FORMS

Students can find the most up-to-date academic and administrative forms through the following sites:

- **Graduate School Forms:** [Graduate School Policies and Forms](#)
- **Sanford School Forms:** [Sanford School Registrar](#)

Common forms include those for independent study, interinstitutional registration, auditing courses, committee approvals, and leaves of absence.

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Submission instructions: Most forms are fillable PDFs. Download and complete the form using Adobe Acrobat Reader, obtain all required signatures (e.g., instructor, DGS), and submit the signed form to the appropriate office as directed.

Below are links to some frequently used forms. (Note: Some of these are not on the Sanford web page as they are administered by the Graduate School.)

- [Graduate Student Independent Study Permission Form](#)
- [Interinstitutional Registration Form and Instructions](#)
- [Graduate Student Permission to Enroll in a Course Below the 500 Level](#)
- [Permission to Audit a Graduate Course](#)
- [Committee Approval Form](#)
- [PhD Preliminary Examination Report](#)
- [Request for Leave of Absence](#)
- [Course Withdrawal Form](#)