

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

GEOGRAPHY M.A./Ph.D.

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Please note: This Handbook does not apply to graduate students in MDP or MS-GIST programs.

See MDP handbook:

<https://geography.arizona.edu/sites/geography.arizona.edu/files/MDP%20Student%20handbook%202019-2020.pdf>

GIST handbook: https://gis.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/featured-images/MS-GIST_Handbook_6_0.pdf

Contents

Contents	2
1. Graduate Curricula in Geography	3
1.1 Courses Offered for Graduate Students	4
1.1.1 Core Courses	4
1.1.2 Graduate Credit Courses	4
1.1.3 Professional Development	5
1.1.4 Jointly Convened Graduate/Undergraduate Courses	5
1.1.5 Independent Studies	5
1.2 Course Load	6
1.3 Advising and Mentoring	6
1.4 Satisfactory Academic Progress	7
1.5 Leaves of Absence	7
2. Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree in Geography	8
2.1 Plan of Study	9
2.2 M.A. Committee	9
2.3 The Thesis Option	9
2.4 The Professional (non-thesis) Option	10
2.5 Optional Certificates	10
2.6 Moving from M.A. to Ph.D.	10
3. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree in Geography	11
3.1 Coursework	11
3.2 Specializations	13
3.3 Foreign Language	13
3.4 Research Methods	14
3.5 The Minor Program	14
3.6 Core Course Performance	14
3.7 Plan of Study	14
3.8 The Ph.D. Advisory (Comprehensive Exam) Committee	15
3.9 The Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam	15
3.10 The Dissertation Committee	15
3.11 The Dissertation Proposal	15
3.12 Advancement to Ph.D. Candidacy	16
3.13 The Oral Dissertation Defense	16
4. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Minor in Geography	16
5. Committee Membership	17
5.1 M.A. Committees	17
5.2 Ph.D. Committees	17
6. Thesis and Dissertation Formats	18
7. School Admissions Requirements	19
8. Teaching and Research Assistantships	20
8.1 Funding Eligibility	22
8.2 Legal residency in Arizona	22
9. Funding for Travel and Conferences	23
10. School Activities	23
11. Graduate Degree Timeline	24

1. Graduate Curricula in Geography

The School of Geography, Development, and Environment of the University of Arizona offers graduate programs leading to the Master of Arts (M.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees in geography. The School's graduate curricula are designed to encourage student participation in research seminars and in formal geography coursework, as well as different forms of independent study. The School offers opportunities for specialization in many areas of geography that reflect the teaching and research interests of the faculty.

The School offers a two-year, professional M.D.P. degree, Master's in Development Practice (<https://geography.arizona.edu/mdp>). This program has its own courses, as well as access to courses in the M.A./Ph.D. program; M.A./Ph.D. students can also take MDP courses. The School also offers a one-year, professional M.S. degree in Geographic Information Systems Technology (GIST), both in-person and on-line (<https://gis.arizona.edu/>).

UA Graduate College: The Graduate College website has extensive and up-to-date information about all aspects of graduate student life and work: <http://grad.arizona.edu>. The website contains the formal statements of university minimum requirements for all degrees. SGDE has additional requirements in some areas, as described in this Handbook. Students are expected to be familiar with these Graduate College requirements, particularly those relevant to coursework, scholarship, exams, residency, and deadlines for filing required documents.

Here are several commonly used webpages within the Graduate College website:

Graduate Student Academic Services, <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas>

New and Current Students, <http://grad.arizona.edu/new-and-current-students>

Important Degree Dates and Deadlines, <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/degree-requirements/important-degree-dates-and-deadlines>

Master's Degrees Requirements, <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/degree-requirements/masters-degrees>

Ph.D. Degree Requirements, <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/degree-requirements/doctor-philosophy>

Dissertation & Thesis Archiving <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/dissertations-theses>

Graduate Assistant & Associate (GA) Manual, <https://grad.arizona.edu/funding/ga>

GA Workload Policy, <https://grad.arizona.edu/funding/ga/graduate-assistant-and-associate-workload-policy>

The UAccess Student website, <http://uaccess.arizona.edu/>, provides a complete list and brief description of geography courses that carry graduate credit (courses numbered 500 and above).

In addition to this Handbook, students may consult a shorter summary of key points in the School's [orientation memo](#) for new M.A./Ph.D. students.

1.1 Courses Offered for Graduate Students

The School offers four types of courses for graduate students: (1) core courses; (2) other graduate credit courses; (3) jointly convened graduate/undergraduate courses; and (4) independent studies. Unless otherwise noted, all courses are worth three (3) units per semester. (Units = credits; both terms are used interchangeably.)

1.1.1 Core Courses

The core courses are fundamental to graduate education and are required for the completion of a degree in Geography. Core course requirements are as follows:

1. GEOG 689: History of Geographic Thought
2. GEOG 500: Research Design
3. An advanced methods requirement of three units for the M.A. and six units for the Ph.D. in the student's areas of study.

GEOG 689 and GEOG 500 should be completed during the first year in residence. For some new Ph.D. students, however, they may choose to wait one year before taking GEOG 500. GEOG 689 is offered each Fall semester and GEOG 500 is offered each Spring semester.

GEOG 689 is a reading and discussion seminar concerned with major changes in the structure of geographic thought, with an emphasis on developments in the 20th and 21st centuries. In addition to surveying major trends in paradigmatic approaches, the course also provides students with the conceptual tools to evaluate these trends relative to cross-cutting issues of epistemology, ontology, and methodology.

GEOG 500 is a course aimed at developing student research agendas and programs through rigorous proposal writing. The course takes the form of a collaborative workshop to familiarize students with identifying research problems, framing questions, reviewing literature, selecting methodologies, and presenting research in light of its intellectual contributions and broader impacts. The course seeks to encourage students to interact with their advisors, plan a course of research, and focus their reading and thinking, whether in human geography, physical geography, spatial techniques, or any other specialty. The result of the course is a draft proposal.

Selection of methods classes should be tailored to the needs and interests of each student, as agreed with advisors and committee members. Methods can be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed, including GIS and remote sensing, and students can learn them through regular graduate or co-convened courses, either within or outside the School as appropriate. Meeting the methods requirement through independent study is unusual but may be approved if appropriate. Ph.D. students may include methods courses taken during their M.A. studies.

1.1.2 Graduate Credit Courses

Enrollment in courses and seminars numbered 500 and up is normally exclusive to graduate students. With approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, credit may be applied to graduate degree requirements without restriction.

GEOG 696 classes are seminars in different subfields of geography whose topics may vary from year to year. Seminars in the GEOG 696 series are given letters that correspond to different subfields (e.g. 696C – Physical Geography, 696N – Geography and Social Theory, etc.). Seminars with the same course number may be repeated for credit given that the course topic changes between semesters. A number of seminars are typically offered each semester, with specific topics and descriptions for that semester. The semester's offerings are typically announced prior to the registration period.

1.1.3 Professional Development

The School offers several one-credit courses in different aspects of professional development. Graduate students are encouraged to take any or all of these courses and can apply the credits towards the requirements for graduation (with the exception of GEOG 695A, Colloquium, which is required but whose credits do not apply towards graduation).

GEOG 695A: Colloquium: Current Topics in Geography [1 unit]

GEOG 695B: Professional Development [1 unit]

GEOG 695C: Preparing Future Faculty: College Teaching [1 unit]

GEOG 695D: Preparing Future Faculty: Writing for Publication [1 unit]

1.1.4 Jointly Convened Graduate/Undergraduate Courses

Some graduate courses are held in conjunction with upper level undergraduate courses, although graduate students must complete additional work. Such classes are typically based on lectures rather than discussion. The School allows a maximum of six (6) units of these jointly convened (also called co-convened) courses to count towards graduate degree requirements (see sections 2 and 3).

1.1.5 Independent Studies

Graduate students can register for different kinds of independent study and thesis or dissertation research, as listed below. There may be little substantive difference between GEOG 599 and 699, and both of them count towards students' required credits. These course numbers are typically used for directed or independent readings, preparation for comprehensive exams, etc.; the specific content of the work is discussed and agreed with the student's advisor(s). These courses are graded Pass/Fail (see <https://www.registrar.arizona.edu/grades/passfail-option>). Please note that all independent study (GEOG 599 or 699) requires a proposal form signed and on file with the School, so that the Program Coordinator can enroll the students (see [INDEPENDENT STUDIES PROPOSAL FORM](#)).

For an M.A., up to nine (9) credits of independent study are permitted. Of these nine (9) credits, six (6) of these credits should be GEOG 910 (Thesis). For a Ph.D., the Graduate College requires that at least 22 of the 36 credits of coursework in the major be for regular grades (not Pass/Fail). The Ph.D. also requires 18 credits of GEOG 920 (Dissertation), for which the Program Coordinator can enroll students (see sections 2 for M.A. and 3.1 for PhD for degree requirements).

In the following list, the number in brackets refers to the number of credits permitted each semester, not the number of credits required for graduation.

GEOG 593 Internship [up to 5 units]
GEOG 599 Independent Study [up to 6 units]
GEOG 699 Independent Study [up to 6 units]
GEOG 910 Thesis [up to 6 units]
GEOG 920 Dissertation [up to 9 units]

1.2 Course Load

Graduate research and teaching assistants employed by the School are required to register for at least six (6) units of coursework (not including audited classes), and are normally expected to register for nine (9) units (three courses) each semester, in addition to the Colloquium (GEOG 695A). Four courses (12 units) per semester constitute a normal load for full-time students who are not employed. The maximum allowed is 16 units per semester.

Adjustments in student load and sequence of courses may be made to accommodate the schedules of part-time students, as long as consistent progress towards degree objectives is apparent. Advanced Ph.D. students who have met all credit requirements and who are not employed as a GA may register for a minimum of one (1) credit. Students can also apply for a Leave of Absence for different reasons (see section 1.5). The School has a limited pool of funds to pay tuition for graduate students who are registered for credits while not employed as a GA (see section 8).

All graduate students in residence are expected to attend the weekly Colloquium whenever possible, whether or not they are formally registered for GEOG 695A (one credit, which is not graded and does not count towards degree requirements). Students should register for the Colloquium each semester if their credit load permits.

1.3 Advising and Mentoring

Successful graduate study relies on effective relationships between the student and the advising faculty member(s). New students must be available for orientation several days before the beginning of classes. Upon arrival in the School, each new graduate student is assigned a faculty mentor, based on their stated research interests. This assignment is made initially during the admissions process in spring. In many cases it is evident which faculty member is most appropriate or qualified to mentor a specific student, due to shared interests, and in other cases there may be several possibilities.

All students eventually have a major advisor (i.e. committee chair) and several committee members. New students meet with the Director of Graduate Studies and with their initial mentor at the start of their first semester to discuss educational objectives and plan a tentative plan of study. By the end of the first year, students should notify the department of their choice of major advisor, which may or may not correspond to the faculty mentor assigned by the department during orientation (the DGS and Program Coordinator will remind first-year students of this requirement during the Spring semester).

The formal advising relationship is agreed to by mutual consent through discussion between the student and the faculty member concerned. A student may change mentors and advisors, but the change must again be by mutual consent, and should be done in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain informal mentoring relationships with different faculty members, including but not limited to those faculty who are formal members of the student's M.A. thesis, Ph.D. comprehensive exam, or dissertation committees.

New students are also strongly encouraged to introduce themselves on arrival to the School Director, staff, and members of the faculty. Continuing graduate students should consult with their mentors and advisors as often as necessary during each semester, and with the Director of Graduate Studies at least once each year or whenever necessary. Students are responsible for planning ahead enough to ensure appropriate course registration, and to meet any filing deadlines specified by the Graduate College.

1.4 Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory academic progress towards completion of a degree will be assessed each Spring semester by the School's Graduate Committee, as part of the annual review of current graduate students. The School follows the Graduate College in defining satisfactory academic progress as maintaining at least a B average and having a major professor/advisor. Every graduate student must file an annual progress report as part of this process, which is due in February and covers the preceding calendar year, and mentors/advisors are asked to evaluate their students' progress towards degree requirements. See the details set forth in this Graduate Handbook for specific requirements and expectations.

If a student fails to make satisfactory progress, the student will be notified in writing with a statement of necessary corrective action – specified by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the student's mentor/advisor – and a deadline for completion of such action. If a student believes an assessment of unsatisfactory progress to be in error, the student may appeal in writing to the Graduate Committee within the next three months. A student who fails to complete the required work satisfactorily by the deadline may be deemed ineligible for GA funding. Students can re-apply for eligibility for funding once the required corrective action has been satisfactorily completed. The request to restore eligibility for GA funding must be supported by the Graduate Committee and the Director. There is no guarantee of restored eligibility.

1.5 Leaves of Absence

Graduate students may apply for leaves of absence for academic, medical, or personal reasons, for one semester to one year, as determined by the Graduate College. Students on leave do not register for classes or other units. Graduate students (especially Ph.D. students) frequently take a leave of absence while doing fieldwork. Students on leave must be aware that they must pay to maintain UA health insurance or make other arrangements for coverage. Please check the Graduate College website ([Leave of Absence](#)). Students apply for leaves through [GradPath](#) (in the "forms" section).

2. Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree in Geography

At the M.A. level, the School offers two types of degrees, the thesis option and the professional (or non-thesis) option. In both cases, students must take a minimum of 33 units of graduate credit (roughly 11 courses), including:

Core: nine units (three courses) (see section 1.1.1).

Geography Courses: 12 units (four courses) of graduate credit courses (section 1.1.2); up to six of these units may be jointly convened graduate/ undergraduate credit courses (section 1.1.4) and/or independent studies other than thesis or dissertation units (section 1.1.5).

Electives (Geography and other): 12 units (four courses) of graduate credit courses in SGDE and other departments, including independent studies, thesis, and dissertation credits (section 1.1.5).

The 33 units offered for the degree may not include more than nine units of thesis, internship, and/or independent studies (see section 1.1.5). In addition to the 33-unit minimum, students are also required to register for one unit of GEOG 695A (Colloquium) during each semester in residence, although these units do not count towards degree requirements.

The Director of Graduate Studies may approve exceptions to the above requirements.

Most students take two years as full-time students to complete the M.A., assuming that they are working as graduate assistants and taking nine units of credit per semester. This timing applies to both thesis and non-thesis options. Graduate credit, to be applicable towards the M.A. degree, must have been earned no more than six years prior to the completion of the requirements for the M.A. degree.

The following plan outlines the normal progression in course-work towards the M.A. degree:

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Courses</i>
1	3 3 3	GEOG 689 Geography Graduate-only Course Geography Graduate-only or Jointly convened Course
2	3 3 3	GEOG 500 Geography Graduate-only Course Geography Graduate-only or Jointly convened Course
3	6 3	Geography/Elective Courses Thesis Units
4	6	Geography/Elective and Thesis Units
Total:	33*	* (not including GEOG 695A (Colloquium) each semester)
Notes		Most M.A. students will carry out intensive and/or field research during the summer between semesters 2 and 3.

See also the timeline of administrative steps in section 11.

2.1 Plan of Study

The Graduate College suggests that a Plan of Study be filed by the end of the second semester. The process is done on-line on [GradPath](#). The Plan of Study should identify any courses the student intends to transfer from other institutions, courses already completed at the University of Arizona which the student intends to apply towards the M.A. degree, and additional courses the student plans to complete to fulfill degree requirements. Students can request transfer credits for coursework done elsewhere by submitting a form on GradPath. The Plan of Study must be approved by the student's advisor (committee chair) and the Director of Graduate Studies before it is submitted to the Graduate College. All approvals are done within GradPath. The Plan of Study can be modified later if necessary.

2.2 M.A. Committee

By the time the student has completed the core courses, and following consultation with his/her/their advisor(s), mentor(s), the Director of Graduate Studies, and other appropriate faculty, an M.A. committee will be recommended to the DGS to approve on GradPath. The student should work with his/her/their committee towards preparation of the thesis proposal and thesis, or towards preparation for the professional master's degree exam. See section 5 for further details.

2.3 The Thesis Option

The thesis option is strongly recommended (indeed virtually required) for students who intend to pursue the Ph.D. Doing a thesis is also valuable experience in any field that values good research, analysis, and writing, whether academic or professional. Students choosing the thesis option should present a thesis proposal to their committee for approval, with revisions if necessary; this should occur by the end of the second semester, especially for those planning summer fieldwork. Following approval of the thesis proposal, students are allowed to take up to six (6) thesis units (GEOG 910). Students are allowed to apply up to three (3) of independent study or other electives towards this requirement for graduation. Students who do not have a proposal approved by the end of the third semester may be required to take coursework to pursue the professional (non-thesis) option (see section 6 for more details on thesis formats).

When the thesis is completed in final draft form, the student will present it to his/her/their committee as part of a comprehensive final oral examination: i.e., the thesis defense. The committee members must each be given a copy of the thesis (either electronic or paper) with sufficient time for review prior to the exam. For an M.A. thesis, it is common but not required for the student to offer a public presentation of the research (of no more than one hour, including questions), which is followed by the private meeting with the committee. The committee decides to approve or deny passage of the exam (i.e. defense of the thesis). Thesis credits are awarded after any changes suggested by the committee are made and committee members have signed the final copy of the thesis. The same rules apply whatever the thesis format, i.e. traditional monograph or journal article (see section 6).

A complete electronic version of the thesis (PDF), as well as complete, signed, and bound copies, must be filed with the School and the student's thesis advisor.

The School expects students to complete the thesis option within two years. The M.A. thesis defense should be successfully completed by the deadline established by the Graduate College in the 4th semester (see [Important Degree Dates and Deadlines](#)).

2.4 The Professional (non-thesis) Option

The professional, non-thesis option is recommended for students who intend to pursue a non-academic career in public or private sectors. Instead of thesis units, professional-option students typically take courses in a specialty area of interest. Students choosing this option take a comprehensive examination near the end of their course of study. The exam is administered by the student's committee and includes two parts: a four-hour written portion followed by an oral exam. The precise format of the written exam is determined by the committee, but it is a comprehensive examination of the student's degree program, and not only an examination of the identified individual field of specialization or concentration. These examinations must be scheduled in the student's final semester.

The School expects students to complete the professional degree within two years. The M.A. final exam should be successfully completed by the deadline established by the Graduate College in the 4th semester (see [Important Degree Dates and Deadlines](#)).

2.5 Optional Certificates

Within the constraints of these requirements, students are encouraged to develop a master's degree program tailored to their individual needs. Students are advised to consult with the relevant faculty members and the Director of Graduate Studies about informal tracks of study in different sub-fields of geography, including critical human geography, human-environment relations, physical geography, regional development, methodology and technology, water resources and policy, and others.

The School is also involved in several of UA's graduate certificates in specialized areas. Current certificates include GIS, Professional GIST, and water policy. These are distinct graduate offerings that may include considerable overlap with degree programs, and may be a useful additional qualification for some students. See a list of certificate programs [here](#).

2.6 Moving from M.A. to Ph.D.

M.A. students who are finishing their degrees in Geography and who want to continue in the same program for their Ph.D. must apply by 31 January, during the period when the Program is considering new graduate student applications for the following Fall. The application consists of a statement of purpose for the Ph.D., and letters of recommendation from the student's advisor and all other M.A. committee members. These letters should discuss the student's potential for the Ph.D., any relevant issues about changing research directions or advisors, and the faculty member's willingness and ability to continue serving as advisor or committee member. If appropriate, more than one committee member can sign the same letter, although the Graduate

Committee values separate assessments. There is no guarantee of admission to the Ph.D. program.

Current M.A. students must also apply online to the Graduate College and pay an application fee (which the School cannot pay). Finally, these students should indicate their plan to apply for the Ph.D. in their annual progress report due on 1 February (section 1.4).

In general, the School encourages our M.A. students to continue here if their goal is a Ph.D., and new students are often recruited and/or admitted to the M.A. program with that understanding. The procedure described here fosters orderly information-gathering and allows systematic review of Ph.D. applicants.

M.A. students progressing to the Ph.D. in Geography must have completed and passed the M.A. thesis before the start of their first semester in the Ph.D. program. Failure to do so will result in the student becoming ineligible for Ph.D. funding (see section 6).

3. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree in Geography

The doctorate is a specialized, research-oriented degree for both academic and professional careers. Individualized programs of study are developed under the direction of a student's advisor and other appropriate members of the faculty whose topical and regional research interests coincide with those of the student, and in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. The advisor and committee members oversee the student's progress through coursework, the comprehensive exams (both written and oral), and the dissertation proposal, as described below.

The Graduate College imposes general requirements to be met by all doctoral students at the University of Arizona. These requirements include rules about residency and coursework minima in the major and minor fields; filing the plan of study; comprehensive exams in both major and minor fields; preparation of the dissertation; and the final exam. Students are responsible for learning these requirements and consulting the Graduate College website (section 1).

3.1 Coursework

Doctoral students in Geography must already have a master's degree, whether from our own program or from a different program or university. Ph.D. students must meet all requirements for the master's degree in geography (i.e., 33 credits, including a maximum of nine units of thesis, internship, and/or independent studies). In addition, they must take a minimum of 18 units of coursework in geography and related programs at UA (not including the dissertation or the minor), and at least 12 of these units must be in courses or seminars exclusive to graduate students (see section 1.1.2). Additional coursework may be necessary to ensure proficiency in specific areas. Graduate credits earned for a master's degree count towards the Graduate College requirement of 36 graduate credits in the Ph.D. major field. In addition, all graduate students in residence are expected to attend the weekly Colloquium whenever possible, whether or not they are formally registered for GEOG 695A (one credit, which is not graded and does not count

towards degree requirements). Students should register for the Colloquium each semester if their credit load permits.

Dissertation credits: All Ph.D. students must register for a total of 18 dissertation credits (GEOG 920). Students may register for GEOG 920 while preparing for the Ph.D. comprehensive exam (see section 3.9), and/or register for the remaining dissertation credits after advancing to candidacy. Students can register for up to nine dissertation credits per semester, and must register for at least three such credits/semester until reaching the total of 18 credits. Once students have completed 18 credits and have been advanced to candidacy, they can register for the minimum of one credit/semester if needed. Prompt completion of 18 dissertation credits is encouraged as it can reduce tuition costs to only one credit. (Students may register for more than 18 dissertation credits over time, but only 18 are counted towards the degree.)

The Director of Graduate Studies may approve exceptions to the above requirements.

The Ph.D. degree must be completed within five years of passing the comprehensive examination (see section 3.9). If this deadline is not met, the School may allow the student to retake the comprehensive exam in order to regain eligibility to finish the dissertation.

Students who do not hold the M.A. in Geography from the University of Arizona must complete the core course requirements, GEOG 689 and GEOG 500 (see section 1.1.1), during the first year of study; credit for these courses may be applied towards fulfillment of the 18-unit minimum requirement. Students who have M.A. degrees from other universities can transfer up to 30 units of those credits towards their Ph.D. You should strive to complete all course transfers by the end of the first year of study.

The following plan outlines the normal progression in course-work towards the Ph.D. degree:

Semester	Units	Courses
1	3	GEOG 689
	3	Geography course
	3	Geography course or minor-program course
2	3	GEOG 500
	3	Geography course/method course
	3	Geography course or minor-program course
3	3	Geography/elective course/independent study
	3	Method course

	3	Minor-program course
4	6	Geography/elective course/independent study
	3	Minor-program course
5-6	3	Geography/elective
	3-6	GEOG 920 (Comprehensive exam preparation)
After advancing to candidacy	18	GEOG 920 (comprehensive exam prep credits in GEOG 920 count towards this total)
Total	varies	
Notes on total credit requirements		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grad College requires a minimum of 36 units in Ph.D. major field (18 must be taken at UA); ● Minor programs typically require a 12-15 unit commitment; ● GEOG 500 is recommended during semester 2, but Ph.D. students occasionally take it during semester 4; ● No more than 6 units can come from co-convened courses.

See also the timeline of administrative steps in section 11.

3.2 Specializations

Doctoral students must achieve a high level of competence in at least two fields of specialization. These fields are identified and described by the student in discussions with his/her/their advisor and advisory committee, as part of planning for the Ph.D. comprehensive exam (sections 3.8, 3.9). A student's fields may include, for example, topical, theoretical, methodological, and/or area studies expertise, and should be planned for the student's intended career trajectory, whether academic or not. "What are a student's key words?" is another way to think about fields of specialization. Illustrative examples include Political Ecology, Economic Geography, Climatology, etc.

3.3 Foreign Language

A doctoral student who proposes to undertake research in or on a non-English speaking context is required to demonstrate the necessary language skills before taking the comprehensive exam (section 3.9). A language test will normally be arranged by the student's advisor, and be approved by the student's advisory committee (section 3.8). The School relies on a student's advisors and committee members to enforce this requirement when it is appropriate. The University of Arizona offers training in a wide range of languages, with opportunities also available through Area Studies programs such as Title VI.

3.4 Research Methods

Proficiency in at least one scholarly research method is required for the Ph.D. degree. Normally this proficiency will be acquired and demonstrated through successfully completing specialized methods classes, six (6) credits of which count as part of the Core (section 1.1.1). Ph.D. students may use methods classes from their master's program and take courses outside of the School to fulfill this requirement. The appropriate mix and sequence of courses must be approved by the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

3.5 The Minor Program

UA requires all Ph.D. students to have a Ph.D. minor as well as a major. Doctoral students in Geography are strongly encouraged to minor in another department or program on campus. The minor should be complementary to the student's chosen specializations and is subject to approval by the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. In special circumstances, typically for students with strong previous qualifications in another discipline and insufficient background in geography, a Geography Ph.D. student may minor in geography in order to acquire necessary breadth and depth. This depends on the recommendation of the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

The department or program on campus administering the minor specifies its required content and participates in the student's comprehensive exam. The minor department may choose to waive its portion of the written examination, but must appoint a faculty member to participate in the oral examination. The Ph.D. minor in most disciplines involves a minimum of four courses (12 units) of graduate work. At the discretion of the minor department, appropriate courses taken in the student's master's program may be included. The minor department is not required to be represented on the student's dissertation committee.

See section 4 for more details about the Ph.D. minor in Geography.

3.6 Core Course Performance

For new Ph.D. students to remain in good standing, they must complete the core courses with a grade of B (3.0) or better, and receive positive evaluations of progress and potential from their advisors, their core course instructors, and the Director of Graduate Studies at the end of the first year of doctoral study.

3.7 Plan of Study

The Graduate College suggests that Ph.D. students should file their Plan of Study by their 3rd semester in residence. The Plan of Study should identify any courses the student intends to transfer from other institutions and additional courses the student plans to complete to fulfill degree requirements. Students can request transfer credits for coursework done elsewhere by submitting a form on GradPath. The Plan of Study must be approved by the student's advisor (committee chair) and the Directors of Graduate Studies of both major and minor programs before it is submitted to the Graduate College. All approvals are done within GradPath. The Plan of Study can be modified later if necessary.

3.8 The Ph.D. Advisory (Comprehensive Exam) Committee

Following a student's completion of the core courses (see section 1.1.1), and in consultation with his/her/their advisor, other faculty, and the Director of Graduate Studies, an advisory committee will be proposed to the Director of Graduate Studies via GradPath. The DGS will approve the committee (with modifications, as appropriate, after discussion). This committee will be charged with guiding the student in the selection of appropriate coursework leading to the comprehensive exam and with conducting and evaluating that exam. See section 5 for more details about committee membership.

3.9 The Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam

The Ph.D. comprehensive exam tests the student's breadth and depth of knowledge of geography and particularly his/her/their chosen fields of specialization, including the minor field (see sections 3.2 and 3.5). The comprehensive exam comes after the student has completed all (or almost all) coursework, and before advancing to candidacy. The exam includes written and oral components, the format of which is governed by the School and the Graduate College. SGDE does not require a specific format, which is determined by the student's advisory committee (section 3.8 and section 5). Results from the written part of the exam are reported to the student before the oral exam, which is typically scheduled for two weeks after completing the written part. Students should consult with their advisory committee well in advance and develop a reading list to prepare for the exam, and with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate College about filing deadlines, procedures, and forms required.

3.10 The Dissertation Committee

Once the comprehensive exam has been completed successfully, the student forms a dissertation committee whose members are formally appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies. Although the composition of this committee may be the same as the advisory (comprehensive exam) committee, it often varies somewhat since the focus of the dissertation is different. This committee will be charged with guiding the student through the preparation of the dissertation proposal, the subsequent research and writing, and the final dissertation defense. The rules for composition of the dissertation committee are similar to the advisory (comprehensive exam) committee. See section 5.

3.11 The Dissertation Proposal

The student must submit a dissertation proposal to all members of the dissertation committee, based on previous discussions with each member. The specific format of the proposal is determined by the dissertation chair and committee. Students commonly use grant proposals that they are developing or have submitted. It is strongly recommended that the student meet with the entire committee to discuss the proposal and suggest changes. Students are also encouraged to present the proposal in an informal setting (e.g., brown-bag seminar) to inform the School of their work and get feedback. The dissertation committee must approve the dissertation proposal for the student to advance to candidacy. Students submit a form through GradPath which routes to the

Program Coordinator, who approves the form upon receiving a copy of the proposal for the School's files.

3.12 Advancement to Ph.D. Candidacy

After passing the comprehensive examination and receiving approval for the dissertation proposal, the student advances to doctoral candidacy (also known as ABD, "all but dissertation"). These procedures are done through GradPath.

3.13 The Oral Dissertation Defense

The Oral Dissertation Defense consists of two parts, one open to the public and one confined to the dissertation committee. In the public part, the Ph.D. candidate must present the dissertation to the dissertation committee and to interested members of the School and University, both faculty and students. This presentation must be announced publicly and in advance. The presentation should not exceed an hour and may include a question-and-answer period. The second part of the defense follows immediately after the presentation and entails an oral examination by the dissertation committee. This examination is not open to the public.

The committee members must each be given a copy of the dissertation (electronic or paper) with sufficient time for review prior to the exam. The advisor and committee members should provide feedback on the draft in a timely manner (either before the defense or as soon after the defense as is possible). The committee decides to pass or fail the student, with or without revisions. A grade for dissertation credits is awarded after any changes suggested by the committee are made and committee members have signed the final copy of the dissertation. Complete, signed and bound copies of the dissertation must be filed with the School and the dissertation advisor; electronic copies should be submitted to the School and the Graduate College.

4. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Minor in Geography

The doctoral minor in geography (for Ph.D. students majoring in other disciplines at UA) consists of a minimum of 12 units of graduate coursework in geography, including a maximum of three (3) units of independent study. The program must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and an appropriate SGDE faculty member, who is named to supervise the student's geography minor and to serve on the student's comprehensive exam committee. Students considering the Ph.D. minor in geography should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and with potential SGDE committee members at an early stage about coursework and preparation for the comprehensive examination. The participation of the SGDE committee member must be agreed to by mutual consent through discussion with the student. The School does not require that an SGDE faculty member serve on the student's dissertation committee. See section 5.

As noted above (section 3.5), geography Ph.D. students can also minor in geography under special circumstances. These geography students must meet the requirements of the preceding

paragraph, including an SGDE faculty member to represent the minor on the student's comprehensive exam committee.

5. Committee Membership

There are three kinds of committee members. SGDE considers all faculty members with at least a partial appointment in SGDE to be *regular* faculty. Tenured, tenure-track, continuing-eligible, and career track faculty in other UA departments or programs may be *affiliated* with SGDE. Faculty at other academic institutions or non-academic professionals may serve as *outside* or *special* committee members, if approved by the Graduate College.

5.1 M.A. Committees

The Graduate College requires that M.A. thesis committees must have three members, of whom at least two must be tenure-track UA faculty. SGDE imposes the additional requirement that at least two committee members must be regular SGDE faculty, and a third member may be affiliated faculty in another UA department or program. The same rule applies to M.A. exam committees for students who have chosen the non-thesis option (section 2.4). In special circumstances, the School may approve a third committee member from outside UA, if approved by the Graduate College.

Affiliated faculty members may chair a committee as long as two regular SGDE faculty members serve on the same committee. Outside committee members may co-chair a committee with a regular SGDE faculty member.

5.2 Ph.D. Committees

The Graduate College requires that Ph.D. *comprehensive examination committees* (also known as *advisory committees*) must have at least four members, of whom at least three must be tenured or tenure-track. SGDE imposes the additional requirement that at least three committee members must be regular SGDE faculty, including the student's major advisor. Affiliated UA faculty may serve as a fourth or fifth member of this committee, and may chair or co-chair a committee as long as two regular SGDE faculty members serve on the same committee. One committee member must represent the student's Ph.D. minor program, as approved by that program.

Ph.D. students from other UA programs who are doing the Ph.D. minor in Geography must select at least one regular SGDE faculty member to serve on their comprehensive exam committee, as approved by the Director of Graduate Studies (section 4).

The Graduate College requires that *dissertation committees* must have at least three members, all of whom are tenured or tenure-track UA faculty (or approved as equivalent). SGDE requires that at least one of these committee members must be regular SGDE faculty, and a second member must be either regular SGDE or affiliated UA faculty. Affiliated faculty may co-chair a committee with a regular SGDE faculty member. In special circumstances, the Director of Graduate Studies and committee chair may approve a fourth or fifth committee member from

outside UA as a “special member,” if approved by the Graduate College. Students should send a current CV of the special member to the Program Coordinator.

Students and faculty members are advised to read these School and Graduate College guidelines carefully to avoid misunderstanding. The Director of Graduate Studies decides the final approval and appointment of graduate examination committees in GradPath.

6. Thesis and Dissertation Formats

Students have the choice of preparing the master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation either in the traditional format (i.e., a series of chapters in book or monograph style) or in journal paper format as a related set of published and/or publishable articles. The appropriate format should be chosen after consultation with and approval by the student’s thesis or dissertation committee. Students must follow Graduate College guidelines for preparing and assembling the thesis/dissertation in monograph or journal paper format, as well as following the School policies below.

1. All SGDE policies shall conform to Graduate College requirements.
2. This policy addresses only the format of the thesis/dissertation, and what materials are included in different formats. Expectations about the content and amount of work required to carry out the project are the same for both the traditional and the journal article formats, and are decided by the student’s thesis/dissertation committee.
3. Following Graduate College guidelines, there is no specific requirement about the number of articles required for the thesis/dissertation, and the student’s committee should determine the appropriate number. SGDE follows the general guideline of at least one paper for the thesis and at least three papers for the dissertation.
4. For the paper format, acceptable articles are *published* papers in refereed journals and *publishable* papers (i.e., that will be submitted for publication in refereed journals, subject to approval by the student’s thesis/dissertation committee). The thesis/dissertation may mix published and publishable papers. For publishable papers, students must identify the journal for which the manuscripts were prepared and follow the journal’s guidelines for manuscript preparation.
5. The candidate’s major advisor and the thesis/dissertation committee are responsible for ensuring that the student does a significant part of the work in the papers. The student’s proposal will specify the nature of the student’s contribution. Thesis/dissertation committee meetings and the final oral defense can also be used to clarify any questions that might arise regarding the student’s contribution. In the introductory chapter of the thesis/dissertation, the student must identify at least one aspect of the project as his/her/their own original contribution. The student must be first author of at least one paper in the thesis/dissertation.
6. A potential conflict of interest arises at the thesis/dissertation defense in cases where members of the student’s thesis/dissertation committee are also co-authors on one or more of the papers. It is the responsibility of the committee chair (the student’s major advisor) to alert the School Director if more than one committee member is also a co-author. In such cases the Director may

modify the composition of the committee, or may add to the committee a new member who is not a co-author.

7. School Admissions Requirements

See also the SGDE website: <https://geography.arizona.edu/maphd-program/apply>.

A background in geography or related fields in the natural and social sciences is recommended for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs. Students are selected based on their academic background, professional experience, and letters of recommendation.

Applicants to the M.A. program must have a bachelor's degree with a minimum 3.0 GPA.

Applicants to the Ph.D. program must have a master's degree (or equivalent professional degree, e.g., J.D.). Applicants without a master's degree who are interested in the Ph.D. must apply to the M.A. program first.

The deadline for fall admission is January 5 for both domestic and international applicants. This deadline supersedes the Graduate College deadline. There are no spring semester admissions, except under unusual circumstances.

To apply, you must complete the [University of Arizona Graduate College online application](https://apply.grad.arizona.edu/users/login) [https://apply.grad.arizona.edu/users/login]. Follow these steps:

1. Create a GradApp account
2. Complete your GradApp profile under "My Account".
3. Select "Apply to a Program" from the sidebar.
4. Choose "Degree Seeking" under application type and either "Geography (MA)" or "Geography (PhD)" under program of study.
5. Choose the semester during which you wish to enter the program.
6. Your application should now be initiated under "My Active Applications."

Please submit the following materials to GradApp:

1. **Statement of Intent:** Please write a statement of intent of 2-3 pages (single-spaced), in which you describe your background, interests, and goals in seeking an M.A. or Ph.D. Be as clear and specific as you can in writing your statement. It is not necessary to propose a particular research project, but your statement will be stronger if you can articulate your areas and direction of interest, and how they fit with the work of one or more of our faculty members.

2. Letters of Recommendation: You will need a minimum of two letters of recommendation (three preferred). Enter contact information for your referees in the online application. Your referees will be contacted directly by the University of Arizona.
3. Transcripts: Transcripts from all colleges and universities you have attended or are currently attending are required. Photocopies of unofficial transcripts can be uploaded with your application. You must submit official transcripts by 30 days after the start of your first semester at UA.
4. For international students: proof of English [proficiency](#).

Note: The School does not request or consider scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

Internal M.A. to Ph.D. applicants: See section 2.6.

8. Teaching and Research Assistantships

Please note that most policies applying to Graduate Assistantships/Associateships are governed by the Graduate College rather than SGDE (see links in section 1: [GA Manual](#); [Graduate Assistant and Associate Workload Policy](#)). Graduate Associates are advanced Ph.D. students.

Prospective and currently enrolled students are eligible to apply each year for support from Graduate Teaching Assistantships/Associateships (GTA), Graduate Research Assistantships/Associateships (GRA), and Graduate Outreach Assistantships/Associateships (GOA). Continuing students can request a GTA in their annual progress report, which is due each February and covers the preceding calendar year. Students holding Graduate Assistantships/Associateships must be available prior to the beginning of classes for training sessions and assisting in course or laboratory preparation (specific dates are in letters of appointment).

GTAs are normally assigned each semester, although some appointments are for one year. Each semester, depending on course schedule, the needs of the School, and funding availability, the Program Coordinator sends a list of available GTA positions to all SGDE graduate students, who can respond with their requests, qualifications, and eligibility. Employment as a GA for at least 0.25 FTE includes two important benefits: remission of non-resident tuition and health insurance if the student chooses it. (0.25 FTE positions cover half of the tuition and 100% of insurance; 0.50 FTE positions cover all tuition and 100% of insurance. See section 8.2 on legal residency.)

GTAs are typically offered as half-time employment (0.50), requiring 20 hours of work per week, or as two quarter-time positions (0.25x2, equaling half-time employment). One-quarter- and one-third-time assistantships are also offered, requiring an average of 10 or 13 hours of work per week, respectively. GTAs are assigned to conduct laboratory or discussion sections, to help individual faculty with course preparation or grading, and to carry out other teaching duties assigned by the School Director. Advanced Ph.D. students may be assigned to teach a course as the instructor of record, during summer and winter sessions as well as regular semesters, under the supervision of a faculty member.

Every semester the School requires that faculty supervisors and GTAs evaluate each other's performance in all classes taught. Graduate students are encouraged to retain these evaluations of their teaching and research competencies, to supplement their professional portfolios. In the event that a graduate student has questions or problems related to work as GTA, he/she/they should discuss and attempt to resolve issues with the supervising faculty instructor first, and next with the Director of Graduate Studies as needed. Students may also want to consult their faculty advisors and mentors. The School Director has decision-making authority in matters of graduate student employment.

Renewal of GTAs requires reapplication each year. Awards are contingent on budgetary constraints, as well as on satisfactory performance of assigned duties and satisfactory progress towards completion of degree requirements. The probability of receiving an award is thus dependent on the available budget, the size and quality of the pool of entering and continuing students eligible for funding, and the number of positions available.

GRAs are offered subject to availability of funding through research grants awarded to individual faculty or teams of faculty. Hourly employment is commonly available to assist individual faculty with research, professional, or consulting projects (but does not provide tuition benefits). Many geography graduate students obtain hourly jobs or part-time assistantships with research units elsewhere on campus.

Because GRAs are supervised by the faculty who are the grants' principal investigator(s) (PIs), it is essential that faculty PIs and graduate student RAs communicate clearly about the specific work to be performed and agree about mutual expectations, on a case-by-case basis. GRAs should expect a letter outlining their duties at the beginning of each year or semester.

A question often arises about the relationship between a graduate student's RA work and his/her/their own thesis or dissertation research. Different faculty members have different views about how close this relationship should be. Some faculty strongly prefer that a student's RA work coincides with his/her/their thesis or dissertation, which typically means that the faculty PI is both employer and advisor. Other faculty consider RA work and thesis/dissertation to be separate. Faculty and graduate students (both new and continuing) should be sure to discuss these mutual expectations clearly including those regarding authorship of publications. Since graduate students occasionally change advisors or thesis/dissertation topics, it is essential that they complete any RA work for which they have been employed. Students can ask the DGS for help or advice if desired.

Tuition awards: The School administers a pool of funds for the purpose of paying tuition as needed in specific cases, independent of GA awards. Tuition funds, commonly referred to as GTS (Graduate Tuition Scholarship) dollars, are allocated by the College of SBS to SGDE to pay tuition fees for specific students. These funds are for tuition only and are generally used for advanced graduate students who are away for fieldwork, or otherwise at the discretion of the Director and DGS. There are also other funds allocated by the Graduate College to pay the out-of-state portion of the tuition, with the School responsible for the remaining in-state tuition. These funds are limited.

8.1 Funding Eligibility

For M.A. students admitted with the promise of funding, SGDE's policy is to offer two years of financial support. For Ph.D. students admitted with the promise of funding, who have a master's degree either from UA or another university, SGDE's policy is to offer four years of financial support. As a general rule, the School's expectation is that M.A. (and Ph.D.) students will make use of their promised funding during their first two (or four) years in the program. Any deviation from this must be approved by the School Director.

Financial support may take the form of a Graduate Teaching Assistantship/Associateship (GTA), Graduate Research Assistantship/Associateship (GRA), or Graduate Outreach Assistantship/Associateship (GOA), and typically consists of half-time employment (0.5 FTE). GTAs are allocated by the School according to needs for teaching, while GRAs and GOAs are allocated by faculty Principal Investigators (PIs) according to needs for research and outreach. Each semester of employment, whether as GTA, GRA, or GOA, counts towards a student's promised funding.

Several factors may affect SGDE's allocation of GTAs in the case of students who are at or past their time limit of eligibility. The School will try to give priority in teaching assignments to students who have worked less often as GTAs for SGDE in the past. Usually this means students who have been GRAs through most of their graduate school career. In the case of advanced Ph.D. students who are soon entering the academic job market, the School makes it a priority to ensure that they have teaching experience, if possible as the instructor of record.

For M.A. and Ph.D. students who succeed in getting at least one year of funding from sources outside UA for their studies and research, the School will extend the period of promised support by deferring one year of funding. For example, for a Ph.D. student who wins a dissertation fieldwork grant from NSF or Fulbright, SGDE will commit one year of funding when the student returns to Tucson to write up. Another example would be a Ph.D. student who works as GTA for one year and then gets an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship for three years; SGDE will commit one year of funding beyond the four-year limit.

In all cases, SGDE financial support is contingent upon a student's maintaining satisfactory academic progress and the continued availability of funding. The School may also consider a student's past performance as a GTA, GRA, or GOA in deciding possible GA assignments.

M.A. and Ph.D. students who have used up their 2-year or 4-year periods of promised support, respectively, as well as students to whom the School has not promised funding, may request additional GA support and employment. The School may offer support if it is available, and will pass on information about opportunities for employment through other units on campus.

8.2 Legal residency in Arizona

Please see [memo from DGS](#), 18 June 2020.

9. Funding for Travel and Conferences

SGDE has traditionally offered graduate students funding to travel to one conference per year. The Program Coordinator will circulate an email during the fall semester with up-to-date information about how to access these funds. This call applies to all conference travel for the academic year.

Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) Travel awards are competitive awards intended to supplement travel to conferences, workshops and training, fieldworks, campus visits, and other types of experiential learning. GPSC accepts four rounds of applications yearly, and summer travel is eligible for funding. SGDE students have a good track record of being awarded this type of support. (International students should note that if you are a nonresident alien for tax purposes, your travel grant award may be subject to tax withholding (14% if you are in F or J status, 30% for other non-immigrant status), unless you are exempt under an income tax treaty.) For the most up-to-date information on GPSC travel awards, visit [this link](#).

Many specialty groups in the American Association of Geographers (AAG) offer competitive travel grants to help support attendance to the yearly conference meeting. In some cases, funding is tied to presenting at the AAG, and some awards can be tailored to smaller subsets of applicants, such as first time attendees or Ph.D. students only.

In addition, many SGDE graduate students attend the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG) annual conference, or the Conference of Latin American Geographers, that also make available several sources of travel funding.

Note: this list is non-comprehensive, may not include the most up-to-date information, and only includes some of the more common travel funding sources available to SDGE students.

10. School Activities

The School fosters activities conducive to a stimulating intellectual environment and to professional advancement. In particular, the School encourages graduate students to disseminate their research through presentations at professional meetings and through publication in professional journals.

The School sponsors a series of regular colloquia. These meet in ENR2 S-230 or S-107, usually on Friday at 3:30 p.m. Speakers include visiting scholars, School faculty reporting on current research, academic staff from other units on campus, and practitioners engaged in work of interest to geographers. Graduate students are encouraged to make suggestions of potential speakers to the Colloquium Committee. Regular attendance at the colloquium is expected of all graduate students in residence, whether they have registered for GEOG 695A or not (section 1.2).

Graduate students organize a “Brown Bag” forum in which graduate students and faculty present their ongoing research to their peers. This informal forum provides students and faculty the opportunity to share research interests, peer review each other’s work, and encourage scholarly interaction among students and faculty.

Graduate students in the School publish *you are here, the journal of creative geography*. The journal is an independent, annual publication that seeks to explore the concept of place through articles, fiction, poetry, essays, maps, photographs, and artwork. *you are here* includes submissions from geographers, historians, anthropologists, architects, scientists, writers, and artists.

The Southern Arizona Geographical Association (SAGA) is the School’s graduate student organization. SAGA’s main goal is to provide a forum for graduate students to express their views and concerns about professional development, the School, teaching experiences, and other topics. Each year, usually at the end of Spring semester, SGDE graduate students elect one or more presidents for the following academic year. One of their duties is to attend faculty meetings as SAGA representatives. Many activities are also geared towards encouraging social interaction among the graduate students. With the broad diversity in research interests and backgrounds, it is important for all of the graduate students to have an opportunity to share their views and to develop lasting relationships that will not only carry them through their years at Arizona, but also through their careers. SAGA organizes an annual lecture by an invited guest, with associated intellectual and social activities.

11. Graduate Degree Timeline

The mileposts below are a guide to important administrative steps that students take as they progress towards the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. The listing is in chronological order, although precise sequence may vary a bit. All forms are available on [GradPath](#). Students should check the Graduate College website for up-to-date forms required (see section 1).

Time	M.A. Degree	Ph.D. Degree
Start of 1st Semester	Orientation, diagnostic check and initial advising	
By end of 2nd Semester	Choose regular advisor/committee chair	
End of 2nd Semester	Request appointment of M.A. committee Submit Plan of Study to Graduate College; decide thesis option or not Obtain committee approval of thesis proposal (thesis option only)	Check foreign language, fields of specialization, research tools, and other coursework planning Check that Core Course Performance requirements are/will be satisfied
End of 3rd Semester	Check with DGS and Program Coordinator to ensure all graduation requirements are being met	Request appointment of advisory committee (SGDE) Submit Plan of Study to Graduate College

	Prepare application to continue to Ph.D. if desired	
4th Semester	<p>Arrange M.A. Final Examination (thesis defense or comprehensive exam)</p> <p>Prepare Completion of Degree Requirements form</p> <p>Apply to continue in Ph.D. program if desired</p>	<p>Choose areas of specialization and Ph.D. minor</p> <p>Plan Comprehensive Exam to be taken when coursework is essentially completed</p> <p>Take Comprehensive Exam (written and oral portions)</p>
5th-6th Semester	N.A.	<p>Take Comprehensive Exam (written and oral portions) by 5th semester</p> <p>Submit Results of the Oral Comprehensive Exam for Doctoral Candidacy; Committee Appointment Form (GC forms)</p> <p>Request appointment of dissertation committee; obtain committee approval of dissertation proposal</p> <p>Dissertation research</p>
7th Semester + more	N.A.	<p>Dissertation research and writing</p> <p>Present and defend dissertation and earn Ph.D.</p>