

University of Kansas
School of Public Affairs and Administration
Ph.D. Student Handbook
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Mission of the KU SPAA Ph.D. Program

The mission of the doctoral program in Public Administration at the University of Kansas is to provide advanced graduate education in theory and research in order to prepare students for academic and research careers in public administration as well as professional careers in the advanced practice of public administration.

Program Advising

Students in the coursework phase of the program may not yet have a clearly established faculty advisor. Such students should regularly consult with the Doctoral Program Director. In cases where students are in the process of changing advisors, the Doctoral Program Director may serve as an interim faculty advisor for a semester for administrative purposes such as enrollment and leaves. Students in every phase of the program may have questions about program requirements, enrollment, funding, or matters of administration and process in which they should consult with their faculty advisor or Doctoral Program Director.

Some students enter the School of Public Affairs and Administration Ph.D. program with a clearly established faculty advising relationship or fit. Many students develop faculty advising relationships over time through graduate employment relationships and coursework. By the completion of coursework, students are expected to have an established faculty advisor.

For matters pertaining to University requirements, policies, or processes, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Objectives of the SPAA Ph.D. Program

Our Ph.D. program prepares researchers to enter academia or pursue careers that involve cutting-edge and innovative research in public affairs, policy, planning, and management/governance.

Students are advised by accomplished faculty members with research expertise and experience. In addition to our traditional strengths in public administration, our faculty specialize in:

- Collaborative governance and management
- Decision-making, discretion and accountability in organizational and network contexts
- Election administration
- Gender, race, and ethnicity
- Health and demography
- Information technology and data governance
- Law, policy, and practice
- Sustainable and resilient communities
- Transportation planning and environmental justice
- Urban planning, equity and governance

Within resource constraints, our hope is for each student to gain the following experience:

- Teaching, as a teaching assistant and/or as a lecturer leading an independent section
- Research on a faculty member's project

The School of Public Affairs & Administration is committed to providing each student with honest feedback about scholarly performance and potential. If you have any questions or concerns about your graduate education or anything else, please ask the Doctoral Director, the Graduate Program Coordinator, or any member of the SPAA faculty. We are here to help!

Ph.D. Admission

The Fall semester application deadline for our doctoral program is January 5. Admission to the Ph.D. program is based on the applicant's:

- Undergraduate and/or graduate academic record (official transcripts)
- Statement of Research Interests
- Standardized test scores (GRE)
- References from instructors
- Writing Sample
- Proof of English Proficiency (Non-native English-speaking applicants must provide proof of English proficiency in order to be admitted, more info can be found here: [English proficiency requirements | Graduate Admissions \(ku.edu\)](#)).

Ph.D. Enrollment

Every student doing research or formal coursework must be enrolled in the number of credit hours that reflects accurately the student's demands on faculty time and University facilities. Students in our program generally enroll in at least 9 credit hours per semester during their first two years of coursework, as full-time students. Students will make enrollment choices in consultation with their faculty advisors. If students have questions about enrollment processes or timeline, they should reach out to the Graduate Program Coordinator. Dates and deadlines for enrollment can be found for each semester on the university academic calendar: [Academic Calendar | Office of the University Registrar \(ku.edu\)](#). More information on enrollment policies can be found in this handbook in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section.

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

Ph.D. Coursework

The Ph.D. requires a minimum of 45 credit hours. Students may count up to 15 hours of credit earned toward an MPA degree, or equivalent, toward the required 45 hours. Students who enter the doctoral program without a conferred MPA or its equivalent must complete all MPA core courses in the School of Public Affairs & Administration (SPAA) or the comparable 900-level doctoral courses, except they may choose to take either PUAD 835 Managing Public Money or PUAD 837 Advanced Public Budgeting and Finance.

I. Foundations of Public Administration.

Foundations refer to the enduring theoretical issues and questions in the field; thus, on entering the academic job market, students can justifiably claim to be familiar with the core public administration “canon.” PA doctoral students are required to take the following foundational courses:

- PUAD 930 Research Seminar in Public Administration and Democratic Theory,
- PUAD 931 Research Seminar in Public Administration and Management,
- PUAD 932 Seminar in the Intellectual History of Public Administration,
- PUAD 943 Constitutional Foundations of Public Administration

Substitutions for these requirements require the approval of the Doctoral Director.

II. Methods.

The PA doctorate emphasizes the development of research skills. The public administration field

is epistemologically and methodologically diverse, and doctoral students will be encouraged to take several seminars in research design and methodology. Substitutions for the required courses require the approval of the Doctoral Coordinator. Completion of the Methods Sequence requirement satisfies the Office of Graduate Studies' Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement.

The program requires:

- PUAD 934 Research Methods in Public Administration
- PUAD 935 Advanced Quantitative Methods in Public Administration

We also recommend and encourage:

- PUAD 936 Policy Analysis and Evaluation
- PUAD 937 Qualitative Methods in Public Administration

III. Public Administration Course of Study.

In consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, each student must develop and declare a public administration course of study of at least 2 courses, which may be satisfied by directed readings credit hours. Common courses of study include public management and organization theory, budgeting and finance, human resources management, public policy analysis and evaluation, public values and ethics, public law and administration, and urban policy/politics, but the courses selected will be unique to the students' research interests.

IV. Cognate Field.

The Ph.D. degree requires a cognate field in addition to the public administration course of study. Examples of these supplementary courses may be in the disciplines of economics, political science, education, or a distinct policy area (e.g., environmental policy or transportation policy). The cognate field's sequence of at least 2 required courses requires the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and does not require a comprehensive examination.

V. MPA Core.

If students have not completed an MPA, they are required to take certain MPA courses as a graduation requirement. The MPA core consists of:

- PUAD 824 Creating Good Public Policy
- PUAD 835 Public Financial Systems (Managing Public Money)
- PUAD 836 Intro to Quantitative Methods (Data Informed Decision Making)
- PUAD 841 Context, Ethics, and Law of Public Administration
- PUAD 845 Organizational Analysis (Managing Public Organizations) Any exceptions or substitutions must be approved by the Doctoral Director.

Preliminary Exam

SPAA doctoral students are required to take an exam referred to as the Preliminary Exam, which includes both a written and oral component.

The preliminary exam will typically be taken on the next available date after the completion of foundations courses. (For example: if foundations courses are completed in the Spring semester, the student should plan to write the preliminary exam in September.)

The drafters and graders of the preliminary exam will be the members of the School of Public Affairs and Administration Ph.D. committee and any other faculty member who would like to participate.

Preparing to take the exam:

- The student must complete the course credit and Ph.D. student residency requirements before registering for a comprehensive written examination.
- Only students who complete the required courses in the Foundations, Specialization, Cognate and Methods Sequence, with a GPA of 3.0 or better may proceed to the preliminary examination.
- Students should consult their faculty advisor to plan a schedule of course work and seminar preparation in anticipation of the preliminary exam.

The Comprehensive Oral Examination and Advancement to Ph.D. Candidacy

Following the successful completion of the written preliminary examinations, the student must satisfactorily complete a Comprehensive Oral Examination and present a dissertation proposal in order to become a Ph.D. candidate. Oral exams will be held after the completion of all coursework and typically within six months after successfully passing both written examinations.

In the Oral Examination, participating faculty may ask the student any question relevant to the field of Public Administration. Typically, the exam focuses on questions arising from the student's written preliminary examinations and a review of the student's dissertation proposal.

The committee for the Final Oral Examination will consist of at least four members and must comply with [current KU Final Oral Examination policy](#). At least one member shall not be a member of the SPAA faculty; this member will represent the Graduate School and must be a regular member of the Graduate Faculty in another school or department. The representative of the Graduate School (GSR) shall be a voting member of the committee, shall have the right to full participation, and has the authority to report any unsatisfactory or irregular aspects of the examination to the Graduate School per [the KU GSR policy](#).

NB: students and their advisors must ensure that the outside member of the oral exam committee is a member of the University's Graduate Faculty.

If the aspirant receives a grade of "unsatisfactory," the examination may be repeated but under no circumstances may the student take it more than twice.

Scheduling your Oral Exam and Exam pre-approval

Students should work closely with their advisor to schedule the date and time for the oral examination. The student and/or chair should notify the School's Graduate Program Coordinator a minimum of two weeks prior to the oral exam, for the purposes of 1) reserving the SPAA conference room for the oral exam meeting and 2) satisfying the requirement of the Office of Graduate Studies that a pre-approval **progress to degree form (PtD) be filed two weeks in advance of the exam.**

At the oral exam, students will present and defend their dissertation proposal, which should be

developed in consultation with the student's advisor.

Upon successful completion of the oral exam, the committee chair certifies this to the Graduate School (the Graduate Program Coordinator).

The Dissertation

After passing the Comprehensive Oral Examination, the doctoral candidate must write a dissertation and pass a final oral defense of the dissertation before a dissertation committee consisting of members of the SPAA faculty and a member of the University's graduate faculty from a department other than those in SPAA.

The procedure for scheduling the dissertation defense ("Final Oral Examination," under University rules) is as follows. After all degree requirements have been met and the dissertation committee has preliminarily accepted the completed dissertation but before it has been bound, the School requests the Graduate School (Graduate Program Coordinator) to schedule the Final Oral Examination, allowing a minimum of two weeks to verify requirements and publicize the examination. At least one month must elapse between the successful completion of the Comprehensive Oral Examination and the Final Oral Examination (dissertation defense).

The dissertation is to report substantial original research in the field of Public Administration. Whether the dissertation satisfies the requirements for the degree is determined by the dissertation committee. Links to the University's dissertation requirements and committee requirements are provided below.

[Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition | Policy Library \(ku.edu\)](#)
[Doctoral Dissertation | Policy Library \(ku.edu\)](#)

Required Mentorship Agreements and Regular and Timely Feedback

In the semester following the completion of coursework students will be required to complete a Mentorship Agreement with their faculty advisor. The requirements of the agreement will vary depending on student's interest and areas of growth. As part of the agreement, students and faculty will establish mutual expectations for regular student communication with the advisor and regular and timely feedback from the advisor to the student. The advisor will email the completed Mentorship Agreement to the Doctoral Program Director and Graduate Program Coordinator. The work required will vary from student to student.

Grading of Dissertation Credit (SP, LP, and NP)

Students enrolled in dissertation hours receive a grade each semester of satisfactory progress (SP), limited progress (LP), or no progress (NP). The pace and rhythm of dissertation work may vary; SPAA therefore does not impose a uniform definition of "progress." This is left to the judgment of the dissertation advisor, who best knows the student and the research project. However, regular progress is important. "Insufficient progress" at the dissertation phase is defined by SPAA as either of the two following two conditions: (1) in any two consecutive enrolled semesters, a student received a grade of no progress (NP), or (2) in any three consecutive enrolled semesters, a student receives only limited progress (LP) or no progress grades (NP).

Note: semesters where a student is unenrolled because of an approved leave of absence do not have any adverse effect on the reckoning of overall progress.

In cases where a student is making insufficient progress based on the above definition, the student will be required by SPAA to participate in the timely development of a mentorship agreement according to COGA guidelines. More information on mentorship agreements can be found here: [Mentoring | College Office of Graduate Affairs](#). Please note: the doctoral committee may also vote to dismiss a student from the program for insufficient progress as defined above; however, it is SPAA's preference to address the issue constructively by developing and carrying out a plan (mentorship agreement) to get a student back on track for completion.

Annual Student Review

The Ph.D. program director and the faculty advisors of students will review the progress of our doctoral students annually. The department will communicate with students each year regarding milestone exams, progress, and any other relevant feedback.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a central value in the School of Public Affairs and Administration. It rests on two principles: first, that academic work is represented truthfully as to its source and its accuracy, and second, that academic work is completed through fair and authorized means. Academic integrity requires honest performance of academic responsibilities by students. Academic responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the preparation of assignments, reports, and papers, the taking of examinations, and a sincere and conscientious effort by students to abide by the policies set forth by instructors. Any subversion or compromise of academic integrity thus constitutes academic misconduct. Examples of misconduct include (among others) falsification, unauthorized assistance with or plagiarism of reports, term papers, research papers or other written documents; giving or receiving unauthorized aid on examinations; disruption of classes; the offering of gratuities or favors in return for grades. The full Student Academic Misconduct Policy can be found at: [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\) | Policy Library \(ku.edu\)](#). Students are subject to sanctions by the University for Academic Misconduct if they violate these principles.

Grievance Procedure, School of Public Affairs and Administration

[Grievance Procedure, School of Public Affairs and Administration | Policy Library \(ku.edu\)](#)

The School of Public Affairs and Administration shall provide a copy of the procedure to anyone who requests it.

NOTE: This departmental grievance procedure is distinct from the specific grievance process for GTAs at KU, as outlined in the MOA for university GTAs.

Ph.D. Student Teams Page

The PhD Students Teams site serves as a repository and resource. All current PhD students are added to and invited to regularly access the PhD Student Teams site to stay up to date on the following:

- PhD Updates in the General Channel
- Funding Resources
- Enrollment
- Employment Opportunities

- Graduation Processes and Events

Information for Graduate Assistants (GTA/GRA/GA)

Access to the SPAA office and resources (e.g. desk, computer, office space, printer, copier, mailbox) will be coordinated through the SPAA Office Manager.

Accessing Paystubs

Paystubs are electronic and be found through your HR Pay account. Instructions for accessing your paystub can be found through [Financial Services](#).

Graduate Student Health Insurance

Students with a 50% GTA, GRA, and/or GA appointment qualify for a premium subsidy through their employment relationship with the University. More information on Graduate Student Health Insurance is available through the [Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website](#).

Graduate Assistant Duties

The following is a general overview of duties for Graduate Assistants working in the School of Public Affairs and Administration. Specific duties will be established in collaboration with the Graduate Assistant's established supervisor.

GTA Duties:

- Selection and organization of instructional material for the course and timely posting of this design in a syllabus;
- The regular delivery of instruction in the relevant format
- Development of assignments, exams, or other pertinent evaluations of student work
- Grading and evaluation of student work
- Regular availability to interact with students in office hours and/or electronic communication.

GRA Duties:

- Assists a faculty member in original research
- Specific duties are set by the coordinating faculty members
- Specific duties are provided to the GRA in meeting with the faculty member at the beginning of the term of appointment; these duties should also be put in writing
- GRA appointments are made on the basis of shared intellectual interests or methodological fit. There is the expectation that work as a GRA will assist in the student's intellectual development.

GA Duties:

- Students in SPAA typically do not hold Graduate Assistantships. Students may be permitted to hold Graduate Assistantships outside of SPAA. Students who are pursuing an opportunity for a GA appointment should notify the Doctoral Program Director as soon as possible.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs, hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that *most commonly* affect graduate students are included.

Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

GENERAL POLICIES

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. Your department or program may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

Admission

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor's degree (as evidenced by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained).

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

English Proficiency Requirements

The University requires all applicants, international or domestic, to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are multiple ways to prove English proficiency:

- Declaration of native or native-like speaker status on the online application for graduate study.
- Official scores from an English proficiency standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS-Academic, or PTE), sent by the testing agency to the University of Kansas. Official scores must be less than two years old. Scores must be reported to KU directly by the testing service. Self-reported scores or unofficial scores are not accepted. TOEFL scores should be sent by ETS to KU institution code 6871. IELTS should be sent to KU Graduate Admissions via the e-delivery service. PTE score sheets containing the Score Report Code and Registration ID should be emailed to graduateadm@ku.edu for verification.
- Graduation with a baccalaureate degree (or higher) earned in residence from an accredited English-medium college or university or an accredited college or university in the United States. Degrees earned online may not be used to verify English proficiency. Note: this option is not sufficient for employment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.

- AEC Curriculum: Students who haven't taken one of the listed tests may complete coursework through the KU Applied English Center (AEC) to demonstrate English proficiency.
- US Military Employment: If you are employed as an officer in the U.S. military with documentation of selection or promotion to the rank of Major or higher (or the equivalent U.S. Navy or Coast Guard rank), then you will be considered fully proficient and will not be required to complete AEC testing.

Additional English Competency Requirements for GTAs:

English proficiency requirements for GTAs are governed by the Kansas Board of Regents and must be met separately from the English proficiency requirement for admission to a KU graduate program. Detailed information on English proficiency requirements for GTAs may be found on Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' Spoken English Competency page.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)

Enrollment

For graduate students, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While individual units may have additional enrollment requirements, for students who are required to enroll full-time (e.g. students holding a GTA/GRA/GA appointment, international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, students receiving federal financial aid, etc.) the University defines full-time enrollment it as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s). *See Doctoral post-comprehensive enrollment.
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a Competency-Based Education (CBE) program

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;

- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s).
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a CBE program

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU's definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

Students not enrolled by 11:59pm the day before the first day of classes will be assessed a late enrollment fee. The University Registrar then deactivates the KU ID of any not enrolled by the last Friday in October (for Fall) or last Friday in March (for Spring). Students who wish to enroll after that must submit a Permit to Re-Enroll to be reactivated.

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Withdrawal form may be submitted on their behalf. Please note that voluntarily withdrawing from your program does **not** automatically withdraw you from coursework. You must also withdraw from all classes in Enroll & Pay via the "Withdraw from the University" option.

Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from all courses, as well any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current Academic Calendar.**

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript.

Your graduate program coordinator (or similar title) is available to guide you through any enrollment scenarios or questions that come up. In order to avoid problems on your record, please consult with them prior to dropping or changing enrollment.

Related Policies:

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements](#)

Graduate Credit (Including Transfer Credit)

The University's Graduate Credit policy defines KU's conditions for the following:

- Definition of graduate credit for the purposes of a course "counting" towards a graduate degree or graduate certificate at KU;
- Transfer of graduate credit to KU from an outside institution;

- Reduction in the required number of graduate hours for Master's students;
- Counting credit hours taken as non-degree seeking student towards a later graduate degree at KU;
- Counting credit hours taken as a certificate seeking student toward another graduate degree.

Transfer Credit

The transfer credit option allows master's students to add graduate-level coursework completed at another institution to their KU transcript to count toward their KU degree. Upper-level coursework taken as an undergraduate, even courses numbered at the graduate level, is not eligible for transfer in any case. Additional restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses and the number of credit hours that can be counted toward a KU master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department or program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

No transfer of credits is allowed for the Ph.D. In circumstances where students enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution or other relevant graduate coursework, it may be possible for students to request a reduction in the number of hours required for the Ph.D. Students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Reduced Credit Hour Degree

KU policy defines 30 hours as the minimum for master's degrees. Departments may petition for a reduced hour degree master's degree for individual students in cases where they may provide evidence that the student entered the program especially well-prepared to complete a graduate-level degree and the student is able to maintain a superior grade point average. Reduced credit hour degrees must be based on coursework or experiences that can be objectively measured, such as coursework or qualifying internship or study abroad programs. Professional or life experience does not qualify. A reduction in hours is distinct from a transfer of credit and is reserved for students whose prior coursework doesn't qualify for transfer credit (e.g. was already used to fulfill requirements towards a completed degree) and there are no modifications on the transcript.

Restrictions apply to the number of credit hours that can be reduced for a master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below.

In all cases, a reduction in hours must first be approved at the department or program level, so to begin the process for approval, students should consult with their DGS. Students must also provide documentation of the coursework or experience being used to justify the reduced hours (e.g. transcripts, program descriptions).

Because there is no minimum number of required hours for the Ph.D., reduction of required hours based on prior degrees or experience is determined solely at the program level. Doctoral students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Related Policies:

- [Graduate Credit](#)

- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements \(on Reduced Hour Master's Degree\)](#)

Credit/No Credit

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their cumulative graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

Students make the CR/NC election via the Registrar's CR/NC online request form. Elections and changes to elections can only be made during the specific CR/NC period. For regular semester courses, this period begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. Exact dates may be found on the current KU Academic Calendar. Please keep in mind, short courses may have alternate dates.

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling; however, in cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information.

Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.3.8](#)

Probation & Dismissal

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student that is not making satisfactory progress toward completing their degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student of why they are not making satisfactory progress, what they must do to return to good standing, and the deadline for doing so.

Students are most commonly placed on probation due to their graduate cumulative GPA dropping below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Individual Schools/the College may set more stringent GPA requirements.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constituting a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to;

- Lack of progress on the thesis, dissertation, or capstone project

- Unacceptable academic performance on program milestones outside of coursework (e.g. exams)
- Unsatisfactory grades or GPA within foundational required courses (despite the overall cumulative GPA)
- An unsatisfactory result in their department's annual progress evaluation
Nearing or going beyond their maximum time to degree. See the Time Limits section below for more information.

Students should carefully review the Good Academic Standing policy for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook or the degree requirements section and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise their cumulative GPA or otherwise meet the communicated terms of the academic probation, the department will reconsider their continuation in the program, and in most cases will recommend the student for dismissal. Once dismissed, a student is no longer able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete their degree. Students dismissed from any graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate program at the University of Kansas.

A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss their status with their advisor.

Related Policies:

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

Grading

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' (GPA) Grading policy governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in Article II of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of GPA.

Students should also consult their advisor and the departmental grading section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

Related Policies:

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)

- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)

Time Limits

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study, the doctorate degree in five (5) years of study, and both the master's and doctorate together in six-seven (6-7) years of study.

Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, students are encouraged to use a Mentoring Agreement Template and/or adapt to their own needs to support effective mentoring and a positive mentoring relationship.

Note that individual schools/the College/degree programs may require Mentoring Agreements for students who are nearing their maximum time to degree.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)
- [Doctoral Degree Comprehensive Oral Exams \(on exam expiration and recertification\)](#)
- [Doctoral Program Profiles with Time to Degree Information](#)
- [KU CLAS Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- [Univ. Michigan Rackham Graduate School Mentoring Plan Templates](#)
- [KU Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs IDP template](#)

Leave of Absence

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the University and the department and while "stopping the clock" on their time to degree. When a student is on Leave of Absence status it is understood that they have temporarily suspended their graduate work and therefore will not make use of University resources, including faculty time.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done through a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department's internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student's need for a leave of absence.

In order for a Leave of Absence to be approved, the student must be withdrawn from all active and/or future enrollment. Withdrawal for the purposes of Leave of Absence is still subject to all Registrar deadlines, required forms, and applicable tuition and fees.

Students on Leave of Absence are automatically reactivated after their leave is over and are eligible to enroll for their intended semester back during the normal enrollment periods. See the KU Academic Calendar for exact dates that enrollment begins.

If at any time plans change and a student wishes to return and enroll before leave was supposed to end, they may contact their department to be reactivated early.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Leaves of Absence \(policy\)](#)
- [Leave of Absence \(GPA website, form linked at bottom of page\)](#)

Required University Milestones

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the following milestones are required for all students and specific regulations apply:

- Master's Final Culminating Exam (written or oral)/Thesis Defense for Master's degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Exam
- Doctoral Final Exam/Dissertation Defense

*A final culminating effort is not required for departments with an approved coursework-only master's degree option in the Academic Catalog (note that programs with a capstone are considered coursework only).

Before a student is allowed to complete any of these three exams, pre-approval from the school/College is required in advance of the exam date. This pre-approval request will be submitted on the student's behalf by their department after the exam date has been scheduled. The school/College reviews the student record and verifies all University requirements have been fulfilled. The full list of these requirements may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their departments well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

There are additional policies requirements for oral exams. The following are University policies pertaining to oral exams:

Oral Exam Committee Composition

All voting committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. Additionally, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty in the candidate's department or program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply, especially for doctoral exam committees. Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the University policies pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their

Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam committee. Your graduate program coordinator can assist with confirming the qualifying status of any faculty member at KU, or outside of KU.

Oral Exam Attendance

Oral Exams may be conducted in-person, remotely, or a hybrid of both. There are no University level requirements for physical presence; however, there are strict regulations on participation.

In all cases, all committee members must be present, either physically or via phone/video conference, for an exam to commence. **If a committee member does not arrive or appear, the exam may not begin and if a committee member leaves or loses connection such that they cannot fully participate, the exam may not proceed. Oral examinations that do not meet these attendance requirements are not valid.**

Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the student's individual Ph.D. program's degree requirements, the following are University requirements for graduation with a Ph.D. at KU.

Enrollment Requirement

Prior to the semester in which the comprehensive exam is held, all doctoral students must complete a minimum program engagement equivalent to two full-time semesters. This may be accomplished through either of the following:

- Two semesters (fall and/or spring) of full-time enrollment in KU coursework, as defined by University policy
- At least 18 hours of enrollment in KU coursework spread out over several part-time semesters

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)

Continuous Enrollment for Post-Comprehensive Students

During the semester in which the doctoral oral comprehensive exam is completed and each fall and spring semester follows, doctoral students must adhere to very specific enrollment requirements. These requirements may be different than enrollment requirements prior to the oral comp exam.

Failure to properly comply with the enrollment requirements may cause delays to graduation or additional enrollment requirements to make up what was missed, increasing tuition expenses near the end of your degree program.

To avoid delays or additional costs, you are also strongly advised to meet with your graduate program coordinator the semester before your oral comprehensive exam. Your graduate coordinator will work with you to develop an enrollment plan that meets all policy requirements, while also preventing unnecessary or avoidable fees.

Post-comprehensive enrollment requirements also apply to students with GTA/GRA/GA appointments, but these students must be certified to drop their enrollment levels. Departments are responsible for tracking student enrollment and will submit the certification form on the student's behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the beginning of the semester in which the enrollment will drop below 6 hours. Students who are certified to reduce hours continue to meet the University's definition of full-time enrollment, as well as the enrollment requirements of their employment contract.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Doctoral Candidacy](#)

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

The University offers a variety of Approved Graduate Certificate Programs to encourage current graduate students to pursue interdisciplinary study, gain a credential for expertise in an outside area of study, or provide an option for a coherent course of advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. Note that students must be fully admitted to a graduate certificate by the end of the last course that will count to fulfill the certificate. Students wishing to complete the certificate should apply as early as possible. Students whose interests or career goals may be served by a Graduate Certificate should familiarize themselves with the University's policies relating to Certificate programs (found below) early in their graduate career, in addition to individual certificate program requirements.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Graduate Certificate Programs: Eligibility and Admission Criteria](#)
- [Policies & Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs](#)

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (Master's & Ph.D.)

In addition to all program requirements, students planning to graduate must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs Graduation Checklists ([Master's](#) | [Doctoral](#))

These graduation checklists provide a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be consulted by every graduating master's or doctoral student as soon as graduation is

expected. Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for formatting and electronic submission of the thesis or dissertation. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

We strongly encourage students to submit an Application for Graduation as early as possible; ideally prior to the 20th day of classes of the semester they intend to graduate.

GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs (GPA) offers funding opportunities in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to GPA. Some of the available funding includes:

[Summer Research Scholarships](#): intended primarily for post-comp doctoral students.

[Graduate Student Travel Fund](#): intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (max \$750) only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Doctoral Student Research Fund](#): Designed to support KU doctoral students who need assistance to carry out research that advances progress toward the degree. Applications for this fund are accepted only for a limited time as funding is available. Students are eligible to receive one award from this fund during their doctoral career. Students should check the link above for additional information and restrictions.

Policies Regarding Freedom of Expression on Campus

Kansas State Law (HB2333) requires postsecondary educational institutions in Kansas to publish in their handbooks and orientation programs the institution's policies, regulations, or expectations of students regarding free expression on campus.

Per KU General Counsel, this includes the following two policies:

- [KU Public Assembly Policy](#)
- [Kansas Board of Regents Statement on Free Expression](#)

Note that the two policies listed above apply to ALL members of the campus community; they are not specific to graduate students.

APPENDIX I: Expectations of Ph.D. Students: A Practical Guide

An original program of research.

The most basic element of a successful Ph.D. student career is active development of an original program of research. Ultimately, the dissertation constitutes the final expression of this program of research. Entering students should not think of their research as something that may be put off until the “dissertation stage.” Students’ research programs begin the moment they enter the program, and students are encouraged to begin thinking about possible dissertation topics and ideas from their start in the program. Nearly every course requires a final paper; these papers may be used to explore aspects of students’ research interests. Students should be mindful that academic jobs in the Public Administration market are typically framed within the standard specializations.

There is room, of course, for “experiments” with dissertation ideas that are abandoned for one reason or another. Almost no successful student knows his or her final dissertation idea at the start of the program.

In the process of exploring research ideas and developing a dissertation topic, students should work closely with their faculty advisor/faculty mentor. Some advisors may prefer to direct dissertations that are elements of the advisor’s research program; others may prefer to have students develop their own independent dissertation topic. In either case, advisors have a good sense of which ideas have already been “taken,” which ideas are likely to lead to “dead ends,” which ideas are “marketable,” and how to implement ideas in the form of a practical program of research. Although advisors may help in these and many other ways, students should play a very active role in developing their own basic research program.

As a matter of practicality and prudence, students should expect to have a well-developed dissertation idea and research plan *prior to sitting for the Ph.D. written exams*.

As a matter of formal School rules, students are required to present a dissertation idea to a faculty committee as the basis for the Ph.D. oral exam, which shortly follows the written prelim exams, as described above.

The responsibility of students in relation to advisors

A Ph.D. advisor is crucial to a successful career as a Ph.D. student. The importance of the advisor cannot be overstated. Advisors provide guidance on research ideas, help to provide direction and coherence to the student’s program of independent research, coordinate the dissertation research plan, help to find funding for dissertation research, ensure that a dissertation is successfully completed, and coordinate the job search.

Students should seek out and cultivate a scholarly relationship with an advisor as soon as possible in their student career. The primary basis for selecting an advisor is the advisor’s “fit” with the student’s academic interests. An equally important consideration is the ability of the student and advisor to work together productively.

Although advisors play a critical role in students’ scholarly development, students have an

equally significant responsibility to remain in ongoing communication with advisors, respond to advisors' advice, and report progress, especially during the critical period after the completion of coursework.

Change of Faculty Advisor

For a variety of reasons, you may complete your degree with someone other than the advisor with whom you first worked. You do not need the permission of your current advisor to seek a new advisor. The circumstances surrounding a change in advisor may sometimes be complex; the Director of Graduate Study can serve for one semester as a caretaker advisor for the limited purpose of managing administrative matters where an advisor's name or signature is needed.

Reasons for changing an advisor include:

- Your or your advisor's interests may change such that the two are no longer compatible.
- After providing at least one full semester's warning, your advisor may terminate the advising relationship. This most often occurs when students fail to make timely progress toward their degrees.
- Your advisor leaves the School or KU, or your advisor retires, dies, or is otherwise unable to continue advising.

In each instance, the faculty advisor should, when possible, notify the Graduate Program Coordinator of the need for a change in advisor. What happens next depends upon your progression toward the Ph.D. degree and the reason for the change in advisor.

1) If you and your advisor's relationship dissolves due to a change in research/academic interests/goals and you are in good academic standing and pre-comprehensive exam, the department is under no obligation to appoint a new permanent advisor. It is the student's responsibility to secure a new advisor; however, the student may request guidance from the Director of Graduate Study and/or their current advisor. The current advisor will continue to mentor the student until a new faculty advisor can be secured. It is highly recommended that the student secure a new advisor within 1 full term. At that time, the program can review the student's attempts to locate a new advisor and, if the program finds the attempts unsatisfactory, can elect to place the student on academic probation and/or dismiss the student from the program.

If the student is post-comprehensive exam, the Director(s) of Graduate Study and the student's current dissertation committee will work with the student to identify a new advisor within the department. A new advisor should be secured within 1 term. Faculty members will not be required to supervise research that is outside of their area of expertise or interest.

2) If a faculty advisor no longer wishes to mentor a student due to a change in compatibility (including ongoing unsatisfactory performance in academic and/or 3G responsibilities), the advisor must notify the Graduate Program Coordinator of the dissolution of their advisor relationship and responsibilities. The Graduate Program Coordinator will send notice to the student and also notify the Director(s) of Graduate Study. The advisor must provide the student with 1 full term/semester of notice (for example, a faculty advisor should notify a student within the first few weeks at the beginning of a term that they will discontinue being an advisor by the end of that term; should this occur in the middle of a term, the student will have 1 full semester in the following term to find a replacement advisor).

The student should ordinarily locate a new advisor by the end of their full term of notice to remain in good academic standing. If the student fails to secure a new advisor within this timeframe, they will be considered out of good academic standing and the School can elect to place the student on academic probation and/or dismiss the student from the program.

A new advisor is not obliged to supervise research that is outside the advisor's area of expertise or interest; students may find that they must change their area of research to accommodate their new advisor. This may add time to earning their degree. In all cases, the program encourages students to meet with their new faculty advisors to outline outstanding degree requirements or research and to establish a mentoring agreement.

In each case of an advisor change, the student is responsible for completing a Record of Change in Advisor form (available from the Graduate Program Coordinator) and submitting the completed document to the Graduate Program Coordinator for filing. The form will be kept in the student's electronic file.

Attending Seminars and School Lectures

The Graduate Students of Public Administration Council (GSPA) hosts several lectures each year by top scholars in the field. These include the "Return to the Roost" and "Visiting Scholar" lecture series. Return to the Roost lecturers are given by scholars who graduated from the KU Public Administration Ph.D. program. Visiting Scholar lectures are given by other scholarly leaders. The scholars who speak in these lecture series meet separately with KU doctoral students to discuss research, career development, and other topics.

The relationship between "foundations," "field of study," and "cognate."

The Ph.D. program is designed to provide intensive training in Public Administration "foundations" and in a "field of study." Additionally, students are required to develop a "cognate" field. Foundations refer to the enduring theoretical issues and questions in the field; thus, on entering the academic job market, students can justifiably claim to be familiar with the core P.A. "canon."

The student's field of study, by contrast, is the primary area of specialization. The standard specializations are Public Management, Organizational Theory, Law & Public Administration, Human Resources, Budgeting and Finance, Public Policy Analysis and Evaluation, Public Administration Theory and Ethics, and Urban Policy/Politics and Community Building. In exceptional cases, students may have a field of study that is not included in this list. However, students should be mindful that academic jobs in the Public Administration market are typically framed within the standard specializations.

The "cognate" field is to be a coherent series of courses *outside* the discipline of Public Administration. Ideally, students, in conjunction with advice from their advisor, will craft cognates that are closely related to their areas of specialization and their research program. For instance, a student specializing in budgeting may develop a cognate in related areas in the School of Business; a student specializing in theory and ethics may develop a cognate in Philosophy; a

student specializing in organizational theory and behavior may develop a cognate in Sociology and Psychology.

Financial support and student obligations

The School strives to provide ongoing financial support for Ph.D. students who are making normal progress toward their degree. The level of support may vary and is subject to the School's budgetary exigencies. This section of the Handbook pertains to Ph.D. students receiving financial support from the School.

Unless special arrangements have been made, financial support from the School is contingent on students' working exclusively on Ph.D. coursework and research. This means that funded Ph.D. students are ordinarily prohibited from carrying outside employment.

Financial support typically comes in two forms: Research Assistantships and Teaching Assistantships. When the primary assignment is a Research Assistantship, the student's obligation is to the faculty member who is directing the Research Assistantship; the student should carry out the tasks assigned by the faculty member, up to the number of hours per week allocated for the position. Evaluations of the student's work are the primary responsibility of the faculty member in charge of the position. When the primary assignment is a Teaching Assistantship, the student's obligation is to the School, the faculty member in charge of the course, and the students in the course(s). Evaluation of the student Teaching Assistant is the primary responsibility of the Doctoral Director.

In addition to GRA and GTA positions, the School provides limited funding to assist in defraying students' travel expenses to academic conferences. These funds are available on the basis of requests to the Doctoral Director.

Ongoing financial support is contingent on normal progress toward the Ph.D. degree. At the end of each semester, the Doctoral Committee, in conjunction with advice from the School's graduate faculty, assesses each student's progress toward the degree. Ordinarily, "normal progress" is contingent on having no more than one grade of "incomplete" at any time, passing Ph.D. prelim exams by the start of the fourth academic year in residence, successfully defending a dissertation proposal within thirty days of successful completion of the prelim exams, and certification of progress on the dissertation by the advisor. Additionally, students' responsibilities may be revised in light of their ongoing performance of their duties.

The responsible and ethical conduct of research

Research in Public Administration commonly involves the use of "human subjects" as defined by federal regulations and University rules. In order to conduct their research, therefore, many Ph.D. students in Public Administration must gain University certification for compliance with regulations governing human subjects. More broadly, the University requires training in the responsible conduct of research before sitting for comprehensive Ph.D. exams, and the School provides this training as part of our core research methods courses.