

Political Studies PhD Map

Applying to and Navigating Graduate Studies

GRAD MAP FOR PH.D. STUDENTS 

Why GRADUATE STUDIES in POLITICAL STUDIES?

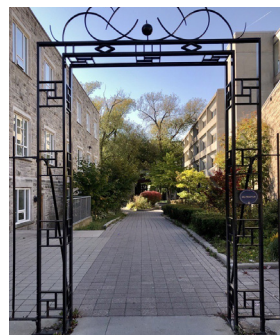
The Department of Political Studies at Queen's University has long been known for its graduate programs. We are small enough to provide our students with a highly personalized graduate experience, and our faculty are strong, diverse, and well recognized for their research so that we can provide a well-rounded education that gives our graduates a solid basis for a wide range of careers. The department has various strengths, including ethnically divided and diverse political systems, gender and politics, political institutions such as federalism and political parties, international relations, and political behaviour.

"Upon setting foot in the Department, I found an open and supportive community of graduate students, as well as a genuinely helpful and caring faculty. The almost daily contact with fellow graduate students and faculty forced me to stay focused on research and helped me to complete the dissertation in a timely manner."

— Rémi Léger, PhD

Why QUEEN'S?

As one of Canada's premier departments of political science, we are committed to both research and teaching. Our faculty are actively engaged in a wide range of research activities, and are highly visible in the discipline both in Canada and abroad. We are no less committed to our students.



Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years, full-time): Students will complete coursework, field exams in two fields, a thesis proposal, a second-language examination, thesis, and thesis defence.

FIELDS of Study

- Canadian Politics
- Comparative Politics
- Gender and Politics
- International Relations
- Political Theory

Before applying, you should identify your area of research interest and think about potential supervisors. Visit the [Political Studies Department website](#) to read about fields of study and learn more about supervisor interest areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact them and tell them about your interest in graduate work and related experience. This is also an opportunity for you to find out if the faculty member is accepting new graduate students to supervise. Meet with your potential supervisor at departmental events for prospective students.



**GRADUATE STUDIES AND
POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS**

queensu.ca/grad-postdoc

Political Studies PhD Map

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

YEAR I

YEAR II

YEAR III

YEAR IV
& TRANSITIONINGACHIEVE YOUR
ACADEMIC
GOALS

- Key priorities include your relationship with your supervisor, forming your committee, coursework, field exams, and language exam.
- Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, timelines, and any required accommodation plans.
- Look to Student Academic Success Services. Attend or present at a graduate conference such as Political Studies Graduate Studies Association (PSGSA).

MAXIMIZE
RESEARCH
IMPACT

- Think about audiences for your research.
- Complete CORE online module on research ethics if doing research involving human participants
- Apply to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Ontario Graduate Scholarships funding. Attend conferences in your field.

BUILD
SKILLS AND
EXPERIENCE

- Serve on departmental or university committees. Talk to the Political Studies Graduate Student Association (PSGSA) to get involved.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets like the Queen's Journal, CFRC, and the SGSPA Blog. Look in the AMS Clubs Directory.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.

ENGAGE
WITH YOUR
COMMUNITY

- Consider volunteering with different community organizations, museums, and cultural studies groups, such as the Centre for Studies on Democracy and Diversity, the Centre for International and Defence Policy, and the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations.

LAUNCH YOUR
CAREER

- Finding a career fit starts with knowing yourself. Take a Career Services workshop or meet with a career educator and coach for help.
- Start reading publications like University Affairs and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Browse non-academic labour market websites.

- Priorities include completing your field examinations and pursuing substantive research.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion.
- Find your way through the academic process with the help of the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (SGSPA) professional development website.
- Attend a major conference in your field, such as the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) Annual Conference or Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN).

- Use conference presentations to create, discuss, and explore way to disseminate research findings. Learn from the many academic and professional development workshops available throughout the year.
- Expand your research audience through social media like LinkedIn, a blog or podcast.

- Hone skills for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees and in the community.
- Start keeping an ePortfolio of your skills, experiences, and competencies.
- For help with teaching, get support from the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Enrol in SGS902 or the PUTL Certificate for more professional development in teaching.

- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups.
- Consider signing up for the PhD-Community Initiative program run by the SGSPA.

- Start building your teaching portfolio including student evaluations, and seeking mentorship.
- Explore different careers of interest by using LinkedIn to connect with Queen's alumni. For more information check out Career Cruising.
- Investigate requirements for professional positions or other opportunities related to careers of interest.

- Continue to meet regularly with your supervisor, review research progress, and write your dissertation. Check out the SGSPA writing camps like Dissertation Boot Camp and Dissertation on the Lake.
- Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.

- Continue to present at conferences.
- Consider participating in the 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) or GRADflix competition.
- Contact the Queen's Media Centre for guidance on speaking to news outlets about your work. List yourself on the Arts and Science University Research website.

- Begin teaching as a departmental Teaching Fellow.
- Find opportunities for extra training through CTL, SGSPA professional development, Mitacs, or other sources to boost your skills. Investigate internships from MITACS and other sources.
- Prepare for work or studies in a multi-cultural environment by taking the Intercultural Awareness Training Certificate.

- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest, through LinkedIn, the Queen's Alumni Association, professional associations, and at conferences. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

- Volunteer for hiring committees and attend job talks. Research academic careers of interest. Craft your CV and job application materials.
- Start focusing on non-academic areas of interest. Research organizations of interest and start putting together your industry resume and begin your job search plan.
- Find impactful work that aligns with your values using the Queen's Career Guide to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
- Present your research at conferences and work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.

- Continue to attend conferences and connect with scholars in your field and with community partners.
- Continue public outreach through social media and the Queen's Media Centre.
- Consider being interviewed on the SGSPA radio show Grad Chat to talk about your research.

- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in different forums: casual conversation, networking, and interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

- Consider joining professional associations like the Canadian Political Science Association.
- Join groups on LinkedIn reflecting specific careers or topics of interest.

- Build connections with faculty outside of your department. Pursue interviews for faculty positions and apply for post-doctoral fellowships and positions.
- Apply to jobs or make plans for other adventures.
- If considering employment abroad, research possible immigration regulations. If you are an international student interested in staying in Canada, consider speaking with an International Student Advisor.

Knowledge & Workplace
Skills

A graduate degree in Political Studies can equip you with valuable and versatile skills, such as:

- **Research skills:** analyze and assess arguments based on their empirical and normative components
- **Analytical writing skills:** write in a clear, succinct, explanatory and persuasive manner
- **Effective verbal communication skills**
- **Information management:** prioritize, organize, and synthesize large amounts of information
- **Time management:** meet deadlines and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
- **Project management:** develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise findings, draw and act on conclusions
- **Creativity and innovation**
- **Perseverance**
- **Independence** and experience as a collaborative worker
- **Awareness:** an understanding of sound ethical practices, social responsibility, responsible research, and cultural sensitivity
- **Professionalism** in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
- **Leadership:** initiative and vision leading people and discussion

Career Possibilities

A PhD in Political Studies can take your career in many directions. In Canada, less than 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education – the majority will work in industry, government, or non-profits.

- Academia and teaching
- International and non-profit organizations
- Law
- Policy analytics
- Politics
- PR and communications

Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can provide you with a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.

How to use this map

Use the 5 rows of the map to explore possibilities and plan for success in the five overlapping areas of career and academics. To make your own custom map, use the My Grad Map tool: careers.queensu.ca/gradmaps.

Graduate Studies FAQs

How do I make the most of my time at Queen's?

Use the Grad Map to plan for success in five overlapping areas of your career and academic life. Everyone's journey is different - the ideas on the maps are just suggestions to help you explore possibilities. For more support with your professional development, take advantage of the SGSPA professional development framework and the new Professional Development Plan (PDP) process to set customized goals to help you get career ready when you graduate.

Where can I get help?

Queen's provides you with a broad range of support services from your first point of contact with the university through to graduation. Ranging from help with academics and careers, to physical, emotional, or spiritual resources – our welcoming environment offers the programs and services you need to be successful, both academically and personally. Check out the [SGSPA website](#) for available resources.

What is the community like?

At Queen's, graduate students from all disciplines learn and discover in a close-knit intellectual community. With over 130 graduate programs throughout more than 50 departments and research centres, you will find friends, peers and support among our graduate students. With the world's best scholars, prize-winning professional development opportunities, competitive funding packages and life in the historic waterfront city of Kingston, Queen's offers a wonderful environment for graduate studies. Queen's is an integral part of the Kingston community, with the campus nestled in the core of the city, only a 10-minute walk to downtown with its shopping, dining and waterfront. For more about Kingston's history and culture, see Queen's University's Discover Kingston page.

Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

- M.A. in Political Science, Political Studies, or an equivalent.
- **Grade requirements:** minimum A- average.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The following minimum scores are required: (1) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30). Applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score, or (2) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score and a 7.0 for each test band), or (3) PTE Academics: 65, or (4) CAEL CE -70 (minimum overall score).

KEY DATES & DEADLINES

- **Application due:** January 22, 2026
- **Notification of acceptance:** March

Before you start your application, please review the Graduate Studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

Each offer of admission guarantees a minimum level of funding for the duration of the student's period of funding-eligibility (four years for PhD students). This funding typically consists of graduate awards and teaching assistantships. We encourage applicants to apply for additional funding through external scholarships.

For more information, please visit the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs' information on awards and scholarships, and queensu.ca/politics/graduate/phd-program

