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 School of Graduate Studies requires the following minimum scores: TOEFL (paper-based): 550, (internet-based): 77, IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score), or (3) PTE Academic: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES

- Application due: Late January (see Political Studies website).
- Notification of acceptance: March

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 programs and services you need to be successful, both academically and personally. Check out the Student Life at Queen’s 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, excellent funding packages and life in the affordable, 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 Discover Kingston page.

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 is particularly well known for its strength in the study of ethnically divided and diverse societies.

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, 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 potential thesis topics and learn more about faculty members. 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.

"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
ACHIEVE 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 Student Association (PSSGA).
- Priorities include completing your comprehensive examination 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 Expanding Horizons and SGS Habitat.
- Attend a major conference in your field, such as the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) Annual Conference or Association for the Study of the State.
- Continue to meet regularly with your supervisor, review research progress, and write your dissertation. Check out the SGS Dissertation Boot Camp or Dissertation on the Lake.
- Use conference presentations to create, discuss, and explore ways to disseminate research findings. Learn from the Expanding Horizons Publishing workshop.
- Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.
- Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
- Present your research at conferences and workshops with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.
- Discuss career pathways, references letters, and publication options with your supervisor.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

- Think about audiences for your research.
- Complete CORE online module on research ethics if doing research with live people or sensitive topics.
- Apply to SSHRGC, OGS, and other funding.
- Attend conferences in your field.
- Present your work at graduate conferences, through professional associations, or topic conferences.
- Expand your research audience through social media such as Twitter or a blog.
- Continue to present at conferences.
- Consider participating in the 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) 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.
- Attend teaching as a departmental Teaching Fellow.
- Begin teaching as a departmental Teaching Fellow.
- Find opportunities for extra training through CTL, Expanding Horizons, 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 hosted by QLIC and Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre.
- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in difficult forums: causal conversation, networking, and interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups.
- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest, through Queen’s Connects on LinkedIn, the Queen’s Alumni Association, professional associations, and at conferences. 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 SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Serve on departmental or university committees. Talk to the Political Studies Graduate Student Association (PSSGA) to get involved.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets like the Queen’s Journal, CFCG, and the SGS Blog. Look in the AMS Clubs Directory.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- Hone skills for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees and in the community.
- Start keeping an endorlof your skills, experiences and competencies.
- For help with teaching, get support from the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Enrol in SGS902 or the PDUs certificate for more professional development in teaching and learning.
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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 (CIDE), and the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations.
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups.
- Serve on departmental or university committees. Talk to the Political Studies Graduate Student Association (PSSGA) to get involved.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets like the Queen’s Journal, CFCG, and the SGS Blog. Look in the AMS Clubs Directory.
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LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

- Finding career fit starts with knowing yourself. Take a Career Services workshop or meet with a career counsellor for help. Check out books like So What Are You Going to do With That? or The Academic Job Search from the Career Resource Area for advice on various career options.
- Start reading publications like University Affairs and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Browse non-academic labour market websites.
- Stay on the lookout for special events like School of Graduate Studies Career Week to explore your career pathways.
- Start building your teaching portfolio including student evaluations, and seeking mentorship.
- Explore different careers of interest by reading alumni profiles on the SGS website, and using Queen’s Connects on LinkedIn to connect with Queen’s alumni, or find alumni in various careers through “Ask an Alum”. For more information check out Career Cruising.
- Investigate requirements for professional positions, or other opportunities related to careers of interest.
- 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.
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WHAT WILL I LEARN?

A graduate degree in Political Studies can equip you with valuable and versatile skills, such as:
- Research skills: analyze and assess arguments about policy and institutions, 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.

WHERE CAN I GO?

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
- Policy analytics
- Law
- International and non-profit organizations
- Politics
- Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can provide you with a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.