



Department of Public Administration

PhD in Public Administration

Student Handbook

NC State University

School of Public and International Affairs

NC STATE
UNIVERSITY

This handbook is intended to provide up-to-date information regarding the requirements for the PhD in Public Administration program at NC State University. In addition to reading this document, all graduate students should refer to the [Graduate Handbook](#) and the [Graduate School website](#) which contain the official policy of the University. Students should note that, in some instances, the program's requirements may be more stringent than those of the Graduate School; in those cases, students should refer to the program's requirements.

Dear PhD Students:


Welcome to the doctoral program in Public Administration at North Carolina State University! The vision of our program is to foster the next generation of intellectual leaders who will define the study and practice of public and nonprofit management and policy. We see in you the potential to help us realize this vision.

This program is - above all things - a community; we learn from each other. The relationships you forge with your colleagues and professors during your time here will challenge and support you throughout the program and into your career.

This Handbook provides important reference information about the program that we hope you find useful. Your faculty advisors, Meggie Romick--our Graduate Services Coordinator, Jerrell Cogburn--our Department Chair, and myself are all here to help should you have additional questions or concerns.

Good luck and welcome aboard!

Sincerely,



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1. Program Description

The doctoral program in Public Administration at North Carolina State University aims to prepare the next generation of scholars who will define the field of public and nonprofit management as professors and scholar-practitioners in universities, governmental agencies and institutes of public affairs. Our PhD program offers advanced training and mentorship in the tools, relevant theories and methodologies for how to pose and answer the questions of greatest relevance to the discipline.

The normal preparation for entering the doctoral program will be the completion of the MPA degree or other relevant graduate degree.

Our program offers its doctoral candidates a number of important strengths and opportunities, including:

1. Award winning faculty recognized for research productivity,
2. Structured research mentoring with opportunities for students to collaborate with faculty on research projects, conference papers and manuscripts,
3. Structured teacher training that prepares students to teach as instructors of record in higher education and obtain the Teaching and Communication Certificate (TCC), and a
4. Location in the state capital and near Research Triangle Park.

2. Degree Requirements

The PhD in Public Administration requires the completion of 72 graduate credit hours, including 60 credit hours of coursework and 12 credit hours of dissertation research. Students having obtained a master's degree in a relevant discipline prior to enrollment in the PhD program may be approved for up to an 18-credit hour reduction, reducing the total doctoral requirements to 54 graduate credit hours. Total degree hours must include at least 36 hours at the doctoral level (700- and 800-level courses).

A typical degree breakdown is as follows:

- Transfer Credit from Master's Degree: 18 credits
- Core Courses: 24 credits
- Management Specialization: 6 credits
- Methods Elective: 3 credits
- Elective Courses: 9 credits
- Dissertation Courses: 12 credits

Additional requirements include:

- Presenting a conference paper or publishing an article in a scholarly journal;
- Passing preliminary written exams;
- Passing preliminary oral examination/Prospectus defense, and
- Passing final oral dissertation defense.

Example Courses and Exam Schedule for Full Time Students¹

Credits

Year 1 Fall	PA 761 - Foundations of Public Administration	3
	PA 715 - Quantitative Policy Analysis	3
	PA 798 - Public Administration Research Methods and Traditions	3
Year 1 Spring	PA 762 - Organizational Theory	3
	PA 765 - Quantitative Research in Public Administration	3
	Management, methods and/or content specialization elective	3
Year 2 Fall	PA 763 - Public Policy Process	3
	PA 766 - Advanced Quantitative Research in Public Administration	3
	PA 885 - Doctoral Supervised Teaching	3
Year 2 Spring	Management, methods and/or content specialization electives	9
Year 2 Summer	Preliminary Written Exams	
Year 3 Fall	PA 803 - Advanced Research Design	3
	Dissertation credits/electives	6
Year 3 Spring	Preliminary Oral Exam/Dissertation Prospectus defense	
	Management, methods or content specialization electives	6
	Dissertation credits/electives	3
Year 4 Fall	Dissertation credits	9
Year 4 Spring	Dissertation credits	9
	Final Oral Exam/Dissertation Defense	
Degree Total		72

Prerequisites

Entering students should have completed a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree or related graduate degree. Students seeking to enroll in the doctoral program prior to having completed a master's degree may complete the MPA en route to completing their PhD.

Core Courses

There are 24 credit hours of required core courses. PA 803 should be taken only after a student has passed their Preliminary Written Exams.

¹ Actual schedules may vary based on student progress and course availability.

Core Courses	Credits
PA 715 Quantitative Policy Analysis	3
PA 761 Foundation of Public Administration	3
PA 762 Public Organization Theory	3
PA 763 Public Policy Process	3
PA 765 Quantitative Research in Public Administration	3
PA 766 Advanced Quantitative Research in Public Administration	3
PA 798 Special Topics: Public Administration Research Methods and Traditions	3
PA 803* Advanced Research Design	3
Core Total	24

*Students may petition to have PA 803 waived if they have an accepted dissertation prospectus.

Required Management Specialization

In addition to core courses, students are required to include a 6-credit management specialization to their plan of work. Eligible courses include but are not limited to:

PA 770 Contemporary Public Management	3
PA 771 Seminar in Nonprofit Organizations	3
PA 798 Special Topics: Collaborative Governance and Public Networks	3
PA 764 Budgeting and Financial Management	3
PA 798 Special Topics: Seminar in Human Resource Management (proposed)	3
Management Specialization Total	6

Methods Electives

Students are also required to take at least one 3-credit course in methodology and should consult with their primary advisor concerning appropriate methods electives to be included on the Plan of Work.

Elective Courses

Elective courses should be chosen in consultation with the student's primary advisor. These courses should complement the student's specific research program, providing the methodological, theoretical and conceptual background necessary for the student to engage as a specialist within their sub-field of interest.

Students on teaching assistantships through the Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP) are required to include PA 885 - Doctoral Supervised Teaching as one elective course on their

Graduate Plan of Work. Successful completion of this course will qualify students to teach as instructors of record within the University. Students must be in at least their second year of the doctoral program before enrolling in PA 885. A maximum of three credit hours of PA 885 can be applied to the doctoral degree program and included on the Graduate Plan of Work.

Dissertation Courses

Students are required to take 12 credits of dissertation credit (PA 895).

2.1. Grades

Students must earn a "C-" or higher in a course in order to receive graduate credit (this does not include PBS or transfer courses, which need a "B" or better to be transferred).

Departmentally, we require a minimum of a 3.20 average on all graduate coursework and on all courses on a student's Plan of Work. If a student falls below a 3.20 during a given semester, they are required to meet with their advisor and the Director of the doctoral program to discuss an improvement plan of action. Subsequent failure to bring grades above a 3.20 in subsequent semesters will result in a review of the student's progress to date and possible termination from the program and/or assistantship.

The Graduate School requires that a student have a minimum of a 3.00 average on all graduate coursework and on all courses on their Plan of Work. This is strictly enforced. If a student has 18 or more credit hours and their GPA falls below a 3.0, they will no longer be eligible for financial aid or an assistantship. While departmental standards may be higher than the Graduate School, students should still familiarize themselves with the Graduate School process for [Academic Difficulty](#).

2.2. Time Limit for Degree Completion

Full-time students are allowed a maximum of four years from admission to the PhD program to attain candidacy for the degree. Half-time students will have four years (or the semester after they have 48 hours of coursework completed including transfer credit - whichever is later) to attain candidacy for the degree.

Failure to abide within these timeframes will result in termination from the program. Students must successfully complete all degree requirements within 10 calendar years. Leave of absence semesters will not be counted against the the allotted time to prospectus defense but will be counted against the overall time to completion requirement in 10 years or less.

2.3. PA 885 - Directed Teaching

Students receiving departmentally-funded GSSP assistantships are required to complete PA 885. PA 885 is a 3-credit course that students will generally complete in the Fall semester of their second year. Upon successful completion of PA 885, students may be cleared to teach as instructors of record within the Department. Successful completion of PA 885 will also meet partial requirements for the Teaching and Communication Certificate (TCC) with the Graduate School. More information about the TCC can be found [here](#).

A maximum of 3-credit hours of PA 885 can be applied to the doctoral degree program and included on the Plan of Work.

2.4. Electives in Other Departments or Universities

Students may include graduate-level, non-PA electives on their Plan of Work, which can come from other departments at NC State or from universities that are part of the Interinstitutional Registration program or the Cooperating Raleigh Colleges organization. All electives must be approved by the student's advisor as applicable to the student's area of specialization in order to count toward their Plan of Work.

The [Interinstitutional Registration](#) program includes UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Greensboro, UNC Charlotte, NC Central University, and Duke University. The [Cooperating Raleigh Colleges](#) organization includes, at the graduate level, Meredith College. Grades from the Interinstitutional Registration program will be calculated in the student's overall GPA, but grades from Meredith College will not.

See the [Course Registration](#) section of the Graduate Handbook for additional information.

2.5. Directed Studies

The program offers three courses that allow students to pursue topic areas unique to their research interests that are not offered by the Department or University. Students may include a total of 6 credits of directed studies (i.e. PA 780, PA 835, PA 893) in their Plan of Work. Students wishing to pursue a directed study as part of their Plan of Work must first consult with their primary advisor to gain approval. Second, students must identify a departmental faculty member willing to serve as a supervisor for this study. Once identified, the student and supervisor should discuss the scope of the directed study. A contract outlining the scope of work and deliverables for the directed study must be drafted by the student and signed by the study supervisor as well as their primary advisor (if different). Forms for directed studies can be found on the [PhD Moodle](#) page.

Directed studies courses are normally not appropriate for satisfying the program's Methodology course requirement.

2.5.1. PA 780 - Independent Study

Independent research or readings under the direct supervision of an individual faculty member. Student work is evaluated based on reports, papers and exams. Students can register for 1-3 credits of PA 780; this is a letter-graded course.

2.5.2. PA 835 - Readings and Research

Readings and research allows students to design a course around extensive readings, research, and writing in a subject of particular interest to them under direct, individual faculty supervision. Students can register for 1-3 credits of PA 835; this is a S/U-graded course.

A maximum of 6 credit hours of PA 835 can be applied to the doctoral degree program and included on the Plan of Work. A student must have the approval of all the PA members of their committee to include more than three credits of PA 835 on their Plan of Work; thus, a student would need to have submitted their Plan of Work prior to enrolling in the second PA 835 course.

2.5.3. PA 893 - Doctoral Supervised Research

Instruction in research under the mentorship of a graduate faculty member. Students can register for 1-9 credits of PA 893; this is a S/U-graded course.

2.6. Post-Baccalaureate Studies (PBS) Credit

A maximum of 6 credits taken at NC State as a PBS student may be applied to the PhD degree. Only one required core course (PA 715, PA 761, PA 762, PA 763, PA 765, PA 766, PA 798, PA 803) may be taken as a PBS student. PBS students can only register for one of the above courses with the approval of the instructor.

2.7. No Foreign Language Requirement

The curriculum for the PhD in Public Administration does not include a foreign language requirement.

2.8. Conference Paper/Published Article Requirement

Students must satisfy the conference paper/published paper requirement by either having a paper accepted and delivered to a professional conference panel or by having a paper accepted to a peer-reviewed professional journal². Papers can be co-authored with either a faculty member or another student but must be approved by the student's primary advisor for acceptability. Conference poster sessions, printed PowerPoint presentations, and oral presentations not accompanied by a required paper submission are not acceptable for this purpose.

2.9. NC State MPA enroute to PhD

Students interested in the PhD who have not completed a graduate degree (i.e., MA, MS, or JD) are eligible to apply to the doctoral program following the completion of their bachelor's degree provided that they complete an MPA enroute to completing their PhD.

Application to the PhD requires the GRE. Students pursuing the MPA enroute to PhD will be required to complete the core classes required for the MPA as well as pass the MPA comprehensive written exams/take the MPA Capstone course. In order to streamline program requirements, MPA enroute to PhD students will also be cleared to enroll in 700- and 800-level PA courses for their specialization/elective credits. Upon successful completion of the MPA, up to 18 additional credits of approved 700- and 800-level PA courses will be allowed to count

² For published papers, the letter of acceptance is acceptable proof of publication; waiting for actual publication is not required.

toward the required 72 (for a total of 36 credits) providing the student remain continuously enrolled at NC State University. Doctoral students must complete their PhD written exams before the MPA can be awarded.

Doctoral students who have successfully passed their PhD written exams are not required to complete the MPA Capstone requirement in order to be awarded their MPA. However, if students elect to terminate their participation in the PhD program prior to passing their comprehensive exams, they must complete the MPA credit and capstone requirements in order to be awarded an MPA. Per the NC State Graduate School policy, students with a break in their enrollment between their MPA and PhD will only be allowed to transfer 18 credits toward their PhD. An example Plan of Work for an MPA enroute to PhD is provided in the table below:

Example Courses and Exam Schedule for Full-time MPA enroute to PhD Students³		Credits
Year 1 Fall	PA 510 - Public Administration Values and Institutions	3
	PA 513 - Public Organization Behavior	3
	PA 515 - Research Methods and Analysis	3
Year 1 Spring	PA 511 - Public Policy Analysis	3
	PA 512 - The Budgetary Process	3
	PA 514 - Management Systems	3
	PA 516 - Effective Public Communication	3
Year 2 Fall	PA 761 - Foundations of Public Administration	3
	PA 715 - Quantitative Policy Analysis	3
	PA 798 - Public Administration Research Methods and Traditions	3
Year 2 Spring	PA 762 - Organizational Theory	3
	PA 765 - Quantitative Research in Public Administration	3
	Management, methods and/or content specialization elective	3
Year 3 Fall	PA 763 - Public Policy Process	3
	PA 766 - Advanced Quantitative Research in Public Administration	3
	PA 885 - Doctoral Supervised Teaching	3
Year 3 Spring	Management, methods and/or content specialization electives	6
Year 3 Summer	Comprehensive Exams	

³ Actual schedules may vary based on student progress and course availability.

Year 4 Fall	PA 803 - Advanced Research Design	3
	Dissertation credits	3
Year 4 Spring	Preliminary Oral Exam/Dissertation Prospectus defense	
	Management, methods or content specialization electives	3
	Dissertation credits	3
Year 5 Fall	Dissertation credits	3
Year 5 Spring	Dissertation credits	3
	Final Dissertation Defense	
Degree Total		72

3. Required Examinations

3.1. Preliminary Written Exams

The successful completion of the PhD in Public Administration degree requires that students demonstrate competence in critical thinking, use of theory, the appropriate application of research methodology, and the ability to situate ideas and perspectives within the foundational and contemporary movements within the field of public administration. Students will demonstrate these competencies through passing a comprehensive exam comprised of four sections:

- Research Methods
- Policy Process
- Foundations of Public Administration
- Organizational Theory

Students can only sit for their written exams once they have (1) been in the program for two academic years (regardless of full- or half-time status), and (2) completed the following core courses: PA 715, PA 761, PA 798, PA 762, PA 765 and PA 766.

The necessary competencies are broader than coursework and demand broad understanding of the state of the art in each of the examination fields.

Written exams are given annually during the summer. The precise timing (i.e. the month, days, and start time) of the exams will be determined annually by the students who have registered to take their written exams that year, in consultation with the DGP. The interval between the two exam days must be no more than seven calendar days.

Students can bring in one 8"x11" sheet of paper with notes (no smaller than 10 pt. font) on one side of the sheet to each day's exam. The sheet must be turned in with that day's exam.

Possible grading in each of the four areas of the exam include “Pass with Distinction,” “Pass,” “Conditional Pass,” and “Fail.” The “Pass with Distinction” is awarded for exceptional performance and is rare. A “Pass” indicates the student need not retake that section of the exam, even if they have failed another section.

A “Conditional Pass” requires a follow-up examination to be held within six weeks⁴ to allow the student to clarify or expand on some or all answers in the given section. The exam will be an oral examination conducted by the reader(s) who gave the conditional pass.

A “Fail” requires a student to retake that section of the exam. Students may be retested on any section they have failed no sooner than one month after the written exam results are released and no later than the next summer examination period. Students may retake any section up to two times, but receiving three fail grades in the same section (the original exam + two retries) shall be cause for termination from the degree program.

3.1.1. Missed Portion of the Preliminary Written Exam

Students with a verified excuse for not taking all or part of their preliminary written exams may be retested no earlier than six weeks after the results are announced. If a student fails the retest, they may retake the failed section up to two more times. Receiving three fail grades in the same section is cause for termination from the degree program.

Students who do not provide a verified excuse for not taking part of their preliminary written exams will receive a Fail in the section or sections missed and will be retested no earlier than six weeks after the results are announced. If a student fails the retest, they may take the failed section one more time. Receiving two fail grades on retests in the same section shall be cause for termination from the degree program.

3.2. Preliminary Oral Exam (Prospectus Defense)

After a student has passed their comprehensive exams, completed all relevant coursework as defined by their primary advisor, written a dissertation prospectus, and received approval to proceed to a prospectus defense from their primary advisor, the student may schedule the Doctoral Preliminary Oral Examination.

The dissertation prospectus is a written document which details the research question(s) that will be addressed in the dissertation, defends the significance of the question(s) within the field of PA, identifies one or more relevant theoretical perspectives to inform analysis of this question, and outlines a methodology for addressing the question(s). The dissertation prospectus frequently consists of the first three chapters of a traditional dissertation; however students, in consultation with their committee, can propose alternative prospectus formats. Examples of alternative formats might include a grant proposal or the introduction and methods sections for each of three proposed publishable papers.

Satisfactory defense of the dissertation prospectus satisfies the Graduate School’s requirement for a preliminary oral examination. Typically, the student will schedule the oral preliminary examination within six months of completing PA 803.

⁴ Within six weeks of when the student is informed of their “Conditional Pass” grade.

The preliminary oral examination is conducted by the student's advisory committee and a Graduate School Representative (GSR). The exam is open to all graduate faculty. The primary purpose of the preliminary oral examination is for the student to demonstrate readiness to conduct dissertation research.

The student must submit the Request to Schedule the Preliminary Oral Exam form to the PA Graduate Services Coordinator at least two weeks before the exam is to take place.

A unanimous vote by the members of the advisory committee is required for the student to pass the preliminary oral exam. Failure to pass the preliminary oral exam terminates the student's program unless the committee recommends re-examination.

In exceptional circumstances, such as if the dissertation changes in nature after the preliminary oral exam, then the entire committee must meet and approve the new prospectus. A copy of the updated signed title page and prospectus should be given to the Graduate Services Coordinator for the student's file.

3.3. Candidacy

A student is admitted to candidacy upon passing the preliminary oral examination without conditions and by meeting the publishable paper requirement.

3.4. Final Oral Exam (Dissertation Defense)

The final oral examination is scheduled after the dissertation and all required coursework are complete, and no earlier than one semester (minimum 4 months) after admission to candidacy.

To assure sufficient time for the presentation and discussion, the candidate should schedule the defense at a time when all committee members can attend for at least two hours. The student should submit the Request to Schedule the Final Oral Exam form to the PA Graduate Services Coordinator at least two weeks before the defense is to take place.

The dissertation defense should be a professional, polished presentation whereby the student defends the methodology used and the conclusions reached. The defense is conducted by the advisory committee and is open to the University community. The committee chair has the option to allow visitors to ask questions; however, it is the chair's responsibility to maintain a scholarly atmosphere and keep the student's best interests foremost.

A unanimous vote of the advisory committee is required to pass the final oral exam.

4. Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation presents the results of the student's original investigation in the field of major interest. In order to be deemed acceptable, it must meet the following standards:

1. Represent a unique and independent contribution to generalizable theory and/or knowledge;

2. Be empirical and aligned with the tenets of methodological rigor embraced by the discipline, and
3. Be written in a manner consistent with the highest standards of scholarship.

The above standards should be benchmarked against the contemporary peer-reviewed literature in the discipline. The student's dissertation committee represents the ultimate arbiters of whether the above standards have been met. Students should consult regularly with their dissertation chair in the development and execution of their dissertation.

Students who fail to make progress on their dissertation for three or more semesters may be recommended for termination.

As a general guideline, program evaluations or other applied research efforts conceptualized and aimed at contributing knowledge specific to a setting, rather than aimed at addressing a broader research question pertinent to the discipline are not acceptable for dissertations. While it is acceptable that students use data gathered as part of larger research projects done in collaboration with faculty, dissertations should reflect the student's unique conceptual contribution to the project. Dissertations should be written entirely by the student with their committee offering only editorial feedback rather than written co-authorship. Published scholarship in which the student is not the lead author should be included only as supporting evidence and is not acceptable for inclusion as findings in a dissertation. Publication of some aspect of the dissertation in the peer reviewed literature is strongly encouraged. Dissertations should be formatted according to the Graduate School requirements, which can be found in the [Theses and Dissertations](#) section of the Graduate Handbook.

4.1. Dissertation Formats

Typically, dissertations should be formatted in either a traditional deductive, traditional inductive or three-paper format.

Traditional Deductive Format

A traditional deductive format is typically associated with a quantitative dissertation, is organized as a single, hypothesis driven study, and is typically formatted into five chapters:

- 1) Introduction: introduce the research question, articulate the research gap, and justify its significance/importance/relevance within the broader literature;
- 2) Theoretical Framing: draw from existing literature and theory to justify a model or set of hypotheses that you will test;
- 3) Method: describe your method for testing your hypotheses;
- 4) Results: report what you found, and
- 5) Discussion: interpret your findings and their relevance to the broader literature, describe their significance for advancing this body of work, articulate limitations that need to be considered in interpreting their import and propose suggestions for practice and future research suggested by your findings.

Traditional Inductive Format

An inductive format is typically associated with a qualitative dissertation, is organized as a single study and is also typically formatted into five chapters:

- 1) Introduction: introduce the purpose of the study, articulate the research gap, justify its significance/importance/relevance within the broader literature and articulate the justification for an inductive approach;
- 2) Theoretical and Contextual Framing: describe what is known and not known and the interpretive lens that you are using to inform the specific research questions you are asking and the approach you are proposing. Because qualitative research is intentionally neither random nor representative, significant emphasis is placed on justification of the study context and participants. Who/what are these people suppose to represent and why is their specific perspective of conceptual interest/relevance to the field;
- 3) Method: describe your method for answering your research question(s). Note: inductive dissertations should be grounded in an established qualitative tradition (e.g., phenomenology, hermeneutics, grounded theory, narrative policy analysis);
- 4) Results: describe what you found, and
- 5) Discussion: interpret your findings and their relevance for advancing/informing theory. Link interpretation to existing literature and theory. Discuss trustworthiness and credibility.

Three-paper Format

With the consent of the student's advisory committee, a three-paper option may be completed in lieu of the traditional dissertation. The allowable three-paper format is intended for students who are seeking academic careers and must be presented in a publishable format for refereed journals prior to graduation. For those seeking a tenure-track position, faculty believe that the three-paper format will give students a competitive advantage in the academic job market. As such, a student selecting this option must satisfy their advisory committee's judgement that each submission is of publishable quality, even though all of the papers may not have already been published, in press, or submitted for review.

For students who elect the three-paper format, the following standards must be met:

1. The three papers must be thematically linked to the student's area of specialization. There should be substantial introductory chapter linking the three papers as well as a brief concluding chapter indicating what was learned;
2. Each of the three papers must include significant work so that they are viewed publishable in a refereed journal, and
3. The research problem, literature review, and methods in each of the papers must not overlap considerably.

4.2. Writing the Dissertation

Students should maintain contact with the chair of their committee as they work on their dissertation. In consultation with the chair, a student should develop a timeframe for reviewing the literature, collecting and analyzing data and writing the dissertation chapters.

4.3. PA 895 and PA 899

After completing PA 803, students are eligible to begin taking their 12 credit hours of required dissertation courses⁵. Students will enroll in PA 895 - Doctoral Dissertation Research to fulfill the 12 credit hours required for the program⁶.

If a student has completed their degree requirements, met the 72 hour credit hour minimum for the program and needs to be enrolled to meet the Graduate School's requirement for continuous enrollment to complete their dissertation, they can register for PA 899 until they complete their dissertation. Students receiving financial aid or seeking to defer student loan repayment should consult the [GSSP Handbook](#) and the [Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid](#) to ensure minimum credit hour requirements are met.

5. Financial Support

5.1. Teaching and Research Assistantships

The program will provide selected full-time students with financial aid assistantship packages funded through the Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP), which includes tuition (but not required fees), health insurance, and a living stipend. This package comes with a 20 hour/week assistantship requirement. Student assignments may include teaching assistantships, instructor of record assistantships, or research assistantships.

Normally, all full-time PhD students are eligible for GSSP tuition support for up to 4 years pending funding availability and satisfactory student performance. Students are encouraged to seek outside funding to support their dissertation research.

Departmentally supported GSSP assignments will be determined by the program director and will be based on departmental needs and past student performance. Student preferences and career aspirations will be taken into consideration as well. Effort will be made to provide opportunities for students to participate in a combination of both research and teaching assistantships so that students may advance both their research and teaching vitas.

First-year students will be assigned as a research assistant to a research mentor. During Year 1, students will have the opportunity to gain valuable research experience working for their mentor on a research project. Typically, students on GSSP will enroll in PA 885 - Doctoral Supervised Teaching and be assigned as a teaching assistant in Year 2 of their program. Upon successful completion of PA 885, GSSP students will be eligible to be assigned as instructors of record to their own classes. The remainder of GSSP-eligible students will be assigned as either teaching assistants, instructors of record, or research assistants.

⁵ It is recommended that students finish all of their core and elective coursework before focusing on the twelve hours of dissertation credit.

⁶ Only 12 credit hours of PA 895 can be included on the Plan of Work and count towards the student's degree total.

5.1.1. TA and RA Workload

TAs and RAs should not accept other employment, including part-time assignments, without the written consent of their primary advisor or chair of their doctoral advisory committee, the program director (for TAs) or the Principal Investigator (for RAs). Such assignments diminish the quality of the academic performance and may lead to unsatisfactory performance as a TA or RA.

5.2. Professional Travel

Pending funding availability, each PhD student may be awarded an annual travel grant valued up to \$500 to cover the cost of presenting research at academic conferences. Students who receive conference support from other sources (e.g. a travel grant sponsored by a professional association) may still submit a request for departmental support of up to \$500. However, students may only receive reimbursement for expenses not otherwise covered by alternative funding sources.

The Department Chair or DGP will solicit nominations for travel grants annually during the Fall semester. Students will be notified by email whether funding has been awarded and the amount awarded. Students will be required to have an approved travel authorization before registering or committing any funds for reimbursement. Monies spent prior to receiving a travel authorization will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Students receiving travel grants for conference presentations are required to submit a one-slide summary of their paper for departmental advertising and social media purposes. Students should submit slides no later than 2 weeks prior to the conference presentation. Slide templates can be found on the [PhD Moodle](#) page.

In addition to Departmental/SPIA support, students are encouraged to seek out other sources of support for student travel. Possible sources include external grants, travel awards sponsored by the conference organizers, and [travel awards sponsored through NC State](#).

6. Graduate Plan of Work (POW)

The Graduate Plan of Work (POW) is a list of courses a student plans to take to fulfill their degree requirements. By the end of the first year or after completing 18 credit hours (whichever comes later) students should have drafted their POW for the doctoral degree. Prior to drafting the POW, students should meet with their advisor to clarify the area(s) of specialization, identify appropriate courses, and select members of their advisory committee.

Students submit their POW through their MyPack Portal.

An acceptable POW for the PhD degree identifies the student's committee chair and committee and lists a minimum of 72 total credit hours (including any transfer credit and required core, elective, and dissertation credits) with at least 36 hours at the doctoral level (700- and 800-level courses).

Students interested in pursuing electives outside the Department should consult with their advisor to confirm whether the desired course is eligible to be included on their POW. Doctoral POWs should consist of 700- and 800-level courses unless written prior approval from the student's advisor has been granted. An approved POW is required before a student sits for their preliminary written exams.

Once the POW is submitted, it must be approved by the student's committee, the DGP, and the Graduate School.

See the [Plan of Graduate Work](#) section of the Graduate Handbook for additional information.

6.1. Changes in Plan of Work

If your POW has been submitted and approved but changes need to be made, please contact the Graduate Services Coordinator to have your POW reset. Once reset, you may swap out the appropriate courses and re-submit for approval.

6.2. 500-level Courses

If approved by their primary advisor, students may include up to 12 credits of 500-level courses on their Plan of Work.

6.3. Ungraded (S/U) Courses

Students may not include ungraded (S/U) 500- or 700-level courses on their Plan of Work.

6.4. Transfer Credit

Students will include all transfer credit from a previous master's degree on one line labeled "transfer credit" using the class code "TR 999" and include the number of hours they are transferring in.

7. Advising

Answers to many routine program questions can be found in this Handbook, on the PhD webpage, on the [PhD Moodle](#) page, or by contacting the Graduate Services Coordinator. For other questions or concerns, your advisor or committee chair is the best source of information.

7.1. Advisor

Incoming students are assigned a research mentor who will serve as their supervisor for their first-year research assistantship and assist the student in choosing courses. Following Year 1, students may elect to continue working with their initially-assigned advisor or may select a different advisor. There is no assumption that students will remain with their first-year advisor. Students wishing to change advisors should do so by setting up a meeting with a potential advisor and verbally asking that faculty member if they would be willing to serve as their advisor.

If the faculty member agrees, the student should notify the Director of the Doctoral Program and the Graduate Services Coordinator of the change.

7.2. Advisory Committee

Typically, students begin developing their advisory committee by first identifying a primary advisor. The advisor can offer assistance to the student in identifying committee members.

The primary function of the graduate committee is to advise the student in all aspects of the educational program and to monitor the student's progress towards the degree. Thus, the committee must be very active throughout the student's program. The committee should provide an intellectually stimulating foundation for the student's professional and scholarly development.

The graduate committee will consist of at least four graduate faculty members, three of whom must be members of the Department of Public Administration. The committee chair or co-chairs must be a full member(s) of the graduate faculty. Members of the graduate faculties at other universities may also serve as one of the four required committee members.

The graduate committee must also include a Graduate School Representative (GSR), which must be outside of the PA Department. If you don't have anyone in mind, the Graduate School can assign a GSR for you at your request. If your committee includes four PA faculty, a fifth member (the GSR) will be added. If you have an outside graduate faculty member you want to include as your fourth committee member, they may also act as your GSR.

7.3. Graduate Services Coordinator

The Public Administration Graduate Services Coordinator (GSC) serves as the principal administrative liaison between the student, the graduate program and the Graduate School. Our current GSC, Meggie Romick, is available year-round to assist students. She can be contacted via email at mromick@ncsu.edu or via phone at 919.515.5159.

7.4. Director of Graduate Programs

For matters that cannot be addressed by the Graduate Services Coordinator or your advisory committee, the PA Director of Graduate Programs (DGP) for the PhD program, Dr. Branda Nowell, is able to help.

8. Review of Student Progress

At the end of every year, the PhD faculty will review the progress of all PhD students to identify individuals having difficulties successfully completing the program. As part of the review process, students will be asked to conduct a self-assessment and to complete a survey for the PhD program's annual report. Students will receive feedback either verbally or in writing from their advisor concerning their progress and performance in the program. If a student has failed to meet milestones and expectations, formal performance feedback from the DGP will be given in writing followed by a required meeting with the student and their advisor to discuss an improvement plan of action.

8.1. Doctoral Program Milestones and Expectations

In addition to the annual review of student progress, students should keep in mind the following timeline. The timeline reflects realistic expectations for doctoral students entering the program with a master's degree.

Full-time Doctoral Students	
Year	Milestones
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First year core courses successfully completed ● Satisfactory performance on research assistantship ● Conference paper accepted for presentation/presented
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Second year required coursework successfully completed ● Satisfactory performance in research or teaching assistantship ● Primary advisor and committee identified ● Research area of specialization identified ● Plan of Work approved ● Preliminary written exams passed ● Conference paper accepted for presentation/presented ● Peer-reviewed manuscript in development or under review
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dissertation prospectus successfully defended and student admitted to candidacy ● All core coursework complete ● Satisfactory performance in research or teaching assistantship ● (if applicable) Academic job market materials prepared and submitted
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All coursework complete ● Satisfactory performance in research or teaching assistantship ● Dissertation defended

Half-time Doctoral Students	
Year	Milestones
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PA 761, PA 715, PA 765 and PA 762 successfully completed
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PA 763, PA 766 and PA 798 successfully completed ● Primary advisor identified ● Research area of specialization identified ● Plan of Work submitted ● Preliminary written exams passed ● Conference paper accepted for presentation
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PA 803 completed ● Management specialization completed ● Methods elective completed ● Peer-reviewed manuscript in development or under review
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All required and elective courses completed ● Dissertation prospectus defended

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissertation progressing - minimum monthly meetings with committee chair
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissertation defended

9. Academic Policies and Procedures

PhD students should review the [NC State Graduate School Handbook](#) for academic policies and procedures for graduate degrees, financial assistance and student codes of conduct. Below are SPIA-specific policies and procedures:

9.1. SPIA Policy on Grade Appeals

Sometimes a student may feel that they have been graded unjustly and may wish to appeal the grade. In most cases, the grade that a student earns is simply a matter of the faculty member's professional judgement. The exercise of professional judgement is not the basis for an appeal. However, a student may appeal a grade on grounds other than a faculty member's professional judgement by taking the following steps:

1. Meet with the faculty member to seek an informal resolution of the complaint.
2. If the student and faculty member cannot reach a satisfactory informal resolution, the student may submit a written complaint to the PhD DGP. The written complaint must state the basis of the student's complaint. Grounds for an appeal include:
 - Prejudice (e.g. racial, religious);
 - Capriciousness (e.g. use of inappropriate grading criteria);
 - Improper procedures (e.g. unannounced changes in grading policy), or
 - Unusual personal involvement in the relationship with the student.
3. The DGP will investigate the complaint. If it is appropriate and possible, the DGP will commission a review of the written materials by a second professional.
4. If a resolution is not reached, the DGP will make a determination of the appropriate action to be taken with respect to the complaint. The DGP will recommend a resolution to the instructor.

If the student disagrees with the results of the appeals process, the DGP may request the Dean's office to establish a grievance committee to investigate the complaint further. That procedure, which should be employed only in rare cases, will be governed by the [University Administrative Regulations office](#).

9.2. Academic Integrity

The following statement (used with permission) describes a range of behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty.

"Plagiarism, or presenting another's works or ideas as one's own, is a form of stealing. The instructor reserves the right to examine any source used by the student before giving a grade on a paper, and to give an 'incomplete' in the course if necessary, to allow time to obtain sources. Students should be prepared to show source material to the instructor for the purpose of verifying information. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Academic dishonesty includes the following offenses:

1. Claiming a paper written by someone else (including unpublished papers) as your own work.
2. Turning in a paper that contains paraphrases of someone else's ideas but does not give proper credit to that person for those ideas.
3. Turning in a paper that is largely a restatement in your own words of a paper written by someone else, even if you give credit to that person for those ideas. The thesis and organizing principles of a paper must be your own.
4. Turning in a paper that uses the exact words of another author without using quotation marks, even if proper credit is given in a citation, or that changes the words only slightly and claims them to be paraphrases.
5. Turning in the same paper, even in a different version, for two different courses without permission of both professors involved.
6. Using any external source (notes, books, other students, etc.) for assistance during an in-class exam, unless given permission to do so by the professor.⁷

See the [Code of Student Conduct](#) for more details.

The Public Administration faculty has agreed that violations of academic integrity must have consequences. Consequently, students who cheat (see points 1 and 6 above) may receive at least an F in the course; other forms of dishonesty (see points 2-5 above) may result in at least a "0" for the assignment.

10. Registration and Graduate Procedures

All students register for courses using the online system accessed through MyPack Portal. Directions for accessing the system and registering for classes can be found on the [Registering for Classes](#) page.

For the Spring and Fall semesters, a minimum of 9 credit hours per semester is needed to be considered "Full Time"⁸ until the student reaches a semester in which a course load of at least 3 credit hours will reach an accumulated total equal to the minimum number of hours required by their program (i.e. 72). The student will continue to be considered full time until they complete their thesis or dissertation, as long as they enroll for at least 3 credit hours.

A minimum of 4.5 credit hours per semester is needed to be considered "Half Time"⁹.

Graduate students are not required to be registered during the Summer; however, students who receive a stipend but who are not enrolled in the University during a period of five weeks or more are subject to Social Security tax withholding. Should a student enroll during a Summer term, one credit hour during the Summer is considered full time.

⁷ Kendra Stewart et. al., Columbia University.

⁸ PhD students on GSSP are required to maintain full-time status. Full-time status can also be a factor for other types of financial aid.

⁹ Keep in mind that different entities within the University classify full time and half time differently. The Financial Aid Office and the Office of Registration and Records may require an additional number of courses to be considered full time during the summer semester(s).

See the [Minimum Registration and Residence Requirements](#) section in the Graduate Handbook for additional information.

10.1. Continuous Registration

Students must register for graduate courses at NC State for at least six semesters beyond the baccalaureate degree. After a student is admitted and enrolls for the first time, they are required to maintain continuous registration. Continuous registration refers to a student's enrollment each semester, excluding summer sessions, until they have graduated or their program has been terminated.

If a student has reached the required 72 credit hours for the degree program but is still working on their dissertation AND is still eligible to receive GSSP, they must enroll for 3 credits to maintain full-time status. If the student has reached 72 credits and is NOT on GSSP, they will be required to enroll in at least 1 credit hour of PA 899 during the Fall and Spring semesters to meet the continuous registration requirement. If a student is defending/graduating in one of the Summer semesters, they will need to register for one credit hour during the Summer session as well.

10.2. Minimum Residence Credit Requirements

At least 2 residence credits are necessary in continuous residence (registration in consecutive semesters) as a graduate student at NC State. Failure to take courses in the summer does not break continuity.

Summer Credit Hours	Residence Credits
9 or more	1
6-8	2/3
Less than 6 (including registration in 590, 690 series)	1/3

Summer coursework can only be used in partial fulfillment of the residency requirement. A single summer session is equal to one-half of the corresponding amount for a regular semester (e.g. 6 semester hours carried during a summer session will earn $\frac{1}{3}$ of a residence credit; less than 6 hours will earn $\frac{1}{6}$ of a residence credit).

See the [Minimum Registration and Residence Requirements](#) section in the Graduate Handbook for additional information.

10.3. Leave of Absence

A student in good academic standing who must interrupt their graduate program for good reason may request a Leave of Absence from graduate study for a definite period of time not to

exceed one year total within a given graduate program. The request must be made at least one month prior to the term involved. Upon endorsement of the request by the student's primary advisor and the DGP, and approval by the Graduate School, the student would not be required to be registered during the leave of absence. The time that the student spends on an approved leave of absence will be included in the time allowed to complete the degree.

Students who fail to get prior permission and do not register will have their graduate admission terminated and will have to apply for readmission to graduate school. There is no guarantee that readmission will be granted.

10.4. Withdrawal from University

Students who wish to drop all their semester or Summer-session courses must officially withdraw from the University. A student who has pre-registered and prepaid is considered registered and must officially withdraw unless they have notified the University prior to the beginning of the semester.

Students considering withdrawal should consult their primary advisor and refer to the [Withdrawal from the University](#) section of the Graduate Handbook for policies and procedures on officially withdrawing from the University.

Students using the Interinstitutional Registration program must also contact the NC State Department of Registration and Records to initiate the paperwork necessary for withdrawing from the class roll at the other institution.

10.5. Filing for Graduation

Students will fill out a Graduation Application through their MyPack Portal to apply for graduation. Instructions can be found on the [Apply for Graduation page](#). The Graduation Application should be filled out at the start of the semester the student intends to graduate, and the student should also notify the Graduate Services Coordinator of their intent to graduate at this time.

Graduation Application deadlines are listed on the [Graduation page](#). A student must submit their Graduation Application by the deadline in order to be considered for that semester's graduation. Late applications will not be considered.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they complete their coursework during the semester they apply to graduate, have no incompletes on their records and have no library fines or other outstanding fees. Failure to pay attention to these details may result in the Graduate School placing a "hold" on the diploma.

A graduate student who establishes a graduation date by enrolling in the last course on the Plan of Work and who does not complete all the requirements (incomplete grades) by the graduation date is put on "hold" for a period of thirty days following graduation. The Graduate School will notify the student and their DGP of this action by letter. If the student does not complete the outstanding requirement within thirty days after the graduation date, their name is removed from the graduation list and added to the next graduation list following the removal of the outstanding

requirement(s). If the student's time limit for the degree expires before the outstanding requirement is met, their graduate program will be terminated unless a request for extension is submitted to and approved by the Graduate School.

11. Department Resources

11.1. Work Space

Work space has become increasingly scarce on campus. Every effort will be made to ensure that TAs and RAs working with SPIA faculty have access to functional work space. SPIA currently has one office in Winston Hall (Room 122) for PhD students' shared use. Students working with faculty in other University departments or units should request work space within that unit.

11.2. PA Doctoral Student Listserv

All incoming PhD students are added to the doctoral student listserv, which is used to send out program announcements, job announcements for graduates and alumni and calls for papers. Every effort is made to include descriptive subject headers for easy deletion.

12. Campus Resources

12.1. Counseling Center

The [Counseling Center](#) is trained to address academic, emotional and social concerns that are common to college students and may impact overall wellbeing. Counseling services for students include the following counseling types: personal, addictive behaviors, academic, group, career, psychiatric services, and veteran.

Any enrolled student who has paid their student fees may visit the Counseling Center at no additional cost.

12.2. Disability Services Office

The [Disability Services Office](#) determines eligibility for accommodations for students with disabilities.

12.3. GLBT Center

The [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Center](#) serves students of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions. The GLBT Center offers a multitude of events and workshops to help engage, develop and empower members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities and their allies.

12.4. Graduate School Professional Development Programs

The Graduate School offers a number of [Professional Development Programs](#) for graduate students. Typical program offerings relevant to PhD students include:

- PhD Colloquium
- US Academic Writing for International Graduate Students (Parts A & B)
- New Teaching Assistant Workshops
- Preparing the Professoriate

12.5. Graduate Student Association

The [Graduate Student Association](#) is a student-led group that represents and acts on behalf of Graduate Students at NC State to improve the satisfaction and scholarship of their members during their time at State. The GSA serves graduate students by participating in student government, appointing students to university standing committees and developing internal programs to assist graduate students with research and funding.

12.6. NC State Cares

[NC State Cares](#) case managers work collaboratively with campus resources to provide support for students who are in crisis or who are identified as exhibiting concerning or worrisome behaviors.

12.7. Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity

The [Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity](#) (OIED) is committed to fostering an inclusive, accessible and diverse intellectual and cultural campus experience related to the mission of NC State. The OIED offers a number of trainings and workshops that promote diversity and inclusion.

12.8. Office of International Services

The [Office of International Services](#) (OIS) assists future and current international students on campus. Along with hosting the International Student Orientation, OIS provides international students with helpful information as they transition to NC State.

12.9. Student Health Services

[Student Health Services](#) is designed to meet the health needs of NC State students. As a part of tuition and fees, the health fee at NC State covered routine visits to providers (physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners). Services with a charge are offered at prices competitive with the community.

12.10. Thesis and Dissertation Support Services

The [Thesis and Dissertation Support Services](#) program is designed to provide graduate students and postdoctoral scholars with oral and written communication support and skills that can be applied to all aspects of academic, personal and professional life.

13. Student Addendums

13.1. Conferences: How To

Conferences are critical to developing your research career. They allow you to present your research and receive scholarly feedback. Further, they provide an opportunity to meet with other PhD students and professors in the field, which can develop your network. As you attend conferences in your field and subfield(s), you will begin to see the same attendees, and develop a group of colleagues.

Conferences tend to have three submission types: a single paper, a poster, or a full panel.

Single Paper

For a single paper, you can typically submit a full paper or a poster. A full paper will require that you send the paper in advance of the conference for peer review and present it on a panel with 3-4 related papers.

Poster Session

A poster submission requires that you make a full poster detailing the paper and then present it at a poster session with 10-15 other posters.

Full Panel

One additional option is to submit a full panel. This would require that you solicit 3 to 4 papers on a topic related to your paper to form the panel. You would then need to write an abstract for the panel and submit it with all the paper abstracts. It is uncommon for a PhD student to form a panel but you can work with your advisor to form it. At some conferences submitting a panel (or being included on a panel) can increase your chances of being accepted.

There is a general timeline to consider when submitting to a conference. Typically, a call for papers will go out anywhere from 9 to 12 months prior to the actual conference date. For example, you would submit a proposal in early Fall to attend a conference in mid-Spring. All conferences have a different submission schedule and subscribing to the conference newsletter, checking the website, and ask your professors for exact dates will help keep you informed. Submission dates tend to be set in stone, so if you miss the date, you will have to wait for the next year.

There are various types of conferences a PA student may attend. There are general PA conferences at the national and regional level. A large generalist national conference is held by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) each year in March. ASPA accepts a variety of proposals. Smaller regional conferences include Southeastern Conference on Public Administration (SECoPA), Northeastern Conference on Public Administration (NECoPA), and the Midwest Public Affairs Conference (MPAC). SECoPA and NECoPA are held in the early Fall

while MPAC is in the Spring. Some students may also wish to consider presenting at prominent political science conferences, where the program often includes papers and panels on public policy and public administration.

PA General Conferences

- National:
 - American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) - *Spring*
- Regional:
 - Southeastern Conference on Public Administration (SECoPA) - *Fall*
 - Northeastern Conference on Public Administration (NECoPA) - *Fall*
 - Midwest Public Affairs Conference (MPAC) - *Spring*

PA Subfield Conferences

- Association for Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) - *Fall*
- Association for Budgeting and Financial Management (ABFM) - *Fall*
- Public Management Research Association (PMRA) - *Spring*
- Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) - *Fall*

Political Science Conferences

- American Political Science Association (APSA) - *Fall*
- Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) - *Spring*
- Southern Political Science Association (SPSA) - *Spring*

13.2. Navigating & Negotiating Co-authorship

Our program values student-led research and student-professor research collaboration. Our commitment to scholarship includes the expectation that each of us, whether student or professor, makes a meaningful contribution to our collective body of knowledge. Teams of professors and students, or all-student teams, work together to produce a variety of different forms of scholarly work: conference presentations, journal articles, book chapters, blog posts, op-eds, white papers, etc. When working together, it is helpful to thoughtfully consider the following dimensions of collaboration with your co-authors/co-contributors:

- NC State PA Faculty are committed to student development, and collaborative research is among the most valuable learning experiences for our doctoral students. This experience can be fruitful for all parties if the co-contributors commit to early, transparent, and ongoing conversations about expectations regarding workload and work assignments, authorship, intended product and working habits.
- Overcommitment, blown deadlines, procrastination and rushed or incomplete work causes a great deal of frustration to your co-contributors and may result in your having limited opportunities for future research.
- Trying to co-author a paper in your first or second semester can be unrealistic and counterproductive; instead, you are encouraged to use the first year as a time to identify the research questions that most engage you, opportunities for research and professors and fellow students with whom you would like to work. In the second and third years,

students often work on conference presentations and/or journal article drafts, which may continue on through the dissertation research period.

- All-student writing teams that evolve out of group paper assignments for courses should not assume that the course instructor is available for extensive consultation after the course is completed. Group paper assignments often change dramatically on the journey to publication; after the course is complete, students should assure that they have clear agreement from all parties involved on the trajectory of the work.
- Determining the order of authorship (i.e. lead author, second author, etc.) can be a complex task and may evolve over the course of the project. An early conversation to set out criteria and expectations for authorship can eliminate friction later on; there are tools and resources to make these conversations more objective.
 - APA - [Determining and Negotiating Authorship](#)
 - Phd On Track - [Co-authorship](#)
- Other fields may have different professional expectations, and students working across disciplines benefit from educating themselves about professional norms in the relevant fields and journals.

13.3. Summer & 5th-year Funding

While a great deal of student support is often provided for the first four years of a student's time in the program, it is the responsibility of the student to find a way to support themselves over the Summer, and to establish the types of relationships necessary to secure funding for a 5th year of study, if needed. Ideally, students will seek positions over the Summer that will contribute to their academic growth, and help further prepare them for the path they wish to pursue after graduation. This means thinking strategically about the type of experience you have gained from the program so far and what experiences you may be lacking--either for your own intellectual growth and/ or for your CV--that could be filled with a Summer position.

As a student, there are a number of important keys to accessing Summer opportunities. Seeking additional experiences beyond GSSP to enhance your understanding is an important part of earning a PhD. For instance, if you are interested in doing a survey for your dissertation but do not have any survey experience, consider seeking Summer work with a faculty member doing survey research. If you are interested in working with large data sets and have not had a chance to do so, familiarize yourself with faculty members who do this type of work. In some cases, your interests may align with funding opportunities, but in some cases, you may have to volunteer your time to gain experience in a certain area. Sometimes volunteering some time to work on a paper or help with a class during the semester may help establish a good working relationship that comes with Summer funding opportunities.

The keys to accessing Summer opportunities are applicable to accessing 5th year funding as well because recommendations from faculty, previous experience working with faculty, and teaching reviews matter. While a number of students have accepted full-time employment outside the department in their later years of study, doing so can delay the dissertation completion timeline, and this is an important consideration for students considering this option.

For those that choose to remain at the university and seek an additional year of funding while they complete their dissertation, there are several options to consider. One option is to seek funding from an outside source, through a [grant or fellowship](#). Another is to pursue teaching opportunities at another local college or university. A third option is to seek a position on a

project at NCSU to gain additional experience while completing your dissertation, access to which is largely contingent on previous work.

13.4. The Job Market

The Public Administration PhD program is designed to prepare students for teaching and research in public management and related fields. Secondly, the degree is meant to prepare research specialists for governmental agencies and public affairs institutes. While there are substantive overlaps in the skills needed to land academic, government, or industry positions, there exist ways to tailor the graduate school experience and curate your professional profile to the job market of your choosing.

13.4.1. Academia

As competition for tenure-track academic positions increases, so do the credentials of candidates applying for those jobs. Graduates who have transitioned successfully into assistant professorships routinely secure several publications in peer-reviewed journals and boast consistent participation in prestigious conferences upon entering the job market, typically nine months to a year before degree completion. These individuals tend also to be savvy networkers, both with faculty at NC State and the larger profession. Because the academic job hunt is about skill *and* cultural fit, having a connection--through primary faculty at NC State or a colleague from the conference circuit--can be incredibly helpful in landing interviews.

13.4.2. Academia Explained

Step 1: Know the Landscape

Academic jobs come in a few flavors and require slightly different preparation. Here is the general lay of the land:

- **R1 Doctoral Programs**: The most competitive positions are generally Research 1 (R1). These positions are with major research universities, are highly research intensive, generally come with a 2 course per semester teaching load and generally include mentoring doctoral students. MPA and/or undergraduate teaching/mentoring responsibilities are frequently included as well. In these positions, peer-reviewed publications and involvement in externally-funded research is given the greatest weight in the job search process, although some teaching experience is considered a plus. If you are passionate about having autonomy to develop your own research program and like the idea of working with doctoral students, this may be the right fit for you.
- **Master's Programs**: There are also numerous academic programs that offer a Master of Public Administration or related degree and may also have an undergraduate program. These positions may have higher teaching loads (e.g., 3 courses per semester) because there is not time spent on doctoral student committee work. In the job search process, there is often a more balanced emphasis on research productivity (i.e., peer reviewed

publications, conference activity) and teaching experience. If on the faculty, you will likely be expected to maintain an active research program but the publishing requirements for tenure will typically be slightly lower than they would be at a R1 doctoral program. If you prefer a more balanced emphasis on teaching and research, this may be the right fit for you.

- Bachelors-only Programs: Finally, students interested in academic careers but whose primary passion lies in teaching may find a good fit in bachelors-only programs. These programs offer bachelor degrees in related fields such as Political Science, Public Affairs and Urban Affairs. Some positions are housed in private liberal arts colleges, some in four year universities and some in R1 universities. Teaching responsibilities can vary widely in these programs, but a 4 course per semester teaching load is not uncommon. Because your primary focus will be on teaching, the research expectations are generally considerably less compared to an R1 doctoral program. However, recent conversations with colleagues who work at these institutions suggests that having an active research program is still an expectation for tenure and promotion. Further, research productivity is a significant consideration in weighting your application in the job search process.

Step 2: Build a Winning Vita Starting from Day 1

Building an academic vita that will be competitive on the academic job market starts before you even begin graduate school and should be your primary focus each day that you are here at NC State. While attending classes and getting good grades is important, it won't be enough to get you an academic job. In the vast majority of positions on the academic job market, three things will always be key considerations in reviewing your application for a position:

1. Is there evidence that this candidate has the potential to be a productive scholar?
2. Is there evidence that this candidate can effectively teach courses that we need taught?
3. Is there evidence that this candidate will be a good colleague and an asset to our department?

Let's take each one in turn:

1. Is there evidence that this candidate has the potential to be a productive scholar?

This is often viewed as the most challenging credential to achieve but it is possible if you are proactive. Evidence of potential for scholarship includes (in order of impact): peer reviewed publications, book chapters/encyclopedia publications, participation in seeking and obtaining external funding and conference presentations. The process starts before you start graduate school in choosing a program with faculty who are doing research that is of interest to you. This is critical because you will need people who can mentor you in developing your area of specialization and write strong letters of recommendation on your behalf. Once you have been admitted to your selected program, you will want to start building a relationship with those faculty members from Day 1. This is because – while it is possible for a talented few to develop research skills working more or less independently - most students require more intensive mentoring and experience.

During your first couple years, you should focus on seeking out opportunities for gaining research experience, presenting at conferences and publishing. This experience is most often gained by working with a faculty member on their research program or asking them to co-author with you on one of your projects. Access to these opportunities is NOT guaranteed and is awarded on a competitive basis based on your performance and demonstrated potential. While all are committed to doctoral student training, it is important to recognize that faculty in R1 doctoral programs have many competing demands on their time.

Strategies such as proactively reaching out and expressing interest in working with a faculty member, asking for help when you are struggling, and developing a reputation for being extremely dependable, hard working and conscientious will help make sure you are sought out when research opportunities are available. Each year, you should plan on presenting a paper at at least one academic conference. By the time you are ready to go on the academic job market – you should strive to have a minimum of one peer reviewed publication in press and one under review (three or four publications are not uncommon in the pool of students applying for R1 Doctoral program positions).

2. Is there evidence that this candidate can effectively teach courses that we need taught?

Most academic positions will expect at least minimal teaching experience. By the time you graduate, you should plan to have taught at least one course as the instructor of record. You will then be able to use your teaching evaluations as evidence of your capabilities as an instructor. Other forms of evidence include obtaining the Graduate School's [Teaching and Communication Certificate](#). Plan to discuss your teaching goals with your primary advisor to ensure that obtaining your teaching qualifications are part of your plan of work.

3. Is there evidence that this candidate will be a good colleague and an asset to our department?

A surprising number of hiring decisions get made among equally qualified candidates based on who the department feels would be the best colleague to work with. Departmental citizenship and service to the profession is an often neglected part of a student's academic CV. You should seek out opportunities to participate in the functioning and governance of your department, college and/or University by volunteering for committees. You are also advised to get involved in professional associations (ASPA, SECOPA, AoM, PRMA). Service to these associations not only provides evidence of good citizenship but also provides valuable networking opportunities with others in your field who may be on hiring committees.

Step 3: Know your Timeline

One of the idiosyncrasies of the academic job market is that job postings for academic jobs are posted as early as 12 months before an August start date. This means that you should plan on being "market-ready" almost a full year before you plan to graduate. For example, if you plan to graduate in May of 2020 and hope to start work the following August, you'll need to plan to have a winning vita job market ready to apply for positions in August 2019. You'll need to have

defended your dissertation proposal before you go on the market. Plan ahead and discuss with your advisor what a reasonable timeline might look like given your career aspirations.

Step 4: Develop Your Application Materials the Summer Before You Enter the Market

Academic position applications generally require the following elements:

1. A cover letter,
2. A [winning] vita,
3. A statement of research interests,
4. A statement of teaching philosophy, and
5. Three letters of recommendation.

In preparation for the academic job market, you should plan to work with your primary advisor on application materials the summer preceding your application year. You should plan on several rounds of review and revision on your research and teaching statements in consultation with your advisor. There are multiple online resources to assist you in developing these materials as well. You will also want to make sure to give your letter writers plenty of advanced notice so that they can write a strong letter for you. Identifying who you will be requesting letters from should be done the year prior to applying for positions. Letter writers should be faculty members who have considerable experience working with you and who can speak to the three questions described above; do not wait until your last year to start building these relationships!!

Step 5: Know What to Expect

Academic job searches are unlike most jobs you've likely ever applied for. Once you submit your application, it is reviewed by a search committee generally comprised of departmental faculty. The pool of applicants is then often narrowed down to a set of 8-12 semi-finalists who are invited to participate in a phone interview. The phone interview is often relatively short - often 30 minutes or less. Some search committees now use Skype or online conferencing for the phone interview portion.

The focus of the phone interview is generally to provide you the opportunity to describe your program of research and teaching experience. It also give the committee the opportunity to tell you a bit more about the position and answer questions. Because you have been identified as a semi-finalist, the focus of the phone interview is generally seeking to determine how well you fit the needs of the department. The search committee will then generally select their top 3 or 4 candidates who will be invited for an on-campus interview. An on campus interview generally takes place over 1.5-2 day period and includes individual and group meetings with faculty and students, a research presentation or "job talk" and in some cases a teaching presentation.

Step 6: Prepare Your Job Talk

The academic "job talk" is one of the most important parts of the on-campus interview. Through this presentation, faculty and students at the hiring institution are seeking to ascertain a multitude of things including: 1) your methodological and theoretical skills, 2) how interesting your research program is, 3) what you will be like as an instructor, and 4) what you will be like as a colleague.

Because a lot rides on this presentation, it is not something you want to go into unprepared. As soon as you start graduate school, you should make a point of attending as many job talks as possible and debriefing with faculty about what worked and what didn't about the talk. The summer before you plan to go on the job market, you should start to plan your job talk. Generally you will be presenting research from your dissertation so you'll want to stage your analysis accordingly. You should discuss your job talk with your primary advisor. Presenting a version of your job talk at an academic conference in the summer preceding your market year is also a great idea. Once you start submitting applications, schedule a time to present your job talk to your primary advisor and get feedback. Once you feel like the job talk is in pretty good shape, it is a good idea to schedule a brownbag to present the talk in front of the Department. The Department has had great success with scheduling students to present their research at the noon research colloquia and has held practice job talks for students. This will ensure that you are well-practiced and ready for an on-campus interview.

Step 7: Prepare For a Phone Interview

As with all the steps before, preparation is key. Remember, this interview is all about determining fit, so make sure to familiarize yourself with the program, university and area before the interview. You'll want to prepare a few strategic questions that a) demonstrate interest in and knowledge of the department and b) reinforce what a great fit you are. For example, if you are a non-profit scholar and the department has an Institute for Nonprofit Studies, you could plan to ask about the Institute and opportunities for collaboration.

Step 8: Prepare for an On-campus Interview

Congratulations! You've been offered an opportunity to visit a campus for an extended interview. If you do not already have a polished job talk, that is the first step. Other "to dos" include:

- Research the faculty and their research programs so that you'll have things to talk about during one on one meetings with them;
- Develop a list of questions that you can ask about the position and the department. Again, these questions should focus on demonstrating fit and helping you get a sense of what the department is like. Save the "How much summer salary can I get my first year" questions for after they offer you the job;
- Go buy a suit (some departments/faculty care a great deal about the formality of attire, others don't – regardless, you'll never get criticized for wearing a suit and you might get criticized if you don't so best to hedge your bets);
- Make sure you have comfortable shoes. On-campus interviews are long days, often including walking tours of the campus. It is hard to be charming when your feet are killing you;
- Consult with your advisor and other department faculty to see if they know people at the institution to which you've been invited. You may be able to learn things about the institution that will be helpful for you to know before you arrive for the interview.

Step 9: Negotiate a Good Contract.

You've been offered the job. Even though you probably will want to, do not immediately say "Great, when do I start?" during this call. Politely thank him/her, express how exciting this opportunity is and that you look forward to receiving the letter of offer. Then get off the phone and call your advisor or other mentor to talk through contract negotiations. Such negotiations include teaching load expectations, start-up funding, expectations for graduate student support, reimbursement for relocation expenses and a range of other issues.

13.4.3. Government & Industry

Graduate students are some of the most highly-educated members of society. In both industry and government, PhDs are sought-after job candidates in roles requiring skills in research, public service, consulting, analytics, teaching and writing.

Translating academic skill into different contexts is no easy feat. Nevertheless, former NC State Public Administration PhD students have gone to work for the federal government, professional research institutes, nonprofits and health care organizations. Simply put, recasting yourself for a non-academic position requires thoughtful editing. Much of what is valued in academia (e.g. courses taught, presentations given, books and articles published) can be less important in some professional circles. It is still important to be active on these fronts, particularly publishing, but consider putting additional effort into building leadership experience (e.g. administrative and professional service opportunities in the program and/or leadership with roles professional and academic associations) and technical skills (e.g. data management, data analysis, survey methods, proficiency in SPSS, R, SAS, STATA, etc).