



# **HANDBOOK FOR THE PHD IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM**

**School of Public Affairs  
University of Colorado Denver**

**Updated December 2020**

**For further information about the  
Doctoral Program contact:**

**Dr. Chris Weible  
Director, Doctoral Program**

**Student Services Team  
*Dawn Savage (A-L)*  
*Antoinette Sandoval (M-Z)***

**School of Public Affairs  
University of Colorado Denver  
1380 Lawrence Street Center, Suite  
500  
Denver, CO 80202  
chris.weible@ucdenver.edu  
(303) 315-2010  
Fax: (303) 315-2220  
www.spa.ucdenver.edu**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	4-6
	Purpose of Handbook	4
	School of Public Affairs	4
	The Doctorate in Public Affairs	4
	Residency and Time Required for PhD Degree	5
	Doctoral Administration/Director of Doctoral Programs	5
	Student Responsibilities	5
	Faculty Expectations	6
	Financial Aid	6
<b>II.</b>	<b>ADMISSION</b>	7-9
	Admissions Calendar	7
	Admission Requirements and Selection Criteria	7
	Application Process	8
	Personal Interviews	8
	Admission Categories	9
<b>III.</b>	<b>GENERAL TIMELINE AND THE ADVISORY PROCESS</b>	9-11
	Role of the Director of the Doctoral Program	9
	Role of the Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair	10
	Mentor Activities Recommended for Faculty	10
	Mentee Activities Recommended for Students	10
	PhD Student Association	11
	PhD Committee Student Representative	11
	Annual Progress Report	11
<b>IV.</b>	<b>DOCTORAL COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS</b>	11-13
	Credit Hours	11
	Common Core Courses	12
	Methodology Proficiency	13
	Other Coursework	13
<b>V.</b>	<b>POLICIES ON COURSE COMPLETION, GRADE CHANGES, ETC</b>	13-15
	Retaking Courses	13
	Incompletes	14
	Drops and Withdrawals	14
	Retroactive Grade Changes	15
<b>VI.</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAM</b>	15-17
	Minimum GPA Requirement	15
	Annual Performance Evaluation	15
	Comprehensive Examination	16
	Admission to Candidacy	17
<b>VII.</b>	<b>THE DISSERTATION</b>	17-18

	Pre-Dissertation Review	17	
	Credit Hours during Dissertation Work	18	
	Dissertation Process	19	
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>DISSERTATION COMMITTEE</b>		19-21
	Purpose	19	
	Committee Composition	19	
	Committee Selection	20	
	Role of Chair and Committee	20	
	Committee Authority	20	
	Changing Committee Members	20	
<b>IX.</b>	<b>THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE PROPOSAL</b>		21-23
	Selection of a Topic	21	
	Purpose of the Dissertation Proposal Defense	21	
	Scheduling	21	
	The Proposal	22	
	Conduct of Dissertation Proposal Defense	22	
	Preparation of Final Proposal	23	
<b>X.</b>	<b>CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION</b>		23-24
	Faculty Availability	23	
	Institutional Review Board Approval	24	
	Specifications for Preparation	24	
	Committee Relations	24	
	Use of Professional Assistance	24	
<b>XI.</b>	<b>THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE</b>		24-26
	Scheduling	24	
	Conduct of Defense	25	
	Possible Outcomes	25	
	Review by the Graduate School	25	
	Graduation	26	
<b>XII.</b>	<b>ACADEMIC POLICIES</b>		26-30
	Philosophy	26	
	Grade Point Average	26	
	Probation/Dismissal	26	
	Leave of Absence	27	
	Transfer Credit	27	
	Independent Study Policy	27	
	Time Limit	28	
	Graduate School Rules	28	
	SPA Grievance Policy/Procedures	28	
	<b>APPENDIX: SAMPLE TIMETABLE</b>		31

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK**

This Handbook will facilitate a student's progress toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Public Affairs, encompassing the fields of public administration, public management, and public policy, as well as criminal justice for those students electing to concentrate in that area. The School of Public Affairs (SPA) and the University of Colorado Denver's Graduate School have procedures, rules and regulations for the PhD that must be followed to obtain the degree. This Handbook explains those procedures, rules, and regulations, and PhD students are expected to review and follow the Handbook. SPA updates the Handbook regularly, and the contents are subject to change; the Handbook is not intended to be a contract. If you have any questions, consult with the Director of the Doctoral Program, the Student Services Team, or your faculty advisor.

### **SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The University of Colorado's School of Public Affairs offers and administers the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Affairs. The content of the courses, administration of doctoral exams, and the dissertation process and defense are the responsibility of the SPA faculty and the PhD Committee, headed by the Director of the Doctoral Program and overseen by the Graduate School at the University of Colorado Denver. SPA faculty have a broad base of practical experience, as well as academic and research skills and accomplishments. SPA has an interdisciplinary faculty with a broad range of specializations within the field of public affairs. SPA houses various research centers to enhance the applied and basic research capabilities of the school.

### **THE DOCTORATE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The doctoral program is designed to address the strong demand for the services of people who are skilled in the theory, concepts, and research areas of public administration, public policy, public management, and criminal justice. It is a research-oriented degree. The program develops the conceptual, research, and analytic skills and knowledge of its students so that they will be able to advance the study and practice of public affairs in their subsequent careers. Graduates are able to generate and execute state of the art research on complex governing systems.

The PhD prepares its graduates for positions in academia and consulting firms, public management and administration, public policy analysis, politics and advocacy, and nonprofits. Many students are already practitioners working in government, private sector organizations concerned with government, and non-profit organizations; others are professionals, such as attorneys, health workers, court administrators, and others who desire additional training that will enable them to participate more effectively in the process of administration, management, policymaking, and politics.

## **RESIDENCY AND TIME REQUIRED FOR PHD DEGREE**

The rules of the Graduate School and of the University govern residency, enrollment, and completion requirements. Students are required to take a minimum of six credit hours of courses during both the fall and spring semesters. Exceptions require approval of the PhD Director. They are also required to establish and maintain residency in the State of Colorado to be eligible for in-state tuition; see the University catalog for specific details. Additional courses are offered during the summer semester. Most courses and seminars are offered during evening hours, or weekends on an intensive basis.

Students starting the doctoral program with a master's degree in a related field (e.g., a Master in Public Administration) can provide a useful foundation for many of the core courses but a graduate degree is not essential or required. Students can expect to take two to three years to complete all course requirements for the PhD and then to take two or three additional years to complete the dissertation. Most students complete the degree in 4 to 6 years. The Graduate School of the University of Colorado Denver requires that doctoral students complete their degrees within eight total years from their entrance date, although extra time may be granted for circumstances beyond the candidate's control.

## **DOCTORAL ADMINISTRATION/DIRECTOR OF DOCTORAL PROGRAM**

SPA administers the doctoral program. The School has its own internal procedures and requirements for the PhD degree.

The Director of the Doctoral Program serves as the key administrative officer for the program. The Director, who chairs the Doctoral Committee of SPA faculty, administers overall doctoral policies, approves student degree plans and committees, administers the various doctoral level examinations, and formally notifies students of their progress with respect to coursework, exams, and dissertations.

It is the responsibility of the Doctoral Committee to make policy recommendations for the Program and to advise and assist the Director of the Doctoral Program in administering the doctoral program. New and changed policies will be reviewed first by the committee, then reviewed and approved by the full SPA faculty.

SPA's Student Service Team is the focal point for the necessary paperwork. SPA forms that doctoral students need are available from the Student Services Team, as well as from the SPA website, and should be returned to the appropriate office when completed.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Doctoral students are responsible for the management of their own academic studies. This Handbook, the Director of the Doctoral Program and faculty advisors provide the necessary information about the PhD program. However, the specific contents of a doctoral program, the necessary approvals, and the initiation of its various procedures are matters that are the individual student's responsibility, as set out in this Handbook and in the provisions of the

University catalog in effect at the time of the student's admission. Failure to comply with the Handbook could result in dismissal from the program.

## **FACULTY EXPECTATIONS**

The SPA faculty explicitly assumes that each student arrives at the decision to pursue a doctorate only after seriously considering what such work entails. Much more is expected of doctoral students than is expected of undergraduate or master's students. The responsibilities of undergraduates and many masters' level students tend to be framed by the requirements of particular courses. Doctoral students, in contrast, have an entire field to study. It is their responsibility – with guidance from the faculty – to master the disciplines of public administration, policy, and management, as well as any additional individual areas of study they wish to pursue. Both independent thinking and scholarship are expected of doctoral students. The faculty assumes a higher level of maturity on the part of a doctoral student in terms of their progress towards the degree. Doctoral students will be expected to make a gradual transition from consumers of knowledge, to producers of new knowledge and research.

In turn, faculty members teaching in the PhD program and those serving on dissertation committees are expected to be available to assist and mentor students in mastering the field and transitioning into scholars, including meeting regularly with students for informal advice and support, collaborating with students on grants, research projects, and publications, and introducing students to the relevant professional networks. Questions about mentoring may be directed to the Program Director.

## **FINANCIAL AID**

A limited amount of financial support is available to SPA doctoral students. Financial aid can be requested from the Director of the Doctoral Program, who administers financial assistance for the doctoral program. Each year the School selects students based mostly upon merit and also upon demonstrated need to receive these fellowships. Limited teaching and research assistantships may also be available. Other scholarships and financial aid opportunities are available through the financial aid office of the campus. Students are encouraged to seek additional financial support from outside sources (e.g., foundation support), whenever possible, and especially to fund their dissertation research.

Faculty research grants may also serve as a source of funding for doctoral students. Interested students should contact individual faculty members to discuss opportunities.

## **II. ADMISSION**

### **ADMISSION CALENDAR**

Students will be admitted to the doctoral program once a year during the spring semester, with their doctoral studies beginning the following fall semester. To be considered for admission for the fall semester, applications are due by February 1 for domestic students and January 15 for international students. Students are encouraged to apply well before the deadline to ensure that the applications will be completed by the deadline. The doctoral committee will endeavor to make admission decisions quickly, so that potential candidates can make their decisions. The PhD Program will consider candidates outside of the regular enrollment period on a case-by-case basis.

### **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

Applicants whose native language is not English are also required to submit scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The recommended minimum score on the TOEFL is 100. Applicants should score a minimum of 20 on each of the four individual sections of the exam. This requirement may be waived for applicants who have completed a baccalaureate or graduate-level degree program at an English-speaking college or university. In addition, applicants whose native language is not English are required to participate in an oral interview to demonstrate possession of adequate language skills to succeed in an American doctoral program. Please be aware that the Graduate School may have additional requirements for international students.

It should be emphasized that students who meet minimum entrance standards are not assured admission. The program is highly selective, and admits only persons who the doctoral committee considers to be genuinely qualified to complete the degree successfully and whose interests match well with our program. The SPA faculty also values racial/ethnic and cultural diversity and a productive and stimulating balance among relevant professional backgrounds, interests, and experience of students. In making admissions decisions, SPA considers:

1. commitment to academic/research career and experience;
2. potential for career advancement;
3. the applicant's academic record in graduate studies;
4. Graduate Record Examination scores;
5. the fit between the applicant's research interests and the interests and knowledge of one or more SPA faculty members;
6. letters of recommendation; and

7. if a non-native English speaker, demonstration of adequate language skills to succeed at the doctoral level of work.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applicants are encouraged to apply online through SPA's website. Application materials may also be downloaded from this site and mailed to SPA at the following address:

University of Colorado Denver  
School of Public Affairs  
Campus Box 142  
P.O. Box 173364  
Denver, CO 80217-3364

All of the following information must be submitted before students can be formally considered for admission:

1. Part I and Part II application forms;
2. Two official transcripts for all undergraduate and graduate work, sent directly to SPA from the universities/colleges attended;
3. Graduate Record Examination scores;
4. Current resume or vita;
5. Minimum of three letters of recommendation from colleagues and previous professors, focusing on potential for (a) future leadership in teaching, research and public service and (b) deriving benefit from the doctoral program; at least two should be from former academic instructors;
6. A (maximum) 1000-word statement of educational and career goals and how SPA can help achieve these goals, including the identification of two to three SPA faculty members with whom the student would be interested in working and whether the student seeks financial support through working as a research assistant; and
7. Application fee.

In addition, a student may submit samples of research reports or publications. All application materials will be retained by SPA and will not be returned.

## **PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**



An oral interview may be required of applicant finalists. All applicants who can do so are encouraged to talk with (or email) and meet with the Director of the Doctoral Program and faculty prior to applying to the program.

### **ADMISSION CATEGORIES**

The SPA Doctoral Committee will classify each applicant for admission to the doctoral program into one of the following categories:

1. regular admission;
2. do not admit, but recommend that applicants enter a SPA master's program and reapply as their master's program nears completion;
3. do not admit at this time.

Applicants who have not been admitted have the right to reapply. Under exceptional circumstances, an admitted candidate may defer admission for one year. All admissions are made pending final approval by the Graduate School.

### **III. GENERAL TIMELINE FOR THE PHD AND THE ADVISORY PROCESS**

In general, the PhD program has two parts. In the first part, which typically takes two to three years, the student takes required and elective coursework intended to build their knowledge of the field of public affairs and develop the skills necessary to conduct original research. The student's mastery of this body of knowledge is tested through a comprehensive examination. In the second part of the program, students design and implement a significant research project, or dissertation. The student completes the program upon successful defense of the dissertation. Students typically take two to three years to write and defend the dissertation. These parts of the program are described in greater detail later in this handbook, and a sample timeline is attached as an appendix. Throughout the program, the student will be advised and mentored by faculty.

### **ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM**

The Director of the Doctoral Program approves all programs of study within the degree plan, approves admission to candidacy, and certifies the final completion and acceptance of the dissertation.

A program of study is a degree plan that lists all of the academic coursework a student has done and plans to do to meet the requirements for the doctoral degree. All students should meet with the Director of the Doctoral Program and their advisor(s) during their first semester or second semester in the program and mutually develop a preliminary program of study. This becomes a guidepost for students to follow while they pursue the degree. Students may change their preliminary program of study with the guidance of their advisor if they decide to refocus their

studies. A final program of study must be submitted and approved by the Director for the Doctoral Program with a student's pre-dissertation review.

## **ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR/DISSERTATION CHAIR**

Students are more likely to be successful in the PhD Program when their research interests overlap with members of the faculty. Potential students applying to the program are urged to make an effort to learn about the faculty members at SPA, their academic research interests, their resumes, and their various specializations. Potential students can find out about faculty by taking courses, talking directly with faculty members, and talking with current PhD students. When applying to the PhD Program, student candidates should explicitly identify one to three faculty advisors in their statement.

Upon admission, incoming doctoral students will be assigned to one or two of these faculty members whom they identified as advisors at the start of the Program. In situations where their requested faculty members are unavailable, the student will be assigned the closest match. These faculty advisors then serve as the initial mentors to students. The nature of the mentoring relationship varies and may include, but is not limited to, helping a student select electives, incorporating a student into research projects, discussing dissertation ideas, and providing academic and career advice.

In learning about the field of public affairs and in working with faculty members at SPA, students' research interests may change as well as their choice of faculty advisors. Students are not required to stay with their initial advisors throughout their time in the Program. Students wishing to move to a different advisor should contact the Director of the PhD Program. Students are also not required to have their initial advisor be the chair of the dissertation committee or even be on the committee. *The choice of a dissertation chair is the choice of the student.* In selecting a dissertation chair, students are welcomed to solicit advice from the PhD Program Director, any SPA faculty member, and fellow students. . The PhD Committee recommends the following activities for faculty who mentor PhD students and for students who are seeking mentorship:

## **MENTOR ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDED FOR FACULTY**

- Regularly meet with mentored students (e.g., monthly)
- Seek out project collaboration with students, leading to poster presentation, conference papers, working papers, book chapters, and journal submissions
- Introduce students to the pertinent professional networks
- Include students in grant writing efforts
- Offer on-going advice in course selection, including facilitating relations with other faculty members
- Be willing to meet with students looking to improve their methodological skills, especially on an informal basis; likewise for more theoretical issues

## **MENTEE ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS**

- Meet regularly with faculty mentor/s (e.g., monthly)
- Seek out project collaboration with faculty, leading to poster presentation, conference papers, working papers, and journal submissions.
- Try to attend research seminars (outside of the classroom), brown bags and campus lectures, etc.
- Become familiar with university services, such as the Writing Center, the Auraria library, the Graduate School, etc. for assistance outside of SPA

## **PhD STUDENT ASSOCIATION**

The SPA PhD Student Association's (SPAPSA's) mission is to establish a community of students who support each other through the sharing of experience and knowledge across PhD cohorts. The student association has three main functions: academic enrichment, social interaction, and new student orientation. Through these responsibilities the student association supports academic development of students through information exchange, organizes relevant academic and social activities outside of SPA, and holds meetings for incoming PhD students prior to matriculation. The student association is open to all PhD students who are encouraged to participate in meetings and events as they please, except for those who hold formal positions on the executive board. The executive board typically holds at least one formal meeting per month where all association members are invited to attend. PhD students nominate two co-presidents, treasurer, and secretary to serve per year.

## **PhD COMMITTEE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

The PhD Committee will nominate one or two PhD students to serve as a liaison with the PhD Student Association. The nominated PhD student(s) will typically be one of the students serving in the leadership positions in the PhD Student Association. The PhD Committee Student Representative(s), typically SPAPSA's co-presidents, will serve a maximum two-year term, and may sit on the PhD program admissions committee.

## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

At the end of the spring semester of each year each student must complete a Progress Report and submit it to the Doctoral Program Director. The Progress Report covers such areas as courses taken, research and teaching activities, and external activities related to the field of public affairs, and allows the PhD faculty to monitor student progress in the program. The Progress Report template may be obtained from the Doctoral Program Director.

## **IV. DOCTORAL COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS**

### **CREDIT HOURS**

The doctoral program consists of 60 (66 for students starting prior to 2018) credit hours *beyond* the master's degree, including 30 (36 for students starting prior to 2018) credit hours of

coursework and 30 credit hours of dissertation credit. The course work must include nine credit hours devoted to advanced methodology courses (e.g., intermediate statistics and qualitative research). A minimum of 27 credit hours of appropriate doctoral level course work must be taken at the University of Colorado. Up to three (9 for students starting prior to 2018) credit hours of graduate-level coursework may be transferred from another institution, with the approval of the Director of the Doctoral Program, consistent with section XI of this handbook. Finally, 30 hours of dissertation credit are required, following the pre-dissertation colloquium. A nominal timetable, with suggested completion targets, is appended to this Handbook.

## COMMON CORE COURSES

All doctoral students must take the following core courses:

1. *PUAD 8010 - Historical and Comparative Foundations of Public Administration*  
Description: A doctoral seminar on developments and changes in public administration as a field of study. It examines how theory and practice have evolved and how the field is defined, studied, and taught. It must normally be taken during the first full semester of the doctoral program. Prereq: PUAD 7001, PUAD 5001, or permission from instructor.
2. *PUAD 8020 - Seminar in Public Management*  
Description: An in-depth examination of contemporary literature, concepts, and theories of public management. Current issues and research problems are emphasized to prepare students for their advanced research. Prereq: PUAD 7003/5003, 7004/5004, or permission from instructor.
3. *PUAD 8030 - Seminar in Public Policy*  
Description: Offers an in-depth examination of contemporary literature, concepts, and theories of public policy, with an emphasis on policy process. Current issues and research problems are emphasized to prepare students for their advanced research. Prereq: PUAD 7004/5004, 7005/5005, or permission from instructor.
4. *PUAD 8040 - Seminar In Economic and Institutional Foundations of Public Affairs*  
Description: Offers an in-depth examination of the economic and institutional foundations of public affairs, with an emphasis on the evolution of theory and research in these fields. Prereq: PUAD 8010 and 8030, or permission from instructor.
5. *PUAD 8050 - Quantitative Methods I*  
Description: Introduces students to the foundational principles and techniques of quantitative analysis in the social sciences generally and in public affairs specifically, including statistical inference, regression analysis, other related estimation techniques, and commonly used statistical software packages. Prereq: PUAD 8010, 8020, 8030, and 8040, or permission from instructor. In addition, students should have taken a master's level statistics course within the last three years prior to enrollment.
6. *PUAD 8060 - Seminar On The Conduct Of Empirical Inquiry*

Description: Introduces basic elements of research design in the social sciences, focusing on the relationship between theories and methods, concept development and measurement, selection of observations or cases, and alternative methods of data collection and analysis. Prereq: PUAD 5003, 7003 or equivalent, PUAD 8010, 8020, 8030, and 8040, or permission from instructor.

7. *PUAD 8070 - Quantitative Methods II*

Description: Moves beyond basic linear regression techniques by covering advanced analytic methods for improved causal inference. Students will also be introduced to data management skills and techniques for using longitudinal data. Prereq: PUAD 8010, 8020, 8030, 8040, 8050, and 8060, or permission from instructor.

## **METHODOLOGICAL PROFICIENCY**

The Doctoral Program at SPA requires advanced proficiency in research methods or tools that will assist in completing dissertation research; nine credit hours of advanced proficiency are required. All students are required to take PUAD 8050, Statistics I, and PUAD 8070, Statistics II. A qualitative methods course of the student's choosing (with the approval of the Doctoral Director) is also required. This course might include, *inter alia*, a course in qualitative methodology (e.g. PUAD 7007), mixed methods, geographical information systems (GIS), or social network analysis.

## **OTHER COURSEWORK**

Students have six credit hours (i.e., two semester courses) of electives in the doctoral program (12 credit hours or four semester courses for students starting prior to 2018). Students are expected to use these electives to develop an emphasis in an area that furthers their dissertation and research interests. Careful consideration of electives can improve the preparation of student's dissertation research, as well as inform their comprehensive examination preparation. Elective courses must be approved by the Director of the Doctoral Program. Electives may be taken from any graduate program offered at the University of Colorado. With the permission of the Doctoral Director, some electives may be taken outside the University of Colorado.

## **V. POLICIES ON COURSE COMPLETION, GRADE CHANGES, ETC.**

### **RETAKING COURSES**

A student may retake no more than two courses during the course of the degree program, regardless of whether the need for a retake results from a low grade, an incomplete, or a course withdrawal. Discretion is considered by the program administrator for exceptional, documented circumstances (i.e., military deployment, major medical emergency). If a student has exhausted the option to retake two courses and fails to meet program standards, the student will be suspended or dropped from the program.

A student who receives a letter grade for a course that is too low to qualify for credit may retake the course once. Both grades will be used to calculate the student's overall GPA. To retake a course, the student must re-enroll and pay tuition and fees for the course again.

## **INCOMPLETES**

The course instructor has discretion as to whether to grant an Incomplete, and students should be aware that not all faculty members will grant Incompletes. An Incomplete is typically allowed when the student has successfully completed 75 percent or more of the course and is prevented from completing the class by circumstances beyond their control. If the instructor agrees to grant an Incomplete, the student must make arrangements to complete the remaining coursework with the original instructor within one year. The student may not "sit in" on the class in subsequent semesters. If the coursework is not completed within a year, the Incomplete will automatically change to an F unless the student and the instructor have agreed in writing to an extension.

A student may be granted no more than two Incompletes during the course of the degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the director of the degree program. No Incompletes may be granted in capstone courses.

## **DROPS AND WITHDRAWALS**

Deadlines for dropping a course are set by the Office of the Registrar and posted on the Academic Calendar each semester. Students are responsible for knowing these deadlines. Students can drop a course during the first week of the semester without being assessed full tuition and without having the course appear on their transcript. Students who drop a course after the first week but before census date may drop in the University of Colorado Denver Access portal, but a drop charge will apply. After census date (typically two weeks after the start of classes), the student may withdraw from the course by submitting a Schedule Adjustment Form with the signature of the instructor. A "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

If the request to withdraw is made after the 10<sup>th</sup> week of classes, the student must file a late drop petition, in addition to a completed Schedule Adjustment Form, in order to obtain special approval from the program director and the Dean's office. Students will not be allowed to drop after the 10<sup>th</sup> week of classes simply because they are failing the course; it is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to determine if the course should be dropped due to failing grades prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> week of classes. If the student is permitted to withdraw, a "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

No tuition reimbursements are available for withdrawals made after census date, and students may be required to repay financial aid received. Students who believe their circumstances justify an exception to financial obligations may appeal to the university's tuition appeals coordinator. Students must initiate a drop or withdrawal and follow the appropriate procedures. Students who fail to do this and do not complete the coursework will be issued a letter grade of "F" for the course.

A student is allowed to withdraw from no more than two courses during the course of the degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the director of the degree program.

## **RETROACTIVE GRADE CHANGES**

Students are not permitted to request grade changes for courses in which a final letter grade (other than an incomplete) has been received except as a result of instructor error or as otherwise warranted through the academic grievance process. A student may not enter into an agreement with an instructor to retroactively change a final letter grade based on work completed by the student after the course has ended.

**Course Revalidation Process:** The revalidation process is required by university policy for any course that was taken more than seven years prior to graduation and any course used for transfer credits must have been taken within seven years of the PhD student's proposal defense (aka the campus "comprehensive exam"). The PhD committee will consider course revalidation on a case-by-case basis. To request revalidation of expired courses, submit for each course a request to the Program Director. The PhD committee will review the request and make a determination about revalidating the course.

## **VI. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

PhD level coursework is performed very demanding in order to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to successfully complete a dissertation and to enter the field as a productive "colleague." Students will benefit from timely evaluation of their progress throughout the PhD program.

### **MINIMUM GPA REQUIREMENTS**

Basic evaluation of the progress of students in the PhD program is provided by grades in individual courses, especially at the 8000 level. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.33, and if they fall below this level will be placed upon academic probation, during which time they must achieve a 3.33 GPA. Additionally, students must have the required GPA at the time they take the comprehensive exam. Courses in which the student earns a grade lower than B- may not be applied towards fulfillment of the coursework requirement.

### **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

Overall student performance in the PhD program is assessed by the PhD Committee on an annual basis. Each student is required to provide a Progress Report to the Doctoral Program Director at the end of each academic year. This report, along with other indicators, will be used by the PhD Committee to monitor student progress and provide an annual performance evaluation for each student, which will be shared with the student and the student's advisor and/or dissertation chair.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to evaluate the ability of students to conduct competent and original analytical research and writing of the caliber necessary to develop and complete a dissertation in the fields associated with public affairs. The comprehensive examination consists of two parts: a written examination and an oral examination.

All doctoral students must take the comprehensive examination upon completing the core classes of the program (8010, 8020, 8030, 8040, 8050, 8060, 8070, and qualitative methods). The comprehensive examination is offered only once a year, typically in the summer. Students must take the comprehensive examination the first time it is offered after their completion of coursework. Exceptions to these rules about the comprehensive examination may be requested. In such cases, the PhD Committee will consider the circumstances and decide on a case-by-case basis.

The exact format of the comprehensive examination and its administration may vary each year. Typically, the written portion of the examination consists of a written test that is designed and evaluated by a committee of at least three faculty members appointed by the Director of the Doctoral Program for this purpose. Other exam formats, however, are possible. The faculty on the PhD Committee and/or the Examination Committee will determine the structure of the exam, the exam questions, formatting requirements and specific criteria for grading the exams at the time the students receive the exam. Although the material to be covered generally corresponds to the subject areas introduced in the doctoral seminars, the comprehensive examination includes content beyond any particular course. Students should be familiar with the literature embodied in the themes of the core classes, whether or not that literature was covered in class.

Responses to the comprehensive examination questions will remain confidential throughout the examination sequence, until after grades on the written exam have been assigned. Students will submit exams to the Student Services coordinator, who distributes exams to the faculty committee for grading. The faculty committee members submit their grades to the Coordinator and after all grades are submitted to the Coordinator, students will receive their grades and comments on the written portion of the exam.

After receiving specific written comments from the graders, students will take an oral examination soon after the grading of the written exam, with as many of the grading faculty present as possible. The oral exam will focus mainly upon the written exam, but students are also responsible for the full range of comprehensive exam material in this context.

There are four grades students can receive for the comprehensive examination: (1) pass with distinction; (2) pass; (3) conditional pass; and (4) fail. A grade of “pass with distinction” indicates exceptional performance. A grade of “pass with distinction” or “pass” indicates acceptable performance. In both cases, students continue with their doctoral studies. A grade of conditional pass or a possibly a fail on a portion of the exam requires the student to meet additional requirements specified by the grading committee in order to receive an unconditional passing grade. Unsatisfactory performance on a significant portion of the examination will result in failure.



A final grade of “fail” means that the student does not advance in the program. To advance, the student must retake the comprehensive examination the next time it is offered. The understanding is that, since the student failed the exam the first time, they will need extensive further preparation to have a good chance to pass the next time. At that second taking of the examination, the student must pass, or s/he will be required to leave the program.

A student who fails the comprehensive examination after the first taking, but is otherwise in good standing in the program, may continue with additional coursework and preliminary research towards the dissertation, while the student is preparing to retake the comprehensive examination the next year. That student cannot, however, defend a dissertation proposal. Furthermore, continuing in the program in this manner is no guarantee of passing the following year: The student must assume some risk of failing a second time and being terminated in the program.

A student who fails the comprehensive examination twice, but has otherwise successfully completed appropriate coursework may be eligible for a terminal MPA by SPA, if s/he has not previously been awarded that degree and if s/he meets the degree requirements.

The comprehensive examination is administered under the University of Colorado’s Student Honor Code. A violation of the code, including plagiarism in the answers, will result in a grade of “fail” and may be grounds for a student to be dismissed from the program. Students with documented disabilities should speak to the Director well in advance about making appropriate accommodations.

### **ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY**

A student is admitted (or advanced) to candidacy for the PhD Degree only after they have completed all of the requirements for the degree except the colloquium and dissertation. Admission to candidacy, thus, includes completing in a satisfactory manner all of their coursework, passing the comprehensive examination unconditionally, and achieving a grade point average of 3.33 in doctoral coursework.

## **VII. THE DISSERTATION**

All doctoral students must seek approval of a dissertation topic, then research, write and defend their dissertation. In general, a dissertation is a demonstration that a candidate for the doctoral degree is capable of doing independent, original scholarly research that constitutes a contribution to knowledge in the broadly defined field of public affairs.

### **PRE-DISSERTATION REVIEW**

Prior to the dissertation proposal defense, the student must apply for and pass a pre-dissertation review. The purpose of the review is to make sure that the student has successfully completed all

required coursework and examinations, and that the student is prepared to continue their doctoral work. No student will be permitted to hold a colloquium without a successful review.

At a minimum, to pass the review, a student must:

1. complete in a satisfactory manner all of the coursework indicated in their program of study;
2. pass the comprehensive examination unconditionally;
3. achieve a grade point average of 3.33 in doctoral coursework indicated in their program of study, which they develop with the PhD Director at the time of their admission to the program. Note that, prior to this review, if the student's GPA falls below a 3.33 level, the student is not in good standing, is on academic probation, and must raise the GPA above 3.33 within 2 semesters to continue in the program;
4. satisfy the methodological proficiency requirement; and
5. file required for dissertation proposal paperwork with SPA.

### **CREDIT HOURS DURING DISSERTATION WORK**

Students will need to take a minimum of 30 hours of dissertation credit before they are eligible to graduate. Students typically register for at least five dissertation credit hours (and not more than 10, without approval from the PhD Program Director) each fall and spring semester until 30 hours is reached; thereafter, if additional time is needed before the dissertation is completed, the student must register for at least one dissertation credit each semester. Students in research assistant positions should inquire to the PhD Program Director how many dissertation credits to take. Any number of dissertation credits convey full-time enrollment status for financial aid purposes.

Students who are not enrolled and who have not made arrangements with the Program Director for a formal leave of absence are subject to dismissal. International students who register for only one credit in a semester and who need to maintain their visa status may have to have their academic advisor complete a "Less Than Full-Time Enrollment" form.

Under special conditions and with the approval of the Director of the PhD program, a student may take a leave of absence for up to one year; during that leave, students must agree not to avail themselves of University facilities (e.g., the research library).

A student must be registered for at least one dissertation credit hours during the semester when s/he has a dissertation defense.

A grade of "In Progress" (IP) will be assigned to all semesters of dissertation credit until the final approved dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School office. The Graduate School will then

obtain the dissertation letter grade from the dissertation chair, and all IPs then will be changed to this final grade.

## **DISSERTATION PROCESS**

The dissertation process has four distinct stages:

1. establishing the committee;
2. preparing/defending the proposal;
3. writing the dissertation; and
4. defending the dissertation proposal

## **VIII. DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**

### **PURPOSE**

A dissertation committee has three basic roles:

1. a resource of ideas and information for the student;
2. a source of guidance and feedback during the research and writing process; and
3. the evaluator of the final product.

A student's dissertation committee is the final authority for approving the proposal as well as the dissertation.

### **COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

A dissertation committee shall consist of at least four persons: a chair (who must be drawn from the full-time, tenured, or tenure-track SPA faculty); at least two other faculty members from SPA; and at least one external (non-SPA member) who, if not already a member of the Graduate Faculty at the University of Colorado Denver, may be temporarily appointed subject to approval by the program director and the Graduate School. It is common to also have at least one (but sometimes two) "external advisors" – who may be practitioners, researchers, or academics – selected for the knowledge and skills that the external advisor can bring to bear on the dissertation topic. The chair of the dissertation committee is selected by the student prior to starting their research for the dissertation defense proposal or dissertation process. All committee members must hold a terminal degree, or get a waiver from the Graduate School.

## **COMMITTEE SELECTION**

Doctoral students, in consultation with a dissertation advisor, are responsible for assembling their dissertation committee, especially the chair (see below). The composition of the committee must be submitted to the Director of the Doctoral Program for formal approval. The Director, in consultation with the student's faculty advisor, will either approve the committee as constituted or make specific recommendations or changes. A dissertation defense proposal may not be scheduled until the Director has approved the committee composition. Since the working relationship between a doctoral candidate and the committee may extend over many months, sometimes years, the quality and continuity of relationships are very important to all parties.

## **ROLE OF CHAIR AND COMMITTEE**

The chair and the student will work closely throughout the dissertation process. Still, while the chair is the most important member of a student's dissertation committee, all committee members are important. Accordingly, the student's responsibility is to keep all committee members informed about the progress of the dissertation. Students who consistently seek and heed the advice of all committee members can expect to encounter fewer problems during the dissertation process. The dissertation committee should meet with the student at least once every year to provide feedback on the student's progress. If the committee determines that the student's progress is unsatisfactory, they will forward a written report to the student and the program director suggesting steps to be taken to rectify the situation. Students in good standing who have not had a meeting with their dissertation committee in the preceding 12 months will not be permitted to register for subsequent semesters.

## **COMMITTEE AUTHORITY**

The committee decides when a student's work on a dissertation topic has advanced enough to warrant scheduling a pre-thesis dissertation proposal defense. Subsequently, after a student writes and reviews their dissertation with the committee, the committee determines when the dissertation is acceptable for defense. Following the dissertation defenses, the committee determines what, if any, changes must be made in the final version. The chair and at least three other members of a dissertation committee must sign off on the dissertation, thereby indicating their final approval of the thesis.

## **CHANGING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Committee membership may be adjusted with the permission of the Director of the Doctoral Program. Should the chair of a student's committee leave the University's employ during the dissertation process, they may remain on the committee as an outside reader – if the student desires. Otherwise, the student, after consultation with the committee chair, must choose a replacement member; the choice must be approved by the Director. The chair must always be a full-time, tenured or tenure-track, SPA faculty member.

## **IX. THE DISSERTATION COLLOQUIUM**

### **SELECTION OF A TOPIC**

Doctoral students should start thinking about an appropriate dissertation topic as early in the program as possible. If a student knows in general what s/he wants to do, the student can take related courses that will help them further that interest and talk informally with those faculty most suited to serve on such a committee. The student can also write term papers in courses that help them define the topic more clearly. This statement is not meant to limit a student's flexibility or explorations of topics early in their doctoral career. Some students know exactly what they want to study and should get to it quickly, while others will want to examine different fields before settling on a topic. In either case, it is useful to think about possible topics.

The student has the ultimate choice of a dissertation topic. But this choice is constrained by the student's ability to assemble a committee (subject to the Director's approval) that agrees that the topic is both worthy and feasible.

### **PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE**

The doctoral student presents the dissertation proposal to SPA faculty and students, and to their dissertation committee. This dissertation defense provides a formal opportunity for feedback and suggestions for improvement from the entire SPA community before the writing of the dissertation. The dissertation defense serves as the "comprehensive examination" as required by the Graduate School. A student will have a specific proposal for a dissertation. From the defense, the student should gain a refined proposal and assurance from the dissertation committee that, if the refined proposal is executed according to appropriate standards and with the continuing advice of the dissertation committee, the final product will be accepted and the student will be awarded the doctorate. The dissertation proposal defense is the last chance of the faculty to review the preparation of the student for conducting dissertation research. Therefore, faculty may request students to demonstrate their mastery of portions of the literature of public affairs, through an oral examination of the student. In general, this oral examination will focus on subjects relevant to the student's dissertation topic. If the student fails to satisfy the committee that they have a satisfactory mastery of literature or methodology, the committee may refuse to accept the dissertation proposal.

### **SCHEDULING**

A student should schedule their dissertation proposal within one calendar year of successfully completing the comprehensive exam – or by the end of the third year for full-time students. Students who do not meet this deadline could be asked to communicate their progress and plan to schedule their dissertation proposal to the PhD Director. Additionally, students could be dismissed from the program if the defense is delayed beyond the third year without approval from the PhD program director.

Before scheduling the dissertation defense proposal, students should give at least one, or more, drafts to the committee members. Prior to the actual date, students should give what they expect

to be the “final” draft to all committee members no less than one month before the expected date, so that committee members will have time to make suggested revisions and additions.

The Student Services Team will schedule a defense at the request of a candidate only with the concurrence of the committee chair. Students must request Dissertation Defense paperwork from the Student Services Team; the appropriate paperwork needs to be submitted in a timely manner as indicated in the Handbook. The Student Services Team member must be notified of the desired date and time so that room arrangements can be made. No student will be scheduled if they have not completed all required coursework and who has not passed the comprehensive examination.

## **THE PROPOSAL**

A dissertation proposal should generally include a clear explanation of what the student plans to do and how the student expects to do it, a discussion of how the proposed work will contribute to knowledge in the area of inquiry, a fairly thorough review of the literature, and a careful articulation of the methodology the student will employ, the prospectus will also include a bibliography that includes all relevant literature known to the candidate.

While it is the role of a student’s dissertation committee to suggest or require specific items to be included in the proposal, all proposals should, at a minimum, contain the following:

1. a title page,
2. an abstract of not more than two double-spaced pages,
3. an introductory statement of the significance of the study,
4. a literature survey,
5. a statement of the propositions to be tested or issues to be examined,
6. an explanation of methodology, and
7. a bibliography.

## **CONDUCT OF DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE**

At least three committee members must be present at the exam. All SPA students and faculty are welcomed to attend all defenses. Usually they are held at SPA so interested parties may readily attend. Although formats may vary, usually students make a brief formal presentation of their proposal and then accept questions and comments, first from the committee members, then from the audience. At the defense the student formally asks of their committee:

1. Will the work proposed, if competently carried out, represent an original contribution to the literature that measures up to generally accepted standards in the field and in relevant sub-fields?
2. What revisions in the approach would strengthen the inquiry proposed?
3. What other literature and other data sources should be included?

The committee must agree unanimously on the student's prospectus and dissertation plan. Alternatively, the Committee may ask a student to prepare a memorandum to the record outlining faculty suggestions and detailing how they will be addressed. A second failure would result in the student being asked to leave the program.

### **PREPARATION OF FINAL PROPOSAL**

Upon approval by the committee, students must deposit with the Student Services Coordinator a final written draft of the defense proposal acceptable to all committee members. In the event the student has been asked to prepare a memorandum detailing how faculty suggestions will be included, this document should also be deposited with the Student Services Coordinator. The final written draft of the proposal must reflect the comments and suggestions of all committee members and signatures certifying satisfaction with the document and must be affirmed by all committee members.

## **X. CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION**

### **FACULTY AVAILABILITY**

Students should note that most faculty members are on nine-month appointments and are not always available during the summer for dissertation supervision, and defenses. Thus, students should not assume summer faculty availability unless faculty are teaching during the summer session or prior arrangements are made. Under normal circumstances, and defenses will be scheduled only during the fall and spring semesters.

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL**

All students must obtain approval for dissertation research involving human subjects through the Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB) at the University of Colorado Denver prior to conducting their research. Students are responsible for understanding the requirements for IRB approval. Please refer to the policies and training documents found on the COMIRB website. Students may discuss any questions about the process with their dissertation chair and/or the PhD Program Director.

### **SPECIFICATIONS FOR PREPARATION**

The final authority for the technical preparation of doctoral dissertations is the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School of the University of Colorado Denver. This Office should be consulted early in the dissertation process for directions and dissertation format. The Graduate School Dean's Office should be consulted whenever questions arise concerning acceptable dissertation formats. Since this Office must approve the format and style, but *not* the content, of the final drafts of all SPA dissertations before a student may graduate, a student may want to contact the Graduate Dean's Office at the proposal stage, but, in any case, certainly before preparing the final draft for the dissertation defense. SPA has available copies of the Graduate School guidelines.

## **COMMITTEE RELATIONS**

It is the student's responsibility, with direction from the committee chair, to coordinate the work of the committee. Members of the committee have the right to participate in the dissertation process in the manner they choose; some members may wish to see each chapter as it is completed, while others may wish only to read complete drafts. The student should accommodate the various dissertation review styles of faculty. The faculty members, by serving on a committee, assume the responsibility to respond in a timely fashion. The dissertation process is a cooperative effort involving the candidate as well as all members of the committee.

## **USE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE**

The dissertation is a demonstration of the student's capability to design, execute and report on a major independent research project. In some cases, it is appropriate for students to use limited professional assistance in the project, such as computer programmers, data entry persons, transcription services, text editors and secretaries or typists. However, it is *inappropriate* for students to employ professionals to design the research, to select and/or interpret analytic techniques, to analyze results, or to do tasks that should be the student's responsibility. Violation of this general guideline could invalidate the dissertation project. In cases of uncertainty, consult your dissertation chair or the Doctoral Director.

# **XI. THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE**

## **SCHEDULING**

Dissertation defense dates will be scheduled by the Student Services Team in consultation with the dissertation chair and the Director of the Doctoral Program. No dissertation will be scheduled for defense without the concurrence of the dissertation chair that a defense is warranted. Students must contact the Student Services Team the semester *prior* to the anticipated commencement to obtain information on the relevant deadlines (e.g., from the Graduate School). (Most students will need several weeks after the defense to address the revisions indicated by their committee and to prepare final copies of the dissertation.) The Student Services Team must also be notified of the desired defense date and time so that room arrangements can be made. In effect, if a student does not have a substantially completed draft of their dissertation by the beginning of the semester in which they hope to graduate, it reduces the prospect of completing the process in time.



## **CONDUCT OF DEFENSE**

The dissertation defense is the final oral examination of the doctoral program. The candidate is expected to defend the dissertation, which means to demonstrate professional competence in the field in which it was written. The student should expect that revisions to the dissertation might be required as a result of the defense. The final authority on the extent and nature of any revisions rests with the committee. All members of the committee must be present for the defense, although a minority of members, but not the Chair or the student, may participate by interactive video. In the event of an emergency that prevents one faculty committee member from attending the exam, the exam can proceed with the faculty members who can attend and the student will schedule a separate meeting with the absent faculty member at an alternate time. The defense will be open to all University of Colorado faculty and students.

## **POSSIBLE OUTCOMES**

After the student completes their defense, the committee will vote on the acceptance of the dissertation; at least four faculty members must concur. The formal faculty response to a student's dissertation defense may take four forms to be reported to the Director of the Doctoral Program:

1. **ACCEPTANCE WITH DISTINCTION** – the student has performed with excellence in the dissertation research and defense;
2. **ACCEPTANCE** – the student has successfully completed all of the scholarly requirements for the PhD;
3. **CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE** – the student must make minor changes requested by the committee, resubmit the dissertation for their approval, and the committee will – assuming changes are adequate – recommend acceptance to the Director; or
4. **REJECTION** – the dissertation and/or the candidate's state of knowledge is still not sufficient. The student, in consultation with their committee, will have to make substantial revisions and eventually schedule another defense. Students will be allowed only two defenses.

## **REVIEW BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

After students have had their dissertation formally approved and signed by at least four members of the committee, a copy should be submitted to the Office of the Graduate School of the University of Colorado Denver for a final technical review in accordance with its guidelines at least six weeks before anticipated graduation. (The review period could change for any given semester; it is the student's responsibility to be apprised of and meet these schedules.) Students must satisfy the form and style requirements of the doctoral program and the Graduate School before their dissertation will be formally accepted by SPA. Often the approval by the Graduate School can be accomplished on an informal basis prior to the completion of the final copy.

If the Graduate School Office determines that a dissertation has not met form and style requirements, the dissertation will be returned for adjustments, and the student may not be able to graduate that semester.

## **GRADUATION**

To graduate in a given semester, a student must (1) file an Intent to Graduate form with SPA by the second week of the semester in which s/he plans to graduate; (2) submit copies of the dissertation to the graduate school according to Graduate School policies (see the Graduate School website for the most up-to-date rules); and (3) submit a hard copy of the dissertation to the SPA office. No student will be permitted to graduate or attend commencement unless all three requirements for the degree have been met.

## **XII. ACADEMIC POLICIES**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

SPA expects superior performance from its doctoral students. The phrase “superior performance” has connotations beyond those related to minimum grade achievement, course work being no more than the essential foundation for independent reading and study; it also refers to promptness in doing work, reliability of performance, and steady progress through a course of study. These qualities should be reflected in the student’s performance in the comprehensive examinations and the dissertation.

### **GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

All doctoral students must maintain an overall grade point average of 3.33 in courses included in their program of study at the University of Colorado. No doctoral student will be advanced to candidacy if their grade point average is less than 3.33. Any grade less than a B- (B minus) is not acceptable for degree plan purposes.

### **PROBATION/DISMISSAL**

When a doctoral student’s cumulative grade point average (GPA) falls below 3.33, they will be placed on academic probation. Students may not take their comprehensive examination or be advanced to candidacy while on academic probation. Students on probation will have two semesters in which to raise the cumulative GPA to 3.33 or above. The student will be subject to dismissal if:

1. the student does not earn a 3.33 GPA in all courses taken in the first of these two probationary semesters, or
2. after the two-semester probationary period, the cumulative GPA is still below 3.33.

The final decision on dismissal will be made by the Director of Doctoral Studies. Students may use academic grievance procedures described below to appeal a dismissal.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

In a predominantly mid-career program, interruptions may occur owing to the demands of families and jobs. Upon application to the Doctoral Director, a student will be allowed a reasonable leave of absence. The Student Services team has the appropriate form, which must be signed by the Director. Still, SPA has a strong preference that students remain continuously enrolled until graduation.

Requests for a leave of absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Doctoral Director, upon the specific petition of a doctoral student; justifications for leaves might include illness, accident, and family emergencies. General guidelines include:

1. Students must be in good academic standing;
2. Students must present their cases with a specific date for their return to graduate studies. If they are unable to abide by their anticipated return date, they must re-petition, again to the satisfaction of the Doctoral Director.
3. During leave status, a student is expected to minimize their relationship with the University, its faculty, and its facilities.

Approved leaves of absence do not automatically extend the time limits for earning a degree, but they may be used as a reason to request an extension if needed.

## **TRANSFER CREDIT**

Doctoral students are allowed to apply up to nine (three for students starting in the fall of 2018) semester hours of graded graduate-level credit taken at other appropriate universities toward their doctoral degree plan. Any such credits must be approved for transfer by the Director of the Doctoral Program. Courses taken more than seven years prior to the student's comprehensive examination will not be considered for transfer credit. Transfer credit will not be permitted for required doctoral seminars. Elective credit – including transfer credit – is expected to be clearly related to the dissertation plans of the student. Criteria for acceptance include quality and relevance of the course. Note: transferred credit will count towards a student's cumulative credit hours but the grades will *not* be counted in calculating that student's GPA. Credit may not be transferred until the student has been enrolled at SPA for at least one semester, with a GPA of at least 3.0.

## **INDEPENDENT STUDY POLICY**

With the permission of the Doctoral Director, independent study courses may count for up to 6 credit hours towards the coursework for the PhD. To ensure that faculty sponsors and students arrive at clear definition of the expectations of an independent study project, a "Special

Processing” form must be filed with the SPA office at the beginning of the semester in which the project is undertaken.

## **TIME LIMIT**

Students are expected to complete all degree requirements within eight years from the date of the start of course work in the doctoral program. Extra time granted for doctoral work must be approved by the Director of the Doctoral Program and the Graduate School of the University of Colorado Denver, typically for reasons beyond the candidate’s control (e.g., illness or extreme work-related conditions). Approved leaves do not automatically extend the deadline for completion.

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL RULES**

All students must also comply with the Graduate School Rules, available from the SPA office or the Graduate School. SPA doctoral rules as outlined in this Handbook are consistent with CU-Denver Graduate School rules.

## **SPA GRIEVANCE POLICY/PROCEDURES**

This policy describes formal procedures by which a currently enrolled student may seek to remedy academic grievances within the School of Public Affairs. Academic grievances are challenges to academic actions or decisions, including but not limited to actions such as an academic grade or evaluation of a student’s work in a course, seminar, or other academic forum; a decision with respect to a student’s academic standing in a program or at the School; unjust treatment by a faculty member in a class; actions related to dissertation or capstone procedures, etc.

This policy refers only to academic grievances within the School of Public Affairs. The University of Colorado Denver has established mechanisms for non-academic grievances such as claims of sexual harassment, complaints against university administrative employees, policies, or procedures, interpersonal conflict resolution, and issues relating to student employment, and students should use those mechanisms for non-academic grievances. In addition, challenges involving an allegation of academic misconduct such as plagiarism or cheating are subject to a different policy. Please contact the Associate Dean if you need more information.

**Step One: Informal Resolution.** The student is strongly encouraged to first attempt to informally resolve the grievance through discussion with the faculty member(s) involved.

**Step Two: Filing the Grievance.** If the student is unable to resolve the dispute with the faculty member(s), they should file a written grievance with the Associate Dean, with a copy to the Dean. Absent unusual circumstances, the grievance should be filed within 30 days after the student learns of the event giving rise to the grievance.

The written grievance may be filed via e-mail or delivered directly to the Associate Dean. The grievance should clearly state the basis for the complaint and the remedy requested, and should

include any evidence that supports the grievance, such as class syllabi, assignments, statements from other students, etc.

Students should be aware that grades and other evaluations of student work are traditionally within the jurisdiction of individual instructors, and are not likely to be changed absent evidence that the faculty member (1) determined the grade based on considerations other than student performance; (2) substantially differed from previously announced criteria or procedures in determining the grade; or (3) violated university or school policy in determining the grade. The student bears the burden of proof on these allegations.

**Step Three: Investigating the Grievance.** The Associate Dean will acknowledge receipt of the grievance, forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved, and begin the investigation of the circumstances of the grievance. They may request additional information from the student. The faculty member(s) involved may submit a written response to the grievance, including any evidence in opposition to the grievance, within 21 days of receipt of the grievance.

If the grievance involves the need for substantial academic expertise in a particular field in order to assess whether there is a basis for the grievance, the Associate Dean may appoint a panel of faculty members with expertise in the area to investigate the grievance and recommend a decision to the Dean.

In the event that the Associate Dean is involved in the grievance, the Dean shall refer the investigation of the grievance to another faculty member. In the event the Dean is involved in the grievance, the matter will be forwarded to the Graduate School for investigation pursuant to the rules of the Graduate School.

**Step Four: Decision by the Dean.** Within 30 days of the filing of the grievance, the Associate Dean (or the members of the faculty panel, if one has been appointed) shall give the Dean a written report containing recommendations as to the disposition of the grievance, together with the reasons for the conclusions contained in the report. Within one week of receiving the report, the Dean shall forward the report to the student and the faculty member(s), together with their decision on the disposition of the grievance.

**Appealing the Decision of the Dean.** If the student is not satisfied with the Dean's decision, they may make a written request to the Dean within five days that a faculty panel be appointed to review the grievance and consider the appeal. The appeal panel should be different from any panel appointed to investigate the grievance. The appeal panel shall consider all relevant information and make a written recommendation to the Dean within two weeks of the filing of the appeal, with copies to the student and the faculty member(s) involved in the grievance. The Dean shall consider whether to uphold or deny the appeal, and shall notify the student and faculty member(s) within five days.

Students in the PhD program may appeal the decision of the Dean to the Graduate School Council, pursuant to Graduate School procedures, and the Graduate School Council's decision is final.

**General.** Any deadline in this policy may be waived with the agreement of the student and the School if needed to ensure that all relevant information is considered.

## APPENDIX: SAMPLE TIMETABLE

The following is a typical timetable for a student's progression through the program. *Please note that it is NOT meant as an imperative; rather, it is a suggestion as to what would constitute "normal" progress through the SPA doctoral program for students who are working during the day. Students who are pursuing the PhD full-time, and not working at a job during the day, might be able to complete 3 classes each semester, meaning that they can finish all coursework in 4 academic semesters and finish a dissertation within 3-4 total years.*

### Year 1:

Begin selection of faculty advisor

Fall: PUAD 8010 and PUAD 8030

Spring: PUAD 8020 and PUAD 8040

Summer: Possible elective courses.

### Year 2:

Fall: PUAD 8050 and PUAD 8060

Spring: PUAD 8070; qualitative methods

Summer: Prepare for comprehensive exam in late July or early August

### Year 3:

Fall: Prepare dissertation proposal (prospectus) and additional elective coursework

Spring: Prepare dissertation proposal (prospectus), pre-dissertation review;; dissertation proposal defense

**Years 3-4-5:** Write dissertation

**Year 5-6:** Defend dissertation. GRADUATE!!! Do amazing things with your career!