

Guide for Ph.D students in Security Studies (August 2014)

<http://www.k-state.edu/securitystudies/phdprogram/>

Forms and important information are available at
<http://www.k-state.edu/grad/academics/forms/>

When you start the program:

Get in touch with your major professor. At admission to the Ph.D program, you were assigned to a member of the faculty who serves as your committee chair (your major professor). When you begin the program, you should set up a face-to-face meeting with that professor to talk about your background, research and career interests, and potential dissertation topics. You should keep your major professor informed of your progress through the program and any problems that arise.

You can change major professor if it makes sense for your research program. It does happen that students' research interests change over their time in the program, and you may find that you're better served with a new major professor. Unlike at the MA level, Ph.D major professors must be specifically certified to supervise a doctoral dissertation. Usually, individual professors, the Security Studies office, and the Graduate School can tell you if a particular professor is certified to chair Ph.D committees.

Keep in mind: no professor is obligated to take on any particular student. Make sure that you're changing major professors for a good reason and that the new major professor has agreed to take you on.

During your first semester:

Make it a point to network with your fellow graduate students and take advantage of professionalization opportunities that arise. The Graduate School, the Career Services office, and various academic programs sponsor speakers and opportunities to prepare you for completing your dissertation and finding a job once you're done.

You need to take responsibility for your own professional development. Seek out opportunities and begin thinking early about life after graduate school. Be proactive about career preparation, about building credentials through education, training, publications, and professional contacts.

Talk to the professors in your classes as well as other professors with relevant interests. You should be thinking early on about which professors would be helpful to work with on your dissertation.

Start thinking about a dissertation topic. As a Ph.D student, you should have some idea about the sorts of research that interest you. In doing your coursework, look for

ways to make your courses complement your dissertation by building expertise and surveying literature for potential topics.

Now is not too early to be preparing for eventual Ph.D exams. Maintain careful and systematic records of the materials you cover in your coursework in order to help you prepare for your exams.

During your second semester:

Complete and submit your program of study to the Graduate School. The Graduate School requires a completed program of study by the end of your second semester. The program of study is a form listing the courses you plan to take, and specifies the committee of professors who will oversee your dissertation.

It is quite common for your initial program of study to have a list of courses that does not precisely match what you eventually take; changing the program of study at a later date is relatively simple.

Ph.D committee

<http://www.k-state.edu/securitystudies/phdprogram/#committee>

Part of the program of study is your supervisory committee. The Graduate School requires at least three members on the committee in addition to your chair. Four is the minimum; more is permissible but you need to make sure you have a good reason. The Security Studies program requires at least one member from history, and at least one from political science—your committee chair / major professor counts for fulfilling that requirement.

It is possible to have faculty from outside KSU on the Ph.D committee if they contribute particular expertise. Consult with your committee chair early to complete the necessary paperwork to add an outside member. It's certainly worth the effort for the right person, but it can take some time for grad school approval. Consult with your major professor if you think there's an expert on some aspect of your dissertation who would work well on your committee. Make sure you have a good reason: service as a committee member is not compensated.

The supervisory committee is extremely important. Start talking to potential members in your first semester. No professor is obligated to serve on any particular supervisory committee, so professors may quite reasonably expect you to take a course with them to demonstrate your commitment to their particular field of expertise. You should choose members of the committee for the particular contributions they can bring to your ultimate success in the program.

At some point in the second semester, meet with your supervisory committee so that all members can reach a consensus on your general plan and on your specific dissertation plan.

The dissertation topic

The Security Studies Ph.D is an interdisciplinary program, but has NOT specified what that means in terms of the forms dissertations may take. You should make sure that all members of the committee are in agreement on the general shape of your dissertation. It is an excellent idea for you to circulate by email to your committee your notes on the meeting and the conclusions the group reached.

You should plan on keeping your committee informed of your progress. While a face-to-face meeting of the entire committee every semester may not be necessary, a detailed email update to the committee every semester should be the minimum.

Progressing through the program and coursework

<http://www.k-state.edu/securitystudies/phdprogram/#coursework>

Use your time efficiently. Take the required courses (Hist 911 and 912; Polsc 900 and 901) as soon as they are offered so you're not stuck waiting for them. Make your summers count—while fewer courses are offered in the summer, you can also take language classes or work independently on your research.

Directed readings courses (HIST 985 or 986 and POLSC 985) arranged with a faculty member are a potential option when summer course offerings are limited (as is often the case). Keep in mind that the Graduate Handbook (Chapter 3.D.2) limits you to six credits (two courses) of individualized courses, and you need to save three credits for your final 985/986 with your major professor.

Ph.D exams

<http://www.k-state.edu/securitystudies/phdprogram/phdexams.html>

Once you have completed coursework, you can move to Ph.D exams. The written exams are offered in the first week of April and the first week of November. In order to take exams in a particular semester,

- 1) At the beginning of the semester, notify the program directors that you intend to take exams.
- 2) Make sure that your committee is set and program of study is filed.
- 3) Make sure you and your major professor are in agreement on the scope and nature of your special field exam.
- 4) Complete a "Request for Preliminary Exam Ballot" and submit it to the Graduate School at least a month before exams.
- 5) Arrange format of the special field exam with your major professor. The exam time/place, access to materials, etc. is set by your major professor. Typically, students schedule their special field exam approximately a week after the written exams.

- 6) Schedule oral exam. You should allow up to two hours, and the history and political science seminar rooms are often available. You should schedule the oral exam for no sooner than a week after the special field exams in order to give faculty time to assess them.
- 7) Take written exams. At present, the history and political science exams are each closed-book, eight-hour exams.
- 8) Take special field exam.
- 9) If you have passed all three written exams (history, political science, special field), proceed to oral exam.
- 10) Once you have passed, have the members of the exam committee sign your ballot.

Do not underestimate the Ph.D exams. You should talk to the members of the exam committee and students who have gone through the process.

Prospectus defense

<http://www.k-state.edu/securitystudies/phdprogram/#prospectus-defense>

At some point soon before or after your exams, meet with your committee for them to formally approve your dissertation prospectus and sign your ballot approving your admission to candidacy. The ballot for your Ph.D exams is the SAME piece of paper as the ballot for your committee to sign for admission to candidacy.