

I. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS

A. ADVISORY SYSTEM

During the summer prior to entry in the graduate program, all first year students are assigned a faculty advisor. While students' academic preferences and interests are respected insofar as possible, the Department tries to achieve a roughly equal distribution of advisees among the faculty. Students may request a change of advisor at any time. You are encouraged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the department's Transition Support Coordinator (TSC), Susan Twarog, if you are considering changing advisors. More information on the TSC program can be found at this [website](#).

On registration day there is an orientation meeting for all new students attended by faculty members and some staff.

B. GUIDELINES TO THE NORMAL WORK LOAD PER SEMESTER

Full-time graduate students are expected to take four letter-graded subjects per term. The Department does not require students to write more than two full-length term papers per semester. Students who commit to writing two such papers have the option in other subjects of an examination, a take home examination, or some other exercise which allows concentration on the readings. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the relevant faculty member(s) at the beginning of the semester to seek and agree on an alternative to a full-length term paper. The presumption is that an exercise based on the readings of the subject can be as rigorous and as demanding as a term paper.

Teachers assigning major term papers are expected to reduce required reading assignments for at least three or four weeks during the semester in order to facilitate term paper completion before grades are due.

Students who wish to use one term paper to satisfy the requirements for two classes must contact both faculty members in advance to obtain their consent and to determine the assignment parameters such as length and content.

With the help of their advisors, students should aim for an appropriate balance of term paper writing, systematic reading, and drills and exercises for specialized skills. This balance may differ from term to term, and individual students may find that their education is best advanced by writing more than the minimum number of term papers. Students should keep in mind the Second Year Paper requirement (described below) when choosing classes and assignments in their first three semesters.

The faculty provides information at the beginning of each term as to the expected character of the work load of each of their subjects, and specifically whether (1) a term paper will be absolutely required, (2) an option of term paper or examination based on subject readings will be given, or (3) no term paper will be required.

C. INCOMPLETES

If an excessive number of incompletes remain on a student's record on registration day of the subsequent term, his or her registration papers will not be processed without the approval of the Graduate Program Committee. "Excessive" refers either to (1) two incompletes from the previous term, or (2) three or more previously accumulated incompletes.

Students are permitted to register if they can demonstrate that the relevant work was submitted to the professor, even though a grade has not yet been submitted for the subject. (Grades not yet submitted for fall term subjects taken at Harvard are not considered incompletes for registration purposes in the spring term.)

D. FINANCIAL AID POLICY

Department Financial Aid Program for PhD Students

Financial aid decisions are initially made by the department's Admissions Committee. The Department offers merit-based financial support packages to the majority of admitted PhD students. Packages include five years of tuition and health insurance coverage, plus stipend. Financial aid awards cannot be postponed if a student withdraws during the five year period. Continued funding is contingent on students remaining in good academic standing and making progress towards their degree. Students admitted into the PhD program from the SM program are treated as first-year students for purposes of financial aid.

In general, students in the Master's degree program are not eligible for department fellowships or for department RA or TA appointments. They may be eligible for RA appointments on externally funded research projects including those directed by department faculty.

Departmental support during the first two years is in fellowship form. Funding after the first two years is normally in the form of Research Assistantships and Teaching Assistantships. Students receiving financial aid from the Department are expected to TA two semesters during their fifth through tenth terms in residence. The Graduate Administrator notifies all students about TAships and RAships for a given semester the preceding term. Students are asked to rank their preferences for TAships and RAships. Assignments will be made by the Department Head and Graduate Program Committee head in consultation with faculty.

Students not assigned to TA who receive departmental support in years three through five are designated "Department RAs." Department RAs are required to work an average of 12-15 hours per week on a research project for a department faculty member.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply for outside funding (non-MIT sources). Students who receive outside funding during one or more semesters of their five year funding period are reviewed on a case by case basis and will normally be eligible for additional support as follows: 1) If the outside support is less than that which the student would receive from the department for the year, the department will make up the difference; 2) If the support is equal to or greater than the support the student would receive from the department for the semester, the department will provide one month of additional summer support per semester.

Students in their sixth year are eligible for TAships and non-departmental RAships.

Non-resident Status

Students who have completed **all** pre-1st colloquium requirements may apply through the Department to the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education to undertake Non-resident Doctoral Thesis Research. For the first three terms of non-residency students pay 5% of regular tuition. Thereafter, non-resident students pay 15% of regular tuition. The Institute has specific policies concerning non-resident students. See *Graduate Policies and Procedures* at <http://web.mit.edu/odge/gpp/degrees/thesis.html#7> for details on non-resident status.

Foreign Students

The Department makes no distinction between foreign and American students in the allocation of its own funds, but has no control over eligibility requirements for U.S. government loans or U.S. or other government funded programs.

Assessing Academic Performance

In the determination to provide continued funding to a student, the faculty is concerned with the **quality** of the student's academic performance (as assessed by grades and faculty evaluations), the number of subjects completed, and whether the student is making good progress in the completion of degree requirements (such as completing the Second Year Paper in a timely fashion).

Pre-dissertation students appointed as Department RAs or TAs are required to take 36 units in the semester of their appointment. Students writing dissertations who are appointed as Department RAs or TAs are not required to take subjects, although they may do so. These students must register for at least 36 units of thesis, be actively working on their dissertations, and must make adequate progress as indicated by a "J" grade on the thesis.

Any deviation from these subject load expectations must be approved by the student's faculty advisor and reported to the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee at the time of registration, or when dropping a subject would take a student below the expected subject load.

Childbirth Accommodation

See *Graduate Policies and Procedures* at <http://odge.mit.edu/gpp/registration/changes/#4> for details on the Institute's childbirth accommodation policy.

E. READMISSION

Students who withdraw from the Department or fail to register must complete a Withdrawal Notification form. All students who withdraw must complete an Application for Readmission one month prior to the term in which they plan to return. Students applying for readmission after a lapse of one academic year or more must pay the applicable MIT application fee. Withdrawal Notification and Application for Readmission forms are available on the Department website at <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/grad/forms/html> (See the Graduate Administrator for details.)

Students withdrawn from the Department for five or more years who apply for readmission to the Department of Political Science are reviewed by the Chairs of the Admissions Committee and the Graduate Program Committee, and by the Department Head. The Dean of Graduate Students also reviews applications for Readmission.

The principal requirement for readmission is that students have an active and complete dissertation committee willing to supervise completion of the research and writing of the thesis. In some cases students may be required to re-take general examinations.

F. DEVIATIONS FROM WRITTEN POLICY

The Department recognizes that exceptional circumstances may make it impossible for students to fulfill the expectations outlined here. In such cases the special circumstance should be reported immediately to the student's advisor and the Graduate Program Committee. The Committee may consider waiver of the expectations upon written petition by the student.