

Ph.D. in Planning, Governance, and Globalization



Student Handbook 2023-2024

www.spia.vt.edu/phd-pgg

Campus Locations:
Blacksburg, VA
Arlington, VA



School of Public and International Affairs

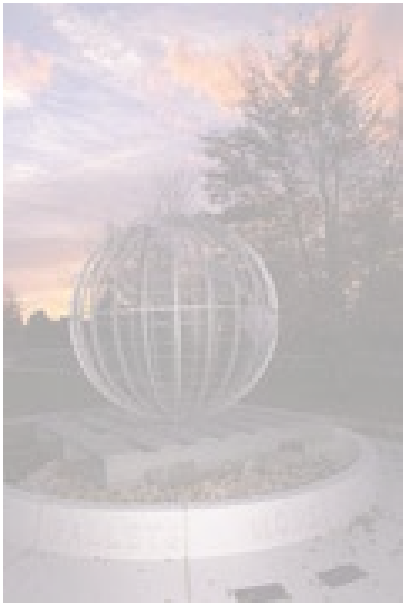
College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences



LIBERAL ARTS AND HUMAN SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH

The School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) is administered within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS) at Virginia Tech, but has collaborative ties throughout the University. SPIA fosters interdisciplinary initiatives, first by building cooperative arrangements among units within the School and University, and second, by partnering with organizations external to the university. The School stresses innovative research for faculty and interdisciplinary instruction for students, while adding value to all academic teaching and research programs for public and international affairs within the University.

Virginia Tech has a long tradition of creating and disseminating new knowledge on issues of public concern and importance. SPIA supports these missions through its instruction, research, and public service programs. The School's goal is to focus Virginia Tech's excellence in government, public administration, international affairs, planning, public policy, and urban affairs to help individuals and communities across the world understand their most critical problems and most promising solutions.



SPIA's graduate degrees are administered by its three programs: Center for Public Administration & Policy (CPAP), Government & International Affairs (GIA), and Urban Affairs & Planning (UAP). The graduate programs are offered both at the Blacksburg campus and at the Virginia Tech Research Center in Arlington, next to the nation's capital. These two locations provide distinct educational and research environments for students and faculty and ready access to the world's center for public and international affairs.

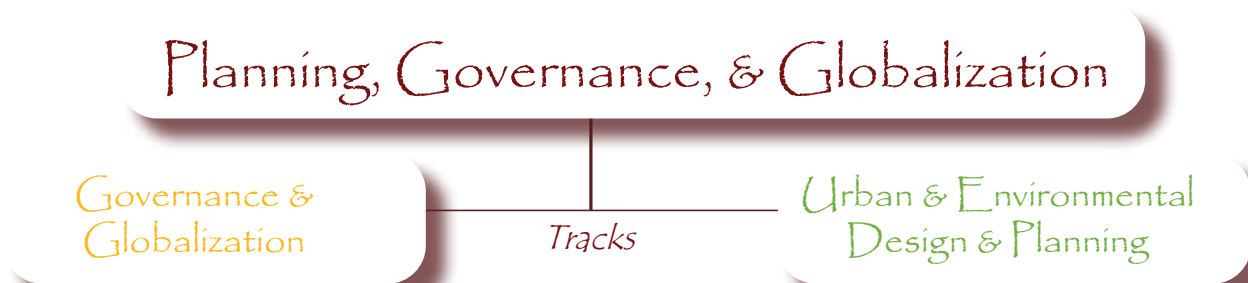
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Ph.D. in Planning, Governance, & Globalization

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Global events have fueled a growing demand for social scientists with truly global perspectives on government, corporate and non-profit sectors. Globalization has restructured our society, resulting in a need to redefine and redirect governance strategies in areas like the workplace, the neighborhood, municipal or state government, nation-states or non-governmental organizations. Likewise, problems of urbanization, democratization, and non-sustainable practices in land and resource use have not been resolved and there is impetus to transform domestic and global trends toward more sustainable economic development, environmental protection, and social equity.

The doctoral program in Planning, Governance & Globalization (PGG) takes a multidisciplinary approach to pursuing these areas of inquiry, utilizing two tracks rooted in different disciplines: “Urban & Environmental Design & Planning” administered by faculty in Urban Affairs & Planning (UAP) and “Governance & Globalization” administered by faculty in Government & International Affairs (GIA). Applicants to the program should have master’s degrees in closely allied fields, such as Planning, Political Science, Sociology, International Relations, Geography and Economics among others.



As a research Ph.D., as opposed to a “taught” program in which one takes a large number of required courses, students are required to engage in a well-defined research project in consultation with their advisory committee and chair. Students choose a dissertation topic, form concentrations of study around that topic and work towards gaining expertise in those concentrations, simultaneously refining their dissertation topic, and research. With fewer fixed course requirements, PGG doctoral students must be self-motivated, independent, and outgoing as they choose coursework, form their advisory committee, pursue their qualifying and preliminary exams, and achieve their overarching goals within the program.

PGG has established a selective Ph.D. program drawing students in the 60th percentile or higher of peer institutions based on GRE scores, GPA, and other measures. The graduate admissions committee carefully screens all applications, and all admissions decisions are made by consensus of the faculty. At least one faculty member from this program must agree to supervise any applicant whose record meets admissions requirements before they receive a formal offer of admission.

Planning, Governance, and Globalization

Tracks and Themes

The Ph.D. program in Planning, Governance and Globalization attracts students with widely differing backgrounds and interests. In order to accommodate this diversity, curriculum requirements are defined in two tracks with several thematic areas. These are:

Governance and Globalization (GG)

Governance: Institutions and Civil Society

Globalization: Identities, Security, and Economies

Urban and Environmental Design and Planning (UEDP)

Metropolitan Development

Community and Economic Development Planning

International Development Planning

Environmental Planning and Sustainability

Landscape Planning and Analysis

Transportation Planning

Physical Planning and Urban Design

On entry into the program, students typically follow the recommended courses associated with one of the thematic areas within a track. For those students wishing to pursue research interests that cross thematic areas or tracks, it is possible to propose, in writing, an alternative plan of study to their program committee.

It is recommended that all students, whether on assistantship or not, complete the GTA Training Workshop which is offered for credit and at no charge by the Graduate School in the week preceding the start of each fall semester. Students who take the course should arrive early enough to take the workshop at the beginning of their first year.

All students, regardless of track, are required to complete thematic coursework in theory, methods, and area directed by the student's PGG track requirements and advisory committee (see Tracks and Thematic Areas within the program beginning on p. 9 for GG and p. 10 for UEDP). Students are also required to take SPIA 6014 Pedagogy and Learning (Seminar in Environmental Design and Planning). This seminar focuses on the nature of research, discovery, teaching, and learning. Incorporated into the seminar is a research colloquium at which PGG students and others present their own research for critical review and feedback.

In addition to information provided in this handbook, students should consult and follow Graduate School policies and procedures found in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

PGG Common Core Requirements

Each doctoral student must complete a minimum of 90 semester hours of graduate study and a dissertation. All students are required to fulfill the requirements for their track or specialization and those of the Graduate School. The curriculum of the PGG program follows a flexible research-based program by requiring a small core of courses and by offering two major tracks, as well as thematic areas under each track. The additional coursework relating to the student's concentration, plan of study, and dissertation are developed by the student with his or her faculty advisory committee.

Graded coursework total: minimum 24 hours (including core); if transferring coursework, a minimum of 15 hours taken at VT. Graded coursework plus research hours add to the total minimum of 90 hours toward the degree.

COMMON COURSE STRUCTURE
90 Credit Hours Minimum*
(See GG & UEDP tracks for course options):

Core Coursework - 12 credits minimum:

- Theory class, 3 credits
- Methods classes, 6 credits
- Pedagogy class, 3 credits (SPIA 6014 Pedagogy and Learning (Seminar in Environmental Design and Planning), or approved substitution)**

Research and Dissertation - 30 credits minimum:

- GG track students register for GIA 7994
- UEDP track students register for UAP 7994

Additional Coursework - 24 credits minimum:

- Includes transfer courses (see p. 17, 50% rule)
(if transferring courses, then 15 minimum taken at VT)
- GG students should see requirements on p. 8
- UEDP students should see requirements on p. 8

Notes:

*Students must have a record of continual enrollment at Virginia Tech during regular semesters for at least three credit hours (i.e., Fall and Spring; students do not have to enroll for summer sessions).

**SPIA 6014 Pedagogy and Learning (Seminar in Environmental Design and Planning), see p. 7 for description. (This course is included in the Graduate School's Future Professoriate Certificate program.)

Students pursuing the thematic area Landscape Planning and Analysis will be required to complete two additional core courses, although these may be waived if students have already taken equivalent courses successfully.

- LAR 5704 – Advanced Landscape Design and Planning Lab (5 credits)
- LAR 5724 – Scholarship in Landscape Architecture (3 credits)

► Graduate School Requirements

By the time students complete the preliminary exam, they must have met the Graduate School's Ethics and Integrity, and Inclusion and Diversity Requirements. Students can meet both of these requirements by taking SPIA 6014 (Pedagogy and Learning). In extraordinary circumstances a student's advisory committee may approve alternate courses to serve as substitutes.

► Residency Requirement

All students must enroll at full-time status (12 hours) for two consecutive regular terms at some point while in the doctoral program. There is an alternative for students at the Northern Virginia campus who cannot meet this.

For more information, please contact Kelly Crist.

► Ph.D. Courses

The following Graduate Courses, among others within the university, are available to PGG students.

GIA or UAP 5974: Independent Study: Pass/Fail only. Variable credit course.

GIA or UAP 5984: Special Study: A/F grade or P/F if instructor approved. Variable credit course.

(Note: for the doctoral degree, a maximum of 12 hours of independent study courses and a maximum of 12 hours of special study courses, with the total for both independent study and special study courses not to exceed 18 hours, may be used on the plan of study. Please see the Graduate Catalog for a detailed description of the difference between Independent Study and Special Study.)

SPIA 6004: SPIA Graduate Colloquium

Special topics, critical reviews, lectures and discussion of literature in planning and public policy. Presentation and critique of research related to dissertation and other research. Research resources and tools, project management and funding opportunities. Professional development, publishing standards and processes. May be repeated up to eight times, as seminar and presentation topics will change each semester. *However, only up to four hours may be included on plan of study - see "Minimum/Maximum Hours..." on p. 16.* Pass/Fail only. Pre: Graduate standing

SPIA 6014: Pedagogy and Learning (Seminar in Environmental Design and Planning)

This course examines central questions of pedagogy and learning with emphasis on the social and cultural foundations of the university in our society. It covers the historical context for and nature of, research in fields encompassed by environmental design and planning; theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches; current research directions; and selected case studies of research projects. A requirement for both GG and UEDP track students (or equivalent, see Ethics Requirement above).

SPIA 6104: Planning Theory Seminar

A doctoral-level seminar that traces the epistemology of major contemporary theories of planning so as to situate the activity of modern planning in an historical and intellectual context. Pre: UAP 5104 or UAP 5174 or UAP 5414. (3H, 3C). A requirement for the UEDP track.

GIA 6114: Critical Geopolitics

GIA 6124: Topics in Security Studies

GIA 6134: Topics in Conflict Analysis

GIA 6144: Topics in Global Governance

GIA or UAP 6984: Special Study

Variable credit course.

GIA or UAP 7994: Research & Dissertation

Variable credit course.

Core and Additional Courses for GG and UEDP Tracks Common to Arlington and Blacksburg

As stated on page six, all PGG students must complete the following:

MINIMUM REQUIRED 12 CREDIT HOURS OF CORE COURSEWORK:

- Pedagogy class, 3 credits - satisfied with SPIA 6014
- Methods classes, 6 credits - satisfied as indicated below
- Theory class, 3 credits- satisfied as indicated below

Students should work out their course choices in consultation with their advisory committee. There are more than 40 graduate-level courses offered to students each semester in these thematic areas within and outside of SPIA that provide a solid foundation for advanced graduate study. In addition to the PGG common core requirements outlined earlier in the common course structure, track-specific requirements are:

RECOMMENDED COURSES TO FULFILL THE GG TRACK CORE

Pedagogy: SPIA 6014: Pedagogy and Learning (3 hrs)

Methods progression, 6 credits:

GIA/PSCI 5115: Research Methods (3 hrs)

and one (or more) of the following:

GIA 5464: Qualitative Methods in Global Studies (3hrs)

GIA/PSCI/UAP 5504: Discourse Analysis (3hrs)

UAP 5224: Planning Methods and Technologies (Statistics) (3hrs)

Theory: GIA/PSCI 6114: Critical Geopolitics (or equivalent approved by advisor)

GG Research Hours:

GIA 7994: Research and Dissertation (30 hrs minimum)

Sampling of Additional Other Courses (see Graduate Catalog* for full listing within GIA & the university):

GIA 5004: Power and Policy in the US

GIA/PAPA/UAP 5034: Global Political Economy

GIA/PSCI 5214: Contemporary Political Theory

GIA/PSCI/UAP 5254: Global Conflicts

GIA/UAP 5274: Contemporary Social Movements

GIA/PSCI 5314: Middle East Geopolitics

GIA 5404: Topics in Political Geography

GIA/PSCI 5434: Politics of Developing Areas

GIA/PSCI 5444: International Politics

GIA/PSCI 5614/HIST 5544: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

GIA/HIST/PSCI 5484: Contemp. American Foreign Policy

GIA/PSCI 5514: Global Security

GIA/UAP 5524: International Development

GIA/PSCI 5581: Environmental Politics and Policy

GIA/PSCI 6124: Topics in Security Studies

GIA/PSCI 6134: Topics in Conflict Analysis

GIA/PSCI 6144: Topics in Global Governance

SPIA 6004: Graduate Student Colloquium

[*GIA Course Catalog](#)

[**UAP Course Catalog](#)

[***SPIA Course Catalog](#)

RECOMMENDED COURSES TO FULFILL THE UEDP TRACK CORE

Pedagogy: SPIA 6014: Pedagogy and Learning (3 hrs)

Methods progression, 6 credits:

UAP 5484: Research Methodology (3 hrs, or equiv.)

UAP 5494: Adv. Quantitative Techniques (3hrs, or equiv.)

Theory: SPIA 6104: Planning Theory Seminar (3 hrs)
(take before Qualifying Exam)

UEDP Required Research Hours:

UAP 7994: Research and Dissertation (30 hrs minimum)

Sampling of Additional Other Courses (see Graduate Catalog for full listing within UAP & the university):**

UAP 5034: Democr. Governance in the Economy

UAP 5084G: Advanced Community Involvement

UAP/GIA 5104: Urb. and Reg. Developmnt. Theory

UAP 5134G: Adv. Land Use & Env. Planning & Policy

UAP 5194: Urban Growth Management

UAP 5304: Land Use Planning

UAP 5364: NGO's in International Development

UAP 5414: Natural Resources Planning Topics

UAP 5424: Metropolitan Planning Topics

UAP 5534: Nonprofit Leadership & Governance

UAP 5554: Land Use Law

UAP/GIA/PSCI 5584: Environ. Politics and Policy

UAP 5604: Housing Planning and Policy Topics

UAP 5764G: Adv. Int. Development Planning & Policy

UAP 5784: Economic Development Planning

UAP 5854G: Advanced Plan. Urban Infrastructure

UAP 5864: Topics in Transport Policy and Planning

SPIA 6004: Graduate Student Colloquium

[****PGG Course Catalog](#)

For all other departmental listings see the [Graduate Catalog](#)

Thematic Areas in the GG Track Common to Arlington and Blacksburg

The Governance & Globalization track has two thematic tracks in which students can specialize:

Governance: Institutions, and Civil Society

Globalization: Identities, Security, and Economies

Area 1: Governance: Institutions and Civil Society

The way that communities, organizations and institutions are governed has everything to do with the quality of the civil society that develops and is sustained. Under this theme, students will investigate new forms of governance that are emerging and their many social, political and economic implications.

Examples of research presently underway by the faculty that fit within this theme include:

- Effective Collaborative Coalitions between Not-for-Profit, Public and Private Sector Organizations (Stephenson, Weisband)
- Emergent Forms of Self-Regulation and Accountability in Organizations (Weisband)
- Comparative Perspectives on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Luciak, Weisband)
- Emergent Modes of Collaborative Governance and Accountability Regimes (Datz, Luciak, Luke, Stephenson, Weisband)
- Provision of Economic Welfare and Social Services through the Not-for-Profit Sector (Ahram, Stephenson, Weisband)
- Private Sector, Public Sector, and Non-Profit Sector Approaches to Global Governance Regimes (Luciak, Stephenson, Stivachtis, Weisband)
- Comparative Policy Networks: States, NGOs, and Businesses (Datz, Stivachtis, Weisband)
- Building Grassroots Participation in Communities (Stephenson)

Area 2: Globalization: Identities, Security, and Economies

Transformative structural changes caused by global economic and political forces are shifting cultural, ethnic, and gender identities, raising new security challenges, and reshaping economies all around the world. Individual interests and collective institutions, along with the quality of the civil society they develop and sustain, must be reevaluated in terms of new opportunities and threats in today's global order. Under this theme, students explore many new forms of cultural identity, systems of security, and networks of economic exchange that global change generates.

Examples of research presently underway by our faculty that fit within this theme include:

- Forced Displacement (Ahram, Luke, Peters, Toal)
- Gender, Development, Social Movements, and Human Rights (Luciak, Peters)
- Local, Regional, National, Global Security Regimes (Ahram, Luke, Peters, Stivachtis, Toal, Weisband)
- Changing Cultural Identities: Local to Global (Luke, Peters, Stephenson, Weisband)
- American Foreign Policy and Security Issues (Ahram, Luciak, Luke, Peters, Toal, Weisband)
- E-Governance, Cybersecurity, New Technology as Global Forces (Luke, Toal)
- Critical Geopolitics and Global Change (Datz, Luke, Peters, Toal, Weisband)
- Post-Communist Transitions, Peace Building, and Conflict Resolution (Ahram, Luciak, Luke, Toal, Weisband)
- Ethnic, Religious, and Racial Conflict (Ahram, Toal, Stephenson, Weisband)

Thematic Areas in the UEDP Track Common to Arlington and Blacksburg

The Urban & Environmental Design & Planning track includes seven thematic areas:

- Metropolitan Development**
- Community and Economic Development Planning**
- International Development Planning**
- Environmental Planning and Sustainability**
- Landscape Planning and Analysis**
- Transportation Planning**
- Physical Planning and Urban Design**

Area 1: Metropolitan Development

More than 90% of all development in the United States occurs in metropolitan areas and between 2005 and 2035 metropolitan development will exceed \$20 trillion in investment. Yet, very few universities offer doctoral specializations in metropolitan development. This thematic area has five topical emphases: metropolitan form, metropolitan systems, metropolitan processes, metropolitan analysis, and real estate development. Virginia Tech faculty in Urban Affairs and Planning lead the nation in metropolitan studies.

Faculty supporting this concentration include: Buehler, Cowell, Hankey, Lim, Luke, Misra, Sanchez, Zahm.

Area 2: Community and Economic Development Planning

“Communities,” defined as sub-regional units ranging from ethnic neighborhoods in large metropolitan centers to small rural towns, face numerous diverse challenges to viability in a rapidly globalizing world. Creating opportunities for economic development in communities distressed by plant closures and contracting job base and developing the institutional capability to respond to social and environmental problems beleaguering many blighted communities, are among issues community development planners address in professional practice. Faculty expertise exists in the areas of community building and involvement, community economic development, housing, neighborhood revitalization, knowledge-based industries, regional innovation systems, and entrepreneurship. Ph.D. students in this concentration can find research opportunities with the Virginia Tech Center for Housing Research, based in Blacksburg, and the Arlington-based Virginia Tech Research Center.

Faculty supporting this concentration include: Cowell, Hall, Hankey, Stephenson, Zahm.

Area 3: International Development Planning

A great challenge facing all planners and policy makers is the persistence of poverty in less developed countries. In its 1992 Planning Accreditation Report, the Planning Accreditation Board noted that the “international strengths of the Urban Affairs and Planning faculty are arguably second to none in the country.” Virginia Tech urban and regional planners continue to build upon an international reputation notable in the areas of international urbanization, environmental and regional economic development planning, nongovernmental organizations and development, and infrastructure planning in low-income countries. Given the University’s renewed commitment to international graduate education and research, the growth in the portfolio of the Office of International Research, Education and Development (OIRE), and SPIA’s emerging position as the University’s central academic unit in international and global studies, this concentration will continue to respond to the University’s strategic goals recommended by the October 2004 International Strategic Directions Plan. Recent international development planning students have entered the PGG doctoral program from Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Pakistan, China, India, Turkey, Mexico, Portugal, and the United States creating a vivacious multicultural environment for advanced graduate studies.

Faculty supporting this concentration include: Datz, Hall, Misra, Schenk, Zhang.

Area 4: Environmental Planning and Sustainability

Environmental Planning has been an important specialization in the PGG degree, and it is the largest specialty of completed graduates under supervision of UAP faculty. Environmental planning involves theories, processes, approaches, methods, and techniques used to improve decisions to manage natural systems and human-environment interactions in domestic and international contexts. It includes environmental land use planning, community energy planning, pollution prevention, planning for sustainable communities, land analysis, watershed and water resources planning, land conservation, collaborative environmental planning, and related areas. Faculty in UAP and other SPIA, College, and University units have substantial experience in these areas, and students often draw on other departments for members of their faculty advisory committees. The UAP GIS Laboratory is dedicated to innovative applications in support of faculty and student research in this area.

Faculty supporting this concentration include: Hall, Hankey, Lim, Luke, Schenk, Wernstedt, Zahm, Zhang.

Area 5: Landscape Planning and Analysis

Landscape planning and analysis is supported by UAP faculty and faculty in the Landscape Architecture program in the College’s School of Architecture + Design. This area focuses on macro scale landscape planning as opposed to site-scale design. It includes regional landscape analysis and planning, greenspace and greenway planning, stormwater management, visual assessment, and biodiversity protection. Both UAP and LAR have GIS labs to support this area.

Faculty supporting this concentration include: Hankey, Kim (LAR), Lim, Mastran, Zahm.

Area 6: Transportation Planning

Transportation planning is an integrative field that examines urban transportation systems in the context of environmental, energy, safety, equity, financial, and health impacts. Students studying transportation examine the social and physical organization of society at geographic scales ranging from local neighborhoods to regions to the entire globe. They explore the social, economic, and spatial relationships which shape how individuals gain access to opportunity in regions, as well as how transportation infrastructure affects local communities and environments. UAP faculty place a special focus on sustainable transportation, public transportation, bicycling, walking, international perspectives, and the coordination of land use and transportation planning. Students can also take advantage of transportation expertise at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute and the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

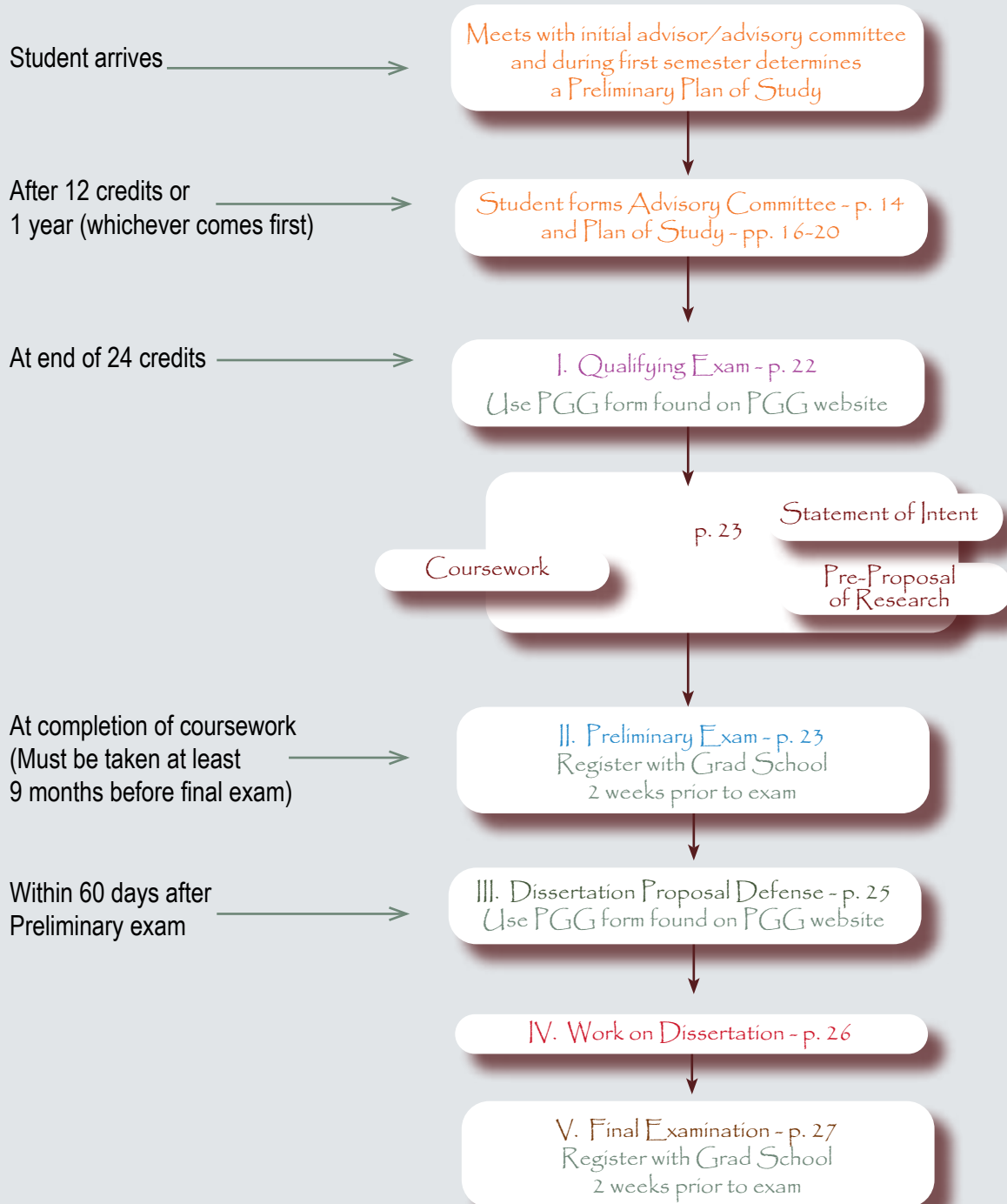
Faculty supporting this concentration include: Buehler, Hall, Hankey, Sanchez, Schenk.

Area 7: Physical Planning and Urban Design

More than one half of the urban infrastructure that will exist in this nation by 2025 will have been constructed after the turn of the century. It is crucial that the physical growth of cities be guided in a manner that supports enhanced quality of life. Faculty members are actively engaged in basic and applied research projects addressing a range of urban design and community planning issues/challenges. The topical areas under investigation include: urban infrastructure planning, urban biodiversity conservation planning, public health through community design, public security and crime prevention through environmental design, equitable and accessible public space design, urban forestry/horticulture, low-impact development and distributed stormwater management. UAP-Arlington directs the Planning Academy for professional and continuing education.

Faculty supporting this concentration include: Clements (LAR), Hankey, Katen (LAR), Kim (LAR), Lim, Luke, Mastran, Zahm, Zhang.

Suggested Timeline including Major Milestones for the PGG Ph.D.



Advisor and Advisory Committee

Overview.

Graduate advisors must be teaching/research faculty (i.e., full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty at Virginia Tech) in the graduate program. It is our normal practice that students have a graduate advisor from the tenure-track faculty in their track (GG or UEDP). Students should concentrate on choosing a Ph.D. Advisory Committee that reflects a balance of needs that the student may face, including area of expertise, personality, and availability. Each student has a minimum of four individuals on their advisory committee, some may have more. Committee members should have areas of expertise that are well-suited to provide assistance and guidance to the student as they progress towards their Ph.D. The Advisory Committee, minimum of four members, is composed as follows:

- (i) the student's major professor (from within the School of Public and International Affairs, usually from within the track – GG or UEDP) as chair
- (ii) at least two members from within the School
- (iii) at least three faculty persons (total) from within the university
- (iv) The fourth member can be from within or outside of Virginia Tech. If a student decides to have two non-VT members, then the committee must have at least 5 members with three being from within Virginia Tech.

Student-Advisor Relationship.

Students will be assigned an advisor upon admission and once classes begin they should work with that advisor to begin thinking about establishing an advisory committee as well as come to a consensus on expectations (both what you expect from your advisor and what your advisor expects from you). Typically, students are assigned an advisor whose specialty is related to the student's research area; however, as those research interests evolve, a student may choose another advisor. Advisors vary in terms of academic interests, working styles, and levels of engagement. Frequent contact with your advisor, particularly at the beginning of your program, will give you a sense of whether your interests and working styles are compatible. Your advisor should be available to answer questions, provide guidance, or discuss your progress through the program. While advisors should carefully monitor student progress, it is the student's responsibility to take the initiative to maintain regular contact.

Role of the Committee Chair.

The student's advisor often becomes the committee chair, but not necessarily. The chair plays three important roles: They can be 1) the student's principal advocate within the program, 2) a strong engine on the dissertation committee that moves the process along and holds other members accountable when needed and 3) an important reference for future endeavors. As such students should be diligent in their selection.

Role of the Advisory Committee.

The student works with the advisory committee to design the Plan of Study, and then the committee approves the Plan of Study, provides advice, and regularly assesses the student's progress and accomplishments. Advisory committee members are officially appointed by the Graduate School on recommendation of the program head or graduate director. How engaged individual members are in the dissertation process is based on how well a student stays in touch and interacts with their committee members.

Who Can Serve on the Advisory Committee.

Virginia Tech teaching/research faculty as well as individuals with suitable academic training, research and applied experience from outside Virginia Tech. Those who are not Virginia Tech tenure-track teaching/research faculty may serve on Advisory Committees with approval from the Committee Chair and Graduate School, but they may not serve as Committee Chairs. The Graduate School must approve such personnel, as well as all non-SPIA VT faculty members. Should you determine that a non-VT or non-SPIA member is appropriate for your committee, please work with Kelly Crist to get the appropriate paperwork filed with the Graduate School. You will receive notice from the Graduate School if the member has been approved.

Choosing Your Advisory Committee.

Students are strongly encouraged to seek out faculty outside of formal classes (during office hours or by appointment) to learn about on-going research, discuss mutual interests, seek mentoring or advice, and discuss any program-related issues that might arise. It is the student's responsibility to make full use of faculty advising through frequent and regular contact with faculty advisors and other program faculty. Committees are composed of a minimum four individuals, which is often enough considering the individual demands on the student by each member and the logistical constraints entailed when coordinating various milestones in your program. It is important to remember also that many faculty outside PGG and those outside the university may also serve as strong sounding boards and resources even if not on the Advisory Committee.

Meeting with Your Advisory Committee.

The first meeting of the advisory committee should happen within the first year of classes for all students. The first meeting should be on the design of the Plan of Study. A second meeting should then be held to approve the Plan of Study. The plan is submitted to Kelly Crist for electronic submission to the Graduate School along with the names of the four committee members for final approval. This second meeting is where one also holds the first of the 5 milestones, the Qualifying Exam, on the road to the Ph.D. Due to the logistical challenges associated with having busy faculty at multiple campuses, students may need to hold Zoom meetings with their committee members.

Making Changes to Your Committee.

Changes in a student's advisory committee will be granted only on approval of all committee members, new and old, and on recommendation by the Department Head or Graduate Program Director. In the case that one or more members do not approve the change in membership of the Advisory Committee, an appeal may be made by either the student or a faculty member to the SPIA Director. If the Department Head considers the appeal to have merit, he/she then may ask the Graduate School for an exception to all members signing the form. To make changes to your committee please use this [form](#).

Dr. Timothy Luke, Interim SPIA Director is the PGG Department Head.

Plan of Study

► Preliminary Plan of Study

Upon entering the program, students are strongly encouraged to meet their initial advisor as soon as possible to determine a preliminary Plan of Study, receive initial thoughts on the dissertation topic, and discuss the future make-up of the advisory/dissertation committee. The purpose of the preliminary plan of study is to help students define initial coursework to meet their interests and the requirements of the program. The preliminary plan of study does not need to be filed with the Graduate School at this stage.

► Plan of Study

The Graduate School expects that students file an approved plan of study before completing 15 credit hours in the Ph.D. program. This plan of study must meet the minimum requirements for the Ph.D. and be approved by the student's advisory committee, the Director of the PGG program, and the Graduate School.

The Advisory Committee of at least four faculty will be formed as part of this process. This committee will be made up of departmental faculty who will advise the student and administer the Qualifying Exam. The committee should be made up of faculty holding a Ph.D. or doctorate in their field and at least half of the committee, including the chair, must be SPIA faculty. See the Advisor and Advisory Committee on p. 14.

Students create their unique plans based on their individual transcripts. When creating your plan, take care to be sure the term taken, course number and course name match those on your unofficial transcript which you can access through Hokie SPA. If you have questions about formatting your plan, contact Kelly.

Once the plan of study is finalized with the dissertation committee, students must submit their plans to Kelly. Kelly can assist with the signature process. Once the Plan of Study has been signed by all committee members, Kelly will then submit the plan electronically to the Graduate School for final official approval.

Note: Under "Research Hours," students in the GG track should list GIA 7994 and students in the UEDP track should list UAP 7994 in this section.

► Minimum/Maximum Hours on Your Plan of Study

The Graduate School requires each PhD student to complete 90 semester hours of graduate study and dissertation work. The plan of study must meet the following requirements:

- Research and Dissertation (7994*) Minimum 30 credits.
- Courses 5000 or higher: Minimum 24 credits. If transferring courses, a minimum of 15 credits must be completed while at Virginia Tech.
- Seminars (subject matter unstructured). Maximum 4 credits.
- Independent and Special Study (5974, 4984, 5984, and 6984). Maximum 12 credits.
(Or 18 total credits when combining the two)

Notes:

1. Courses numbered 5000 or above may not be taken on a pass/fail basis except when offered P/F only.
2. Plans of Study can include a maximum of 6 credit hours of 4000 level undergraduate course work. Undergraduate Special Study courses (4984) may be included on a Plan of Study but Undergraduate Independent Study (4974) may not be used.
3. Seminars may be taken pass/fail and may be used in meeting minimum requirements in courses numbered 5000 or higher. The four-hour restriction does not apply to EDP 6005 and EDP/SPIA 6014.
4. Courses numbered 5974, 5984, and 6984 may be used in meeting minimum requirements for courses numbered 5000 and higher. Special study courses (x984) that are subsequently approved as regular courses do not count toward the maximum permitted special study credit courses.

See the Graduate School's website regarding [Plans of Study](#) for additional information.

► Transfer Credits

The transfer of credit hours from another accredited institution is done on the Plan of Study. You may transfer 50% of the total course work, subject to approval of the faculty advisory committee.

Most graduate students want to transfer in as many credits as they can. This is neither the smartest nor the most prudent policy to negotiate your way successfully through the milestones towards the Ph.D. Transfer credits need to be considered within the balance of VT courses and the anticipated arc of dissertation research. They are supplemental rather than foundational, and are to be chosen only after a general plan of study is determined for an individual student. Put differently, starting with transfer credits is starting backwards. There are a few basic Graduate School rules governing transfer credits:

- ◆ All credits must have earned grades of “B” or better (B- is not acceptable), have been earned while in good standing in graduate status, and must have been offered for graduate credit at the institution where the student took the courses. Grades of “S” or “P” are not acceptable for transfer credit.
- ◆ All transfer courses must be acceptable to the student’s Ph.D. committee and the Graduate Program Director or Department Head and must have been completed within the time limits prescribed for satisfying degree requirements. For transfer course work more than five years old, see the Justification of “Old” Course work below.
- ◆ Credits are transferred to the Virginia Tech graduate degree at the time the Plan of Study is approved. Transferred courses count only as credit hours and are not included in the calculation of the Virginia Tech GPA. Official transcripts are required before transfer course work can be approved for the Plan of Study. Again, be sure those courses you list on your plan match the courses on the transcript.
- ◆ Research hours may not be transferred in from another university for Virginia Tech graduate degree requirements. Credits taken while in undergraduate status or for an undergraduate degree cannot be used as transfer credit for a graduate degree.
- ◆ Remember VT’s 50% rule: No more than 50% of the graded course credit hours needed to satisfy the minimum requirements for a Virginia Tech graduate degree may be transferred from another accredited university. Example: If you have a total of 30 hours of course work on your Plan, of that total only 15 hours can be transfer credits from another institution. At least 15 hours of graduate-level credit coursework (not including research (7994)), must be completed while at Virginia Tech. If you are coming to the program without any transfer credits, then you must complete a minimum of 24 hours of graduate-level credit coursework at Virginia Tech.

No guarantees can be offered about transfer credits to any student by any one professor prior to admission.

► Accrediting Bodies for Transfer Credits

Only courses from colleges/universities accredited by one of the six regional accrediting bodies are acceptable:

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE)
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission (NCA-HLC)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS)
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (WASC-ACSCU)

► Justification of Old Work

Academic work must be “current.” Courses, including transfer credits, that are five years old or older at the time the Plan of Study is submitted require a justification for inclusion on the plan. This process is formalized by submitting the [Course Justification Request form](#).

The Justification form requires the Advisory Committee to explain how the student will update their knowledge for out-of-date courses. For details see the Graduate School policy on [Justification of ‘Old’ Course Work](#).

Justifications remain valid throughout the degree unless the student is out of enrollment for a period exceeding one calendar year. Being out of enrollment causes problems not only for transfer credits but also VT courses you may have taken, so try to stay continually enrolled and in touch with your committee.

**Student Name (VT ID Number)
Leading to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Planning, Governance & Globalization**

I. Research and Dissertation Planned

GIA or UAP 7994 Research and Dissertation
Total Hours of Research and Dissertation Planned _____

GIA or UAP 7994 Research and Dissertation
Total Research and Dissertation Hours Taken _____

Total Research and Dissertation Hours Remaining _____

(Those in the GG-track list GIA 7994, those in the UEDP-track list UAP 7994)

Year-Term

Taken/Planned	Dept.	Course No.	Course Title	Credits	Grade
---------------	-------	------------	--------------	---------	-------

II. 5000 and Higher Level Courses (do not include Research and Dissertation hours here, enter above)

2015-01	SPIA	6014	Seminar in Env Design & Planning	3.00	A-
2015-01	SPIA	6104	Title of Course	3.00	A
2015-09	GIA	XXXX	Title of Course	3.00	B
2016-01	UAP	XXXX	Title of Course	3.00	A
2016-01	UAP	XXXX	Title of Course	3.00	A
2016-01	GIA	XXXX	Title of Course	3.00	B
2016-09	UAP	XXXX	Title of Course	3.00	A
2016-09	STS	XXXX	Title of Course	3.00	A

Total 5000/higher Level Courses _____

III. Transfer Credits from (name of University and Transfer Code if known)
(List transfer courses in same manner as you list VT courses)

Total Transfer Hours _____

IV. 4000-Level Courses (maximum 6 hours allowed)

(List transfer courses in same manner as you list 5000-level courses)

Total 4000 Level Courses _____

V. Supporting Courses

(List courses in same manner as other courses, hours do not add to plan total)

Total Supporting Courses _____

Total Graduate Hours
(minimum 90 hours) _____

How the Ethics & Diversity and Inclusion Requirements will be met? _____
(continue on back if necessary)

Indicate when the Ethics & Diversity and Inclusion Requirements were met or will be met: _____

(Terms: 09=Fall Semester, 01=Spring Semester, 06=1st Summer Session, 07=2nd Summer Session)
(see p. 16 in handbook for maximum/minimum requirements)

**Student's Advisory Committee
Plan of Study Approval Page**

Student: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

Committee Chair: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

Committee Co-chair*: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

Committee Member: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

Committee Member: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

Committee Member: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

Program Chair: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

SPIA Director: _____

Signature: _____

VT ID # (last 4 digits) _____

* If you don't have a co-chair, then there is no need to include this signature line.

The PhD Journey: The 5 Milestones - An Overview

The five milestones on the road to the Ph.D. are:

- (i) qualifying exam,
- (ii) preliminary exam,
- (iii) proposal defense,
- (iv) complete dissertation, and
- (v) dissertation defense.

But the journey does not begin without a successful first-year meeting and assessment by the student's advisory committee. More in-depth discussion of the milestones begins on p. 22.

Keep in mind that the Suggested Timeline on p. 13 is just that, a suggested timeline. It is understandable that not every student can keep to it so it serves as a guideline to help keep you on track.

Not everyone who is admitted to a Ph.D. program successfully obtains a Ph.D. The process is long and demanding. Ph.D. admission is an invitation to pursue, but not an entitlement to obtain the degree. Your initial course grades will be preliminary indicators of your standing (those exhibiting Ph.D. potential should be receiving straight A grades or close to it). To begin the Ph.D. journey, upon the completion of their first 12 credit hours of courses (i.e., their first year of entry), students must have selected an advisor, formed an Advisory Committee (4 members with usually 3 from the student's track program), organized a meeting with this committee and presented them with a proposed plan of study and general topic for research. At this meeting, the student's first 12 hours of study in the program will be assessed. Classifications other than 'excellent' or 'good' are indications that the student should consider other options than a Ph.D. at this time. Students will continue to be assessed annually on their progress by SPIA.

- ◆ The first milestone in the Ph.D. program is a qualifying exam. So, after completing 18-24 of the 90 required credit hours in the program students have: (1) developed a plan of study; and (2) selected a faculty advisory committee. At this time students should set up and pass a qualifying examination by their faculty advisory committee. The qualifying exam ensures that the student is making satisfactory progress toward the degree. The Pedagogy course (SPIA 6014, see pp. 6 and 7) will explain this process in detail and the Research Methods class provides students with a forum within which to develop their initial ideas on a research proposal. Students who do not pass the qualifying exam will be invited to complete course work towards a master's degree.
- ◆ Following successful completion of the qualifying examination the student continues to take coursework as outlined in the plan of study. At the completion of coursework, the student will undertake the preliminary examination, a formal assessment of the student's preparedness to pursue advanced graduate research.
- ◆ Within 60 days of passage of the preliminary examination, students must defend the dissertation proposal before his or her faculty advisory committee. Then, upon completion of the dissertation, the student must defend (final examination) it before the committee. Graduate School policies and guidelines determine all other degree requirements.

Note:

Please remember all required forms should be signed as indicated on each form and submitted to Kelly Crist, in Blacksburg. She will be required to sign most and will also obtain the Department Head (School Director) signature and then forward those to the Graduate School for you.

The Graduate School (GS) prefers original signatures on all forms. Best practice would be to begin the process far enough in advance to get original signatures so the paperwork can be submitted to the Graduate School to meet their two-week deadline. However, the GS realizes that this is not always possible since many students are at satellite campuses and may have a committee member that is not on the VT faculty. Please work with Kelly Crist at the Blacksburg campus for alternative arrangements.

Discussion of Milestones

The Five Milestones: 1. The Qualifying Examination

The first milestone in the Ph.D. program is a qualifying exam of student progress.

In preparation for the Qualifying Exam, the student should have completed at least 12 of the 90 required course credit hours. The student should choose a committee chair and then consult with that chair to select other dissertation committee members. Please see the Advisor and Advisory Committee section on pp. 14-15 for more information on selecting committee chairs and members. It is also wise to solicit advice from one's cohort and others in the PGG program. The student must then prepare a Plan of Study, a draft research prospectus and a reading list (see below). Classes and course credit hours that may help with preparation for the exam include the Pedagogy and Learning course (SPIA 6014) and a methods course (e.g. GIA 5115 for GG-track students).

Make sure to bring the Plan of Study and Signature Page (shown on pp. 19 and 20) and the PGG Exam Outcome Report form with you to your exam. Submit the plan and signed forms to Kelly Crist when completed.

Both are on the [PGG website](#).

The Qualifying Exam is intended to monitor student progress. The exam is structured more as a discussion among the student and committee members as an initial introduction to the student's research and committee input. Two weeks prior to the Qualifying exam, the student will prepare the following documents for discussion and send them to their committee members:

- 1) A Plan of Study (pp. 16-20). The committee will assess consistency of the final Plan of Study with the student's research interests, and suggest adjustments, if necessary.
- 2) A draft research prospectus (length and depth dependent on committee chair). The pre-proposal will present the student's proposed area of research and research question; areas of concentration including identified theory, method and substantive area involved in the proposed research; and an initial timeline. The areas of concentration will be the areas tested during the preliminary exam. The committee will work with the student to either broaden or more closely define these different concentrations.
- 3) A reading list. The student will present an initial list of books and articles s/he will use to prepare for the preliminary exams, subdivided according to areas of concentration. Through student-committee dialogue during and after the qualifying exams, a reading list will be defined on these subjects and it will be the basis for the setting of the preliminary examination.

The committee will also discuss practical considerations relating to the student's research plan, such as funding needs and availability of expertise and support for the student's research program. The purpose of the Qualifying Exam both is developmental and evaluative, to ensure that the student is on track and beginning to focus on research interests. If the Qualifying Exam reveals that the student is not making satisfactory progress, she/he may be advised to withdraw from the program or pursue a master's degree.

► After the Qualifying Exam and Before Prelims

After successfully completing the qualifying exam, students should begin to formalize their dissertation work. This should be undertaken concurrently with completion of the remaining coursework requirements. The student should begin by determining the general area of their dissertation, in collaboration with their faculty advisors. Once the area of the dissertation has been decided, the student should begin preparing a Statement of Intent and determining the final membership of their advisory committee. The Statement of Intent sets out the general area and contribution of the dissertation and can be of assistance in determining appropriate committee members. The advisory committee is selected to support areas of specialization required for the proposed Statement of Intent. At least two members of the committee, including the chair, need to be from SPIA. The chair should be from the program that supports the student's track: GG students should select a chair from GIA faculty and UEDP students should select a chair from UAP faculty.

The student should present a Ph.D. pre-proposal (proto-prospectus) to the faculty advisory committee. The pre-proposal should include the following items:

1. A statement of the proposed work.
2. A preliminary bibliography.
3. A statement about the body of knowledge that will be affected.
4. A statement of the contribution to the body of knowledge.
5. A statement of other work and how the proposed work will be differentiated.

The pre-proposal should be presented to the Advisory Committee prior to the preliminary exam.

Please submit a PGG Exam Outcome Report form, to Kelly Crist in Blacksburg in advance of your exam. Kelly will assist with the signature process. This form can be found at: https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia_vt_edu/doctoral/PGG_Exam_Outcome_Report_Form.pdf

The Five Milestones: 2. The Preliminary Examinations

The purpose of this examination is to evaluate the student's readiness to proceed with his/her dissertation work in terms of theory, research design, and major area of interest. The areas of examination will build on the student's plan of study and qualifying evaluation proposals. The content of the examination will be determined through discussion between the advisory committee and the student. The committee chair will coordinate questions from each committee member. Students will have choices among the questions asked.

The Preliminary Exam consists of two parts: the written exam followed by the oral exam. The written portion typically consists of two parts: in-chamber and ex-chamber. However, the format of the written portion is determined by the committee and may therefore be one or the other or both. Following the written portion of the exam, the oral Preliminary Exam is scheduled through the Graduate School. See below for details.

The in-chamber examinations will be over several days and organized around these three broad topical areas: theory, method, and a substantive field chosen by the student and agreed to by his/her examination committee. One full day of examination will be devoted to each topic with the student answering two or three questions, out of a set of up to five, exam questions developed by the student's examination committee based upon the student's coursework as well as a mutually agreed upon set of readings. These reading lists will be compiled by the student and augmented by the examining committee members. On each examination day, the morning will be devoted to answering the questions, and the afternoon to editing and refining the answers. These exams will be in-chamber with no special resources other than the reading lists and a computer – without internet access – to word process the answers.

If there is an ex-chamber portion, it will follow soon thereafter. It will run 24 to 36 hours, and it will concentrate on a particular research design problem. The challenge posed in this part of the examination is for the student to develop a comprehensive response that should integrate his/her command over the relevant theory, method, and substantive knowledge for a research problem tied to some issue of public and international concern. This research design problem will most likely, but not necessarily, focus upon a topic tied closely to the student's dissertation research. In the NCR, this part of the examination is effectively a Ph.D. pre-proposal (proto-prospectus). The examination committee will specify the resources that the student can consult in the ex-chamber examinations.

Upon conclusion of the written portion, the student's committee completes the PGG Exam Outcome Report form and submits it to Kelly Crist for the student's file:

https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia_vt_edu/doctoral/PGG_Exam_Outcome_Report_Form.pdf

After the written portion is concluded, the committee and student meet for the oral portion of the examination which will examine the student's performance in the in-chamber and ex-chamber examinations. The oral portion of the examination generally follows the written portion within one to three weeks and needs to be scheduled with the Graduate School two weeks prior to the exam date, and the results must be reported to the Graduate School within two weeks of the examination date. The examination can have two possible outcomes:

- ◆ Committee is satisfied and permission to proceed to the Dissertation Proposal Defense is granted.
- ◆ Committee is not satisfied and permission to proceed is denied.

A student can have only two attempts at the preliminary exam and if the second attempt is unsuccessful the student will be asked to leave the program or transfer to a master's program.

Please schedule your prelims two weeks prior to exam with the Graduate School by using the online scheduling system: <https://ess.graduateschool.vt.edu/>

Upon completion of the exam, the Graduate School will prompt your committee members by email to provide their assessments electronically.

The committee must also complete the PGG Exam Outcome Report form for the Oral portion of the exam and submit it to Kelly for the file:

https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia_vt_edu/doctoral/PGG_Exam_Outcome_Report_Form.pdf

The Five Milestones: 3. The Dissertation Proposal Defense

This is a public review of the student's specific research proposal, research design and plan for undertaking and completing the research. In the NCR GG Track, the proposal defense must be within sixty days after completing preliminary examination. There are three potential outcomes, after the proposal draft is read and then presented in person by the student at the defense:

- ◆ Progress Subject to Minor Revisions: If the proposal, in the judgment of the student's faculty advisor, is sufficiently strong subject to minor revisions, the committee will then draw up a detailed 'contract of expectations' which will be signed by all members specifying what the student is undertaking, how and over what timeline.
- ◆ Progress Suspended: If the proposal and/or defense reveal structural weakness and major problems the committee may give the student an opportunity to respond within two weeks to the identified problems with a warning that they may not be allowed to proceed. A second defense is required at an agreed date, and a final decision is rendered, turning the yellow into a definitive green or red.
- ◆ Progress Denied: If the proposal is weak or unrealistic, the student will be asked to radically revise their proposal, change topics or adjust their expectation and work on completing a master's as their final degree.

Please submit the PGG Exam Outcome Report form for your dissertation proposal defense, signed by your committee, to Kelly Crist in Blacksburg. This form can be found at:

https://spja.vt.edu/content/dam/spja_vt_edu/doctoral/PGG_Exam_Outcome_Report_Form.pdf

While the format of your proposal will vary depending on whether you follow a standard format or manuscript format (for more information, see <http://etd.vt.edu/guidelines/>), general guidelines can apply to most of proposals. You can find the general guidelines from various resources (e.g., John W. Creswell (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, SAGE Publications). In your proposal, you will clarify specific research questions to address throughout your doctoral research, provide literature review to understand your research questions, explain your research methods that will be adopted to answer the questions, propose a theoretical/conceptual framework as a guide for your research, and include a bibliography. For example, in the standard format, your proposal will include 1) introduction to explain your motivation, research objectives, and tentative structure of your dissertation, 2) literature review to provide background knowledge on theories and subject matters of your research, and 3) research design and methods including your research plan. In the manuscript format, your proposal will include research objectives and questions in each manuscript, research design for the manuscript, and relationship between manuscripts as an integrated research.

The proposal needs to be developed in collaboration with your committee chair and members so that your committee has a clear understanding of your motivation for your research topic and your proposed research methods. The contents of your preliminary examinations will be closely connected to your proposal. You will selectively use the contents for your proposal in more refined ways. While the preliminary examination tests your comprehensive knowledge on the subject matters, your dissertation proposal will be focused on specific research objectives that you can meet within a certain time limit.

During your proposal defense, you are not expected to present research results, but are expected to demonstrate that your proposed research methods are feasible and relevant. Also, during the proposal defense, you can be asked your scholarly position on debatable subjects or your own perspectives on divergent arguments. In addition, anticipated results based on your research methods and expected contributions can be asked by your committee. Your proposal defense is your opportunity to convince your committee of the importance of your research and its contributions.

After passing the Proposal Defense, students are considered ABD.

The Five Milestones: 4. Research and Writing the Dissertation

During this process, students should be registered for research hours (GG-track: GIA 7994, or UEDP-track: UAP 7994) and corresponding regularly with their advisor and committee to make sure they do not proceed off course and violate the terms of the contract of expectations. Time management and sustained focus are crucial in this phase as well as a lot of patience and perseverance.

In relation to the dissertation format, you will determine whether you follow a standard format or manuscript format based on the topic, scope, and structure of your research in consultation with your committee chair (for the standard formatting guideline, please see here: <http://etd.vt.edu/stdformat.html>).

Writing a dissertation can seem overwhelming. Setting small goals and breaking your research into manageable tasks can be a solution to keep you on track. Targeting journal paper publications can be a strategy to keep momentum on your research. You can develop a plan based on your target and small goals. For general advice to complete your research and writing, you can consult with several sources (e.g., see [Columbia University's Dissertation Toolkit](#) and [UNC's Dissertation Handout](#)).

A basic tip for time management is getting writing into a habit. Common advice is that you set and invest certain amounts of time for writing every day free from any distractions. You can find some tips on how to manage time for your dissertation on the web (e.g., [Ph.D. Academy: How I wrote a PhD thesis in 3 months](#)).

There are also several tools that allow you to stay focused and motivated. You can use resources at the Graduate School, such as a Dissertation Writing Group, to share tips and get support. There is also useful advice on the web and professional blogs (e.g., <http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/26/using-rage-to-stay-motivated-part-two/>).

The Five Milestones: 5. Defending the Dissertation

After completion of the dissertation, the student will, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, set a date for a public dissertation defense. This date must be at least two weeks after notification of the defense to the Graduate School. Committee members must receive final defensible copies of the dissertation two weeks before the date of the dissertation defense.

At the conclusion of the public defense, the following outcomes are possible:

- ◆ The student passes with all members of the examining committee accepting the work. (One dissenting vote is permitted.) However, in almost all cases, recommendations will be made to improve the quality of the work.
- ◆ The student fails when more than one member of the examining committee rejects the work.

If the student fails the committee there is one opportunity for re-examination after six months and substantial rework. If more than one member of the committee rejects the work in the re-examination, the student has no further opportunity for re-examination.

Please schedule your final defense two weeks prior to exam with the Graduate School by using the online tool: <https://ess.graduateschool.vt.edu/pages/login.php>

Following the exam, the Graduate School will prompt your committee members by email to submit their outcome assessment electronically.

The committee must also complete the PGG Exam Outcome Report form for the final exam and submit it to Kelly for the file:

https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia_vt_edu/doctoral/PGG_Exam_Outcome_Report_Form.pdf

In relation to the VT Graduate School Approval System, your committee members need to log in to the Electronic Signature System at least four times for Schedule Approval, Exam Result, Result Approval, and ETD Approval.

The final examination result should be entered in the Electronic Signature System within 2 days after the examination, with each committee member signifying whether the exam performance was Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. In addition to entering exam results (Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory), your committee members are required to approve the result. Committee members often miss the step of the result approval, so you are encouraged to follow up that all committee members enter the exam result and approve the result.

Within two weeks of your dissertation defense, you should submit a completed Dissertation Approval Form, upload your ETD, and submit applicable supporting documentation (e.g., copyright permissions, IRB approval or exemption notices, Survey of Earned Doctorates). For more information, please review here: <http://etd.vt.edu/etdsubmn.html>.

Information of Interest to Those in GG and UEDP

Privacy

Virginia Tech is committed to protecting the privacy of its students, employees, alumni, and other associated individuals. At times, the university will ask you for your Social Security number. Federal and state law requires the collection of your Social Security number for certain purposes such as those relating to employment, taxes, and student aid.

The university may make the request for your Social Security number at a time when it is easiest for you to provide it, even if the need is not yet mandatory. For example, the university is required by the IRS to supply the name, address, and Social Security number of every tuition-paying student. The university is also required to have a valid Social Security number before an individual can receive compensation. Thus, without your Social Security number, the university cannot grant an assistantship or provide other employment. Virginia Tech may ask for your Social Security number in anticipation of need, such as at application for admission or application for employment.

The university may disclose your Social Security number when required by law, or to external entities acting as the university's contractor or agent.

This statement was created for informational purposes only and may be amended or altered at any time.

Graduate Honor System

The Virginia Tech Graduate Honor System is in effect for all courses within SPIA and all assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the [Graduate Honor Code](#). Please take the time to read this document and make sure that you understand your responsibilities as a student. Be informed of the potential violations of the Graduate Honor Code: Cheating, Plagiarism, Falsification, and Academic Sabotage. Plagiarism or other forms of violations of the Graduate Honor System will not be tolerated. Take time to read [Avoiding Plagiarism: A Guide for Graduate Students at Virginia Tech](#). Please contact any of your instructors at any time if you have questions about the Graduate Honor System at Virginia Tech.

Travel Support

Students should apply for any travel support directly to the [Graduate and Professional Student Senate \(GPSS\)](#).

In addition students who travel to present a academic paper at a conference can apply to receive reimbursement of up to \$400.00 of their travel related expenses from SPIA. For more information on this process, please contact Kelly Crist. Pre-approval is required for reimbursement.

Dealing with Difficulties

Students should try in the first instance to resolve any academic and procedural issues with their advisor or other members of their committee. If that fails or is inappropriate, they may approach the chairs of UAP or GIA as relevant. They may also approach the Director of SPIA. If the matter is not resolvable within SPIA, the Graduate School provides a confidential and informal process through the [Ombudsperson](#). Communication resolves most problems.

Determining the Right Balance: Course Work versus Dissertation Hours

Technically there is no maximum amount of Research and Dissertation hours you can take. If you want to graduate with only 90 credit hours (which is a minimum, remember) and you must take at least 24 credit hour minimum of courses. Therefore, the maximum number of 7994 hours you would take is 66. The exact balance you should strike will be determined by you in consultation with your Ph.D. advisory committee. This should be one subject of your first advisory committee meeting. You will need to think about the following as you prepare for this meeting:

- ◆ What VT courses does my committee recommend that I need in order to proceed through the qualifying evaluation and to pass the Preliminary Examination and Proposal Defense? This is your personalized Ph.D. track.
- ◆ How long, in the estimation of my committee, will my dissertation take and how many 7994 hours will I need in order to stay enrolled and get it done? This is your personalized dissertation arc.
- ◆ How many transfer credits, given the above, should I apply to have transferred? This is your personal educational background.

Always keep in mind the requirement to be continually enrolled. You may reach the 90 hours total and find yourself not finished. You will then be accumulating more than 90 hours. This is not unusual.

Academic Goals for Students

Graduates will be expected to demonstrate the following skills and forms of knowledge, including:

- Development of a strong knowledge base derived from core courses, as evidenced by successful completion of the qualifying evaluation;
- Development of a strong knowledge base derived from specialization in one of the tracks and their thematic areas;
- A working knowledge of quantitative or qualitative methods of research, as evidenced by successful completion of the required core course, satisfactory preparation of a research proposal for the dissertation, and satisfactory analysis of research findings in the dissertation;
- Strong writing skills, as evidenced by successful completion of seminar requirements, qualifying and preliminary exams, preparation of papers for professional meetings or publication, and completion of the dissertation;
- Strong verbal and public speaking skills, as evidenced by discussion participation in seminars, colloquia and class presentations, and paper presentations at professional meetings;
- Proficiency in a foreign language as may be necessary;
- Ability to design and implement a research project that culminates in the dissertation; and
- Pedagogical skills, as evidenced by successful completion of the required core course and/or successful completion of classroom experiences under the tutelage of a faculty member for whom the student works as a teaching assistant.

Types of Jobs for Which Graduates Will Be Prepared

This doctoral degree will enable students to pursue educational, management, research, community and public service, and business careers in the United States or abroad at the following types of employment. Experience from the existing degree indicates the market for Planning, Governance & Globalization graduates.

- Program directors in government agencies;
- Directors and research fellows in nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations;
- Program managers and other personnel in international organizations, such as the United Nations or World Bank;
- Faculty members at academic institutions;
- Research associates and fellows in private consulting firms and research institutions;
- Managers in small businesses and corporations.

Virginia's central location in the Mid-Atlantic region permits Virginia Tech graduates to have easy access to many nonacademic employers who require the types of advanced analytical research skills provided by this degree. Many of the largest sites for such nonacademic employment are, in fact, located in the Commonwealth itself, the District of Columbia or in major eastern cities along the Atlantic from Boston to New York to Philadelphia to Miami. Graduates of this program can find employment in federal agencies, the not-for-profit sector, and international organizations in and out of government.

PGG Student Association (PGGSA)

The PGG Student Association (PGGSA) is a student-run association that aims to provide academic and social support to all PGG students at both campuses. Each PGG student is a member of the PGGSA. The association is lead by a voted president, usually located in Blacksburg due to the concentration of PGG students in Blacksburg. Traditionally, the PGGSA has a representative from the NCR campus.

The PGGSA organizes the Graduate Student Colloquium, a series of weekly research presentations and professional development lead by students and faculty in SPIA. Topics include, but are not limited to, preparing for the PGG milestones, working on the dissertation, the publication process, and academic job search. Discussion panels are served by the GIA and UAP faculty. Students are encouraged to propose new topics for the professional development sessions. Students are also encouraged to present their research in the Colloquium. This is a great opportunity for students to introduce their research, get feedback from faculty and peers, practice for conferences or job talks, and initiate research collaboration. The Colloquium is broadcasted to the NCR campus through Zoom. It is recorded on-demand; all slides and extra materials, if available, are uploaded on the “PGG - for current student”’s Canvas site. All PGG students are encouraged to help organize the Colloquium, address any questions, and provide feedback.

Happy hours are organized occasionally. PGG students gather on certain Fridays and/or holidays. In addition to providing social support outside the academic program, happy hours are rare chances where you can meet students from all phases in the PGG program and seek their advice on academic issues.

The PGGSA welcomes any ideas on how to make it well suited for PGG students’ needs.

PGGSA resources on Canvas: <https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/37753>

PGGSA on Twitter: https://twitter.com/VT_PGGSA

PGG on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VTPGG/>

Information of Interest to Arlington Students

This handbook works in conjunction with Virginia Tech's Graduate School Graduate Catalogue for all Ph.D. students which is available at: http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/

Here, we try to explain what is meant in practical terms for students at the Arlington campus. Yet, it is a 'rough guide' because it does not specify all contingencies. It does not enumerate all the rules. The Graduate School is the ultimate authority on the Ph.D. journey. It is very important that students grasp that all the options and contingencies that are articulated in these general guides are not necessarily available to students in NCR, which is an extension campus environment. Here we provide a brief sketch of our context, our institutional culture and our working practices of procedure. The goal is to simplify and streamline our Ph.D. program so it makes sense to you and allows you to understand it.

Access to the Virginia Tech Research Center - Arlington

Please contact Elia Amegashie (elia@vt.edu) to arrange to receive access to the VTRC-Arlington Building if you intend to take in-person courses.

Concerning the Advisory Committee

For those in the GG track at NCR, doctoral candidates must have an advisory committee of at least four faculty members with a doctoral degree. Since choice is fairly limited in NCR, we expect that at least three of the GIA in NCR faculty members will serve on student Ph.D. committees. A committee can start off with three members and then add a fourth later when the Plan of Study is submitted. It is fine that the Advisory Committee includes at least one faculty member from outside GIA faculty in NCR and Blacksburg; regular academic faculty in UAP, CPAP and STS may be able to help. It is advisable that students should have taken at least one course with all committee members. Faculty are not permitted to serve as major advisor or committee member for individuals with whom they have a personal or professional relationship (e.g., spouse, son, daughter, business associate, etc.).

Those in the UEDP track should consult with UAP faculty members about committee membership.

Concerning Transfer Credits

For students in the GG track, transfer credits have to be in a field that is germane to the specialization the student is pursuing. Credits for specialty training, management and military logistics will be evaluated by students' advisory committees on a case-by-case basis, but may not necessarily count. The GG track in the PGG degree is a Ph.D. for study of questions at the intersection of globalization and governance. The course credits that comprise it have to pass a credibility and coherence test with your committee.

Information of interest to students in Blacksburg

Desk and Computer Use Policy for PGG Students

Open space

There is a computer lab (AA1) located in the Annex basement. This lab is open to everyone except during class hours.

PGG students have a common mailbox in the workroom on the second floor of the Annex.

Every student must clean up after using any space in the Annex, particularly in the kitchen area.

The Graduate Life Center

The Graduate Life Center offers reservable spaces and other amenities for all graduate students. Located near the Newman Library, Squires Student Center, academic buildings, and downtown Blacksburg, the GLC provides spaces, services, housing, and programming that meet the unique needs of graduate and professional students and encourage their active participation in the graduate community. The GLC has won national awards and is a role model for other graduate schools and departments across the nation.

Important Contact Information

SPIA Contacts

Timothy Luke, University Distinguished Professor and Interim Director for the School of Public and International Affairs

102 Architecture Annex - 0113, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Phone: (540) 231-6633; twluke@vt.edu

Kelly Crist, PGG Graduate Staff Coordinator

110 Architecture Annex - 0113, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Phone: (540) 231-2291; kcrist@vt.edu

Virtual Meeting Link: <https://calendar.app.google/PL1bv1N4VCDzENga8>

GG Track Contacts

Ariel Ahrum, Professor and Chair, Government and International Affairs

900 N. Glebe Rd, Rm. 6-022 - MC 0804, Arlington, VA 22203

Phone: 571-858-3123; ahram@vt.edu

Tim Luke, University Distinguished Professor, Government and International Affairs

102 Architecture Annex - 0113, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Phone: (540) 231-6633; twluke@vt.edu

UEDP Track Contacts

Todd Schenk, Associate Professor and Chair, Urban Affairs and Planning

301 Architecture Annex - 0113, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Phone: (540) 231-1803; tschenk@vt.edu

PGG Forms

Planning, Governance and Globalization Forms can be found on the web:

PGG Exam Outcome Report Form

https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia_vt_edu/doctoral/Qualifying_Exam_Form.pdf

Please note that all forms must be given to Kelly Crist in 110 Architecture Annex (0113) in Blacksburg.

Important Reference Documents/Sites

PGG – Planning, Governance, and Globalization

<http://www.spia.vt.edu/phd-pgg>

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/>

Graduate School Forms

<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/forms.html>

The Graduate School Website

<http://graduateschool.vt.edu/>

Graduate Catalogue

https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation

<https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/GSITWiki/Wiki.jsp?page=GAAPSETD>

Library

<http://www.lib.vt.edu/>

Writing Center

<https://www.lib.vt.edu/spaces/writing-center.html>

Graduate and Professional Student Senate

<https://gpss.vt.edu/>

Computer & IT Help

<https://vt4help.service-now.com/sp>

Scholarships and Financial Aid

<https://finaid.vt.edu/graduate-students.html>

International Students

<http://www.international.vt.edu>

Graduate School Forms

Following are links to common forms that can be accessed through the Graduate School's website. A full listing of Graduate School forms can be found at

<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/forms.html>

1. Application for Degree

[found in Hokie Spa](#)

2. Application for Graduate Readmission (*apply for readmission via Graduate School admissions portal*)

<https://applyto.graduateschool.vt.edu/apply/>

3. Start of Semester Defense Exception

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Start_of_Semester_Defense_Exception_Request.pdf

4. Change of Committee/Advisor

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Change_of_Committee-Advisor_Request.pdf

5. Change of Graduate Program

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Change_of_Graduate_Program_Request.pdf

6. Course Justification Request

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Course_Justification_Request.pdf

7. Request to Admit Candidate to Preliminary Examination

<https://ess.graduateschool.vt.edu/>

8. Request to Admit Candidate to the Final Exam

<https://ess.graduateschool.vt.edu/pages/login.php>

9. Request for Change of Degree Status

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Change_of_Degree_Level_Request.pdf

10. Request for Leave of Absence

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Leave_of_Absence_Request.pdf

11. Request for Letter of Completion

[via HokieSPA Student Degree Menu](#)

12. Request for Plan of Study Changes

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/forms/Plan_of_Study_Change_Request.pdf

13. Student Resignation/ Withdrawal Form

https://www.registrar.vt.edu/content/dam/registrar_vt_edu/documents/Updates/forms/Student-Withdrawal-Resignation-Form.pdf

Please note that all forms must be emailed to Kelly Crist at kcrist@vt.edu so that she may submit them to the Graduate School. Kelly can also provide assistance with obtaining electronic signatures on the forms via DocuSign.

School of Public & International Affairs

spia@vt.edu www.spia.vt.edu 540-231-2291

DEGREES OFFERED

*B.A. in Public & Urban Affairs
(Environmental Policy & Planning (EPP) major)
(Smart & Sustainable Cities (SSC) major)*

Master of Public Administration

Master of Public & International Affairs

Master of Urban & Regional Planning

Ph.D. in Public Administration & Public Affairs

*Ph.D. in Planning, Governance & Globalization
(Governance & Globalization track)
(Urban & Environmental Design & Planning track)*

PROGRAMS in SPIA

*Center for Public Administration & Policy
www.cpap.vt.edu
cpap@vt.edu
blacksburg: 540-231-5133
arlington: 571-858-3102*

*Government & International Affairs
www.gia.vt.edu
gia@vt.edu
arlington: 571-858-3102*

*Urban Affairs & Planning
www.uap.vt.edu
uapvt@vt.edu
blacksburg: 540-231-5485
arlington: 571-858-3102*

CENTERS & INSTITUTES

*Center for Housing Research
www.vchr.vt.edu*

*Institute for Policy & Governance
www.ipg.vt.edu*

Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, sex, handicap, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. Anyone having questions concerning discrimination should contact the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office.



School of Public and International Affairs

Architecture Annex (0113)

140 Otey Street / Room 112

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061