Students’ Most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Academic Advising

Q1: POL and INTA curricula list multiple 2000- and 3000-level courses. What is the difference between these two groups of courses?

A: 2000-level courses are focused on specific policies, regions or issues, whereas 3000-level courses focus on theoretical and conceptual aspects of Political Science. However, from programmatic point of view there is very little difference. Students can use any of these courses to fulfill their POL and/or INTA course requirement. Occasionally, 3000-level courses might require independent research and analysis whereas 2000-level courses might emphasize learning of basic factual content. Also, 2000-level courses have a BoK general education (gen. ed.) attributes attached (and hence will count toward gen. ed. coursework for non-majors) where most 3000-level courses do NOT have these attributes due to university policies.

Q2: I am an INTA major; should I pursue a double (INTA and POL) major or a POL minor?

A: If you have decided to pursue an INTA degree, you are almost certainly going to earn enough credits for a POL minor due to similar coursework. INTA students can declare a POL minor but the department would recommend the pursuit of double (POL and INTA) major if feasible. Similarly, we would suggest one of our inter-disciplinary certificates (e.g. SSTD, IHR, CYBR and others).

Q3: I have finished all gen. ed. and major coursework but still have 1-2 semesters left until graduation (i.e. to reach 120 credits). Why is this so? What should I do?

A: Most curricula in McMicken College are set up in a way that allow students who chose their major early in college to complete required coursework relatively quickly. As a result, by their senior year most McMicken students will have left free electives equivalent to 1-2 semesters of coursework. In these cases, the department normally recommends students to enroll in another minor(s) and/or certificates(s) to use these credits in a structured way that enhances their future competitiveness on the job market.

Q4: I am interested in INTA but also POL and several other majors. Can I complete all of them?

A Students should keep in mind that multiple majors across different colleges are more difficult to complete (the department would basically recommend only a combination of POL/INTA and economics or business). Students should focus on one major and several minors and/or certificates in a course of four years. Bear in mind that you always have an option to pursue a graduate (MA/ PhD) degree in an area different from your undergraduate coursework.

Q5: I have some ideas what to do after college. Who should I talk to?

A: You can most definitely talk to ProPEL people who have professional advisors trained to help you prepare for the job market. However, if you are interested to continue your education and go to graduate school, law school, etc. or seek other professional opportunities, you can also talk to your major advisor and/or other UC Political Science faculty. Feel free to talk to UG Achievement coordinator and UG Director as well.
Q6: I am planning to apply for graduation and I want to make sure I am on track. What should I do and/or who should I talk to?

A: Your first step would be to go online and check your audit. In case, there are minor unresolved issues related to your major or gen. ed. requirements, please feel free to email your respective advisor and inquire about specific requirements as these issues can be resolved by email. If there are more substantial issues that require a waiver or a formal exception, then you should definitely meet with your major and/or college advisor who can consequently refer you to the UG Director. Make sure you clear all unresolved issues before applying for graduation.

Q7: I talked to my major advisor and he or she told me I am okay to graduate. I thought I had fulfilled all requirements (gen. ed. and major) and I applied for graduation but my application was denied. Who is to blame?

A: Students should keep in mind that even if they have met all major requirements, they can be denied graduation if one of the gen. ed. (or McMicken) requirements are not met. One such requirement is that each student should accumulate a total of 120 college credit. If the student is even 1 credit short, the college certifier will deny their application. Students should be aware of this dynamic and plan carefully ahead of time.

Q8: My audit says that as of August 2015 I have accumulated a total of 111 college hours but my advisors told me I am ready to graduate in December 2015. Why is this case if I am supposed to have 120 credits?

A: Unlike most parts of the degree audit which consider your “In progress” coursework completed, the DARS audit counts toward “total college credits” only those hours which the student has completed successfully. In the case discussed above, if the student has registered for and completes 12-18 credits in Fall 2015, they will accumulate between 122-128 college credits which is sufficient to graduate in December 2015.

Q9: I think I was assigned an unfair grade and/or I feel I was treated unfairly by the instructor in the class. What should I do or who should I complain to?

A: Your first step would be to discuss this matter directly with the instructor and explain why you feel you have not been treated fairly. If you are not able to resolve the issue, your second point of reference would be the UG Director. Keep in mind that faculty in Political Science have academic freedom which includes the right to formulate and implement course policies. NO administrator or UG Director can change these policies unless the rules are considered unfair to the students. The Director will inquire about the case from the instructor and let the student know about their resolution or recommendation. UG Director has also the right to bring the issues to the UG Committee and/or Department Head for review and recommendations. Finally, if the student is not satisfied with the department’s review and recommendations, they can refer the case to the University of Cincinnati’s Ombudsman Office (the latter step is recommended only in exceptional cases).

Q10: I met with the UG director or Achievement Coordinator about the fulfillment of a requirement or another administrative issue but I don’t think he or she was helpful and my issue was not resolved. What should I do?
A: By and large, the UG Director is in charge of undergraduate affairs and if they are not available the student should refer this matter to the UG Achievement Coordinator who represents the UG director. However, if the director has reviewed the case and has not been able to find a mutually acceptable resolution, depending on the type of issue, the student can refer the issue either to the Department Head.

Q11: Am I eligible for Departmental or High Departmental Honors? What should I do to receive those honors?
A: In the case of Departmental Honors you should maintain and graduate with a 3.34 GPA in the major; in the case of the High Departmental Honors, your major GPA should be 3.67 and you are required to complete either a graduate-level seminar (7000-level) POL class (see Appendix 2 for a list of these classes) or write a senior thesis and register for POL 5000 and 5001. Details are available in the Capstone section of the UG Handbook and this advising document.

Q12: I was told I am eligible for high departmental honors. Should I complete a senior thesis or take a 7000-level graduate seminar?
A: Senior thesis is recommended if following requirements are met: (1) the student has an approved topic; (2) initial research has been conducted and; (3) a faculty in the department or similar disciplines has consequently agreed to supervise their research. POL 5000 and/or 5001 is especially recommended for students who have received funding from Taft, Tolley Fellowship, UC or other undergraduate research fellowships. If the student is not sure about a research topic, the department recommends pursuing a 7000-level seminar. At least one such seminar is offered every semester and the student should talk to their major advisor about these options.

Q13: What is 4+1? How can I receive more information about the BA/MA program?
A: The 4+1 also known as BA/MA program offers the completion of undergraduate and graduate (Master’s) degrees in approximately 5-5.5 years. To that end, the student should plan at least one year prior to the completion of their undergraduate degree to submit an application for the 4+1 program. They should also plan to take GRE or an equivalent test and prepare an application letter that summarizes research interests and outlines possible topic for a professional paper. Contact the UG Director or Graduate Director for further details.

Q14: Can I finish my BA degree and then work for one or more years before applying for the BA/MA program?
A: No. The rules of the BA/MA program require the students to remain continuously enrolled in college, which means that if you plan to graduate in May, you should be able to start the MA program in August the same year. No gaps in enrollment are allowed. If you prefer to take a year off, then you won’t be eligible to apply to the 4+1 program and will instead need to apply to the regular two-year MA program.

Q15: Can I really finish the BA/MA program in one additional year of coursework (hence 4+1)?
A: The main incentive for the BA/MA program is the funding that students receive from the State of Ohio to pursue a graduate degree. It is possible to complete the work in one year if the student carefully plans their coursework and even considers taking a few required graduate-level
courses in their last semester of undergraduate (BA) coursework. Note that graduate-level courses will NOT count toward the BA degree as no double-dipping is allowed. 7000-level seminars that serve as capstones can count ONLY toward BA coursework and NOT toward their MA coursework at the same time. BA/MA students should plan to complete the remaining graduate-level coursework in two semesters during which the student would also work on their professional paper. Graduate (4+1) students should plan to complete and revise the paper in the summer following the two semesters of graduate coursework. Please, note that if students accept a job offer or have other non-academic commitments, they should be aware that these events would delay their graduation and it may NOT be realistic to expect them to complete the MA requirements in a single year.

Q16: I can register for 3 or 4 credit for my capstone (6000 or 7000-level class)? How many credits should I sign up for?

Normally, students in 5100/6000-level courses should sign up for 3 credits (the 4-credit option is reserved for graduate students), while all students (graduate and undergraduate) should sign up for 4 credits in 7000-level courses. If a student is 1 credit hour short of fulfilling a specific requirement, and subject to the instructor’s approval, it is possible to sign up for 4 credits and arrange additional work in this class in lieu of the extra credit hour. If there is no such arrangement, all UG students should sign up for only for 3 (three) credit hours in 5100/6000-level classes.

Q17: I see that the department offers every semester independent studies POL 4010, 4040, 4060 and 4080. What are these classes and why can’t I sign up for them?

A: As explained in the UG handbook, students wishing to pursue a narrowly defined subject in more depth can sign up for an independent study (up to 4 credits) in American Politics (4010), Political Theory (4040), Comparative Politics (4060), or International Relations (4080). To that end, they have to meet the following requirements: (1) the student must have completed basic course work in the area before proposing an individual work project; (2) they must identify a faculty supervisor for the research project and latter must confirm with the UG director that they are, indeed, willing to supervise the project and; (3) students must prepare a written proposal that includes a reading list and a schedule of meetings with their faculty supervisor.

Q18: I want to do a co-op or an Internship? What opportunities do I have available at UC?

Currently we are NOT able to offer co-ops for POL and INTA majors. If students can arrange a co-op on their own, the department will facilitate the process and the possible transfer of academic credits. Nonetheless, our students can take advantage of the internship program developed in partnership with ProPEL for which students can also earn academic credit. Internship opportunities are posted on the department’s page on Blackboard or are available via ProPEL. See UG Handbook for further details. Students should contact Brodie Theis (email: Brodie.Theis@uc.edu) at ProPEL or the UG Achievement Coordinator.

Q19: My overall GPA is higher than 2.0 but my major GPA is below 2.0. Will that prevent me from graduating and what should I do?

A: Students need to maintain 2.0 overall GPA and GPA in the major to graduate. If you have accumulated Fs (or “In Progress grades” that have consequently become Fs after 1 year) or
“unconditional withdrawals” due to inability (physical, personal, etc.) to complete coursework, feel free to contact the instructor or the respective director of academic programs to inquire if there is an option to complete this coursework and consequently change the grade in this course(s). You should also understand that often times administrators or instructors may not be willing or able to change grades after more than 1 year. Alternatively, students can require if they can grade replace this coursework (each undergraduate can use up to 4 grade replacements during their academic career). If a grade replacement is not possible (due to limited offerings or unavailability of grade replacements), then the student should complete as many courses as needed to reach a 2.0 GPA in the major. The UG Director or the Achievement Coordinator can use the GPA calculator to determine how many courses and what grades the student should complete to reach the desired GPA.

Q20: I am pursuing a major and several minor(s) and/or certificates have several different advisors. Should I see all of them and/or what should I do?

A: Whereas meeting with multiple advisors may be onerous, it is recommended to meet individually with each of them to ensure that you are making satisfactory progress toward your degree(s) as planned. The Political Science department generally recommends students who meet with their advisors to inquire about courses that can fulfill multiple requirements at the same time (for example, a major and a minor/ certificate requirement; or a minor/ certificate and a gen. ed. requirement/s). If students feel they are well-informed and confident about the programmatic requirements, they don’t need to meet with an advisor or can seek advice by email. In this case, however, advisors are NOT responsible for a student’s miscommunication or inaccurate interpretation of different rules and requirements.

Q21: How often should I meet with my major (and/ or McMicken) advisor(s)?

McMicken students have mandatory advising during their freshmen year and can consequently decide to meet with them again as many times as they need. It is always recommended to meet again one semester before graduation to make sure they are on track. Students meet with their Political Science advisors when they start taking classes in the major/ minor/ certificate and should meet as often as they feel necessary. We recommend to seek advice (if necessary) prior to participation in a study abroad program or anticipated application for graduation. The Political Science Department does NOT require mandatory advising.

Q22: I want to study abroad but I don’t know where and when. What should I do?

First, you should visit UC international’s website at: http://www.uc.edu/international/study-abroad/study-abroad-programs.html. Then, you can set up an appointment with an officer/ advisor there to discuss what opportunities are available and which of them will best fit your needs. Make sure that you select a program which offers courses and/ or other experiential activities that are closest to your scholarly and professional interests. For example, you can complete an FL requirement or another major/ gen. ed. requirement and/ or other coursework that will count toward your major(s)/ minor(s)/ certificate(s). Finally, you should feel free to approach your Political Science advisor or UG Director and ask to meet with them to make sure this coursework will fulfill specific requirements. The advisor or the UG Director will also help you fill in the required study abroad forms.
Q23: I am a senior who has NOT studied abroad and I would like to do that before I graduate. What should I do?

While the best time to study abroad is in the sophomore and junior year, it is still possible to use the senior year to study abroad. In these cases graduating seniors should bear in mind the following constraints: First, POL and INTA majors are required to complete their capstone at UC and should plan accordingly. Second, seniors should select courses that fulfill requirements not completed previously (and, if possible, plan how to complete them). Third, if you anticipate delay in graduation, meet with your advisor to weigh the pros and cons of your decision to study abroad.

Q24: Do we offer study abroad programs in our department?

Yes. The Political Science Department offers every other year a study abroad course in Brussels and the Hague with focus on International Cooperation and Institutions (POL 2087/2097, or 6080). 6080 can also fulfill the capstone requirement. Ask the UG Director or your major advisor for more information.

Q25: I have tried on multiple occasions to complete a specific requirement (e.g. STAT or QR coursework); however, it seems that I may have a (documented) medial disability that prevents me from completing these courses. What should I do?

Students with documented disability can petition to have their QR requirement waived. To that end, they should contact the UG director and formally request a waiver. Students are required to present to the UG director all relevant medical documentation. If they don’t have any documentation, they should first seek professional help to determine if they indeed have a disability and how to deal with it. UC’s Counseling & Psychological Services offer a 24 Hour Phone Consultation at 513-556-0648 and are available to help.

Once presented with relevant documentation, the UG Director will review the case and will consequently meet confidentially with the student to determine if such waiver can be granted. Please, note that if a specific requirement is waived for medical reasons, students can still be required to take other courses at a level corresponding to their disability or can be directed to pursue alternative pathways to earn specific academic credit(s).