

University of British Columbia

Department of Asian Studies
Graduate Student Handbook, 2024-2025



About the Department

Welcome to the Department of Asian Studies. Some information about the building, staff, and administrative matters is provided below.

Office hours

The department office is open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday to Thursday and on a remote basis on Fridays. Location: Room 607, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2 ([Map](#))

Title	Name	Phone	Email
Head	Sharalyn Orbaugh	604-822-5132	sharalyn.orbaugh@ubc.ca
Graduate Advisor	Bruce Rusk	604-822-5183	bruce.rusk@ubc.ca
Associate Graduate Advisor	Christina Yi	604-827-2093	christina.yi@ubc.ca
Graduate Program Assistant	Tina Wong	604-822-5728	asia.graduate@ubc.ca
Administrator	Maija Norman	604-822-3512	maija.norman@ubc.ca
Student Programs Coordinators	Adam Barnett	604-822-5234	adam.barnett@ubc.ca
Administrative Assistant	Pamela Francis	604-827-5069	pamela.francis@ubc.ca
Undergraduate Advisor	Zoe Bigelow	604-822-5068	asia.undergrad@ubc.ca
Communications & Events	Lisa Matsumoto	604-822-2610	lisa.matsumoto@ubc.ca

For the most up-to-date information on office staff, phone numbers, email addresses, please check the departmental website at <https://asia.ubc.ca/>

Contact

Please be sure the office has your up-to-date e-mail address, postal address, and phone number. Please report any changes to the Graduate Program Assistant and update this information on the Workday Student (<https://myworkday.ubc.ca/>) with your [Campus-wide Login](#) (CWL). We cannot give out personal phone numbers to callers. If someone calls for you we will take a message and attempt to relay it by e-mail or phone.

Scanning, printing, and copying

The office photocopier in room 413, Asian Centre is also a high-speed scanner that sends documents by email. Scanning is free.

Mail

Student mailboxes are located in the department office, Room 607, Asian Centre. They are only accessible during office hours.

Your mail, including some official UBC announcements, other messages, and student assignments (if you work as a TA) will be placed in your mailbox. Please check it frequently.

Equipment for student use

Students can book laptops, desktops, microphones, VGA convertors, projectors, audio cables, or other equipment to use for events, study sessions, etc. Please contact the Communications & Events Coordinator at 604-822-2610 for more information.

Amenities

- A kitchenette and lounge area on the 400 level of the Asian Centre (one floor below the main office) is available for everyone's use. Hot water is free; coffee is available for purchase from the office (room 607). Please clean and return any dishes you use.
- Graduate students have a shared space / reading room in Auditorium Annex B (1924 West Mall). There is a key for the main door (entrance to room 104) and another for the silent study room (room 103). The latter is only available to graduate students, while undergraduate TAs or TAs from other departments may have access to room 104. There are a refrigerator and microwave in the lunch room (100). Personal belongings should not be left in this space and may be removed without notice. The space is accessible 24 hours a day but staying/sleeping overnight is not permitted.
- Students may book the meeting room in the Asian Centre (Room 604) by contacting asia.graduate@ubc.ca or 604-822-5728.

Graduate Student Life

The Asian Studies Graduate Student Association

The Asian Studies Graduate Student Association is composed of all students registered in any graduate program in Asian Studies. Both full and part-time students are full members with voting privileges. You will have the opportunity to elect up to three individuals (at least one MA and one PhD student) to serve as your Graduate Representatives (“Grad Reps”) during the annual welcome meeting for graduate students in September. The Grad Reps primarily serve as a liaison between graduate students and the Department’s faculty and administration. Students can bring any ideas, concerns, or questions about the program and student life to the Grad Reps.

In addition to meeting at least once a term with the Graduate Advisor and/or Associate Graduate Advisor, the Grad Reps are in charge of organizing the annual graduate student conference, usually held in March. They may also hold other scholarly activities and social gatherings as member requests and resources allow. The position of Grad Rep is therefore an important one, allowing you to advocate on behalf of fellow students and gain valuable professional development and networking skills.

To learn more about the Association, find out about upcoming meetings or events, or to become involved, please contact one of the current Grad Reps. (If you do not know who your Grad Rep is, you may send your inquiries to the Graduate Program Assistant, Graduate Advisor, or Associate Graduate Advisor and we will forward them to the Grad Rep.)

Getting involved

Asian Studies invites and encourages students to become involved in the day-to-day communities, academic and cultural fabric and events of the department. Graduate students are also welcome to give their input into events, graduate student matters and to identify and nurture interdisciplinary linkages between the Asian Studies groups and communities and other networks across the campus as well as off campus, like the various clusters of scholars coordinated through the Liu Centre or the Institute for Asian Research. Students are expected to participate in relevant Asian Studies events and encouraged to volunteer to assist in event planning, orientation, introducing speakers, etc., as well as initiating ideas for possible speakers or events.

The Department of Asian Studies publishes a monthly online newsletter, the Update, to which graduate students are encouraged to contribute ideas, announcements,

interviews, photos, etc. For more information, see <https://asia.ubc.ca/news-events/>, and subscribe to mailing lists here: <https://asia.ubc.ca/news-events/newsletter/>.

Workspaces

Besides the tables and lounge areas on the various levels of the Asian Centre, students can use the Graduate Space. (See the information under Amenities above.)

Questions, problems, advice

Much of the information you will need to navigate your graduate program is contained in this Handbook or on the Asian Studies departmental website: <https://asia.ubc.ca/graduate/>. So please consult them first. But if you have any questions about the information here; have a problem with professors, fellow graduate students, or administrators; or would just generally like some advice about graduate school, here are the people to contact.

For information about **rules, regulations, deadlines, the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS), financial matters**, see the Graduate Program Assistant, Tina Wong, Asian Centre Room 605 (other contact info above).

For **problems or advice regarding the MA program**, see the Associate Graduate Advisor.

For **problems or advice regarding the PhD program**, see the Graduate Advisor.

One of the main functions of the graduate program staff—the Graduate Program Assistant, Graduate Advisor and Associate Graduate Advisor—is to advocate on behalf of Asian Studies graduate students. So, if you have a problem or concern, please do not hesitate to talk to us.

Beyond the department, the Graduate Student Society (<http://gss.ubc.ca/>) advocates for UBC graduate students and offers support services, including peer counselling, emergency financial aid, and assistance for student events. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Students (<https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/>) can provide confidential assistance to help students address problems with any part of the University.

UBC Workplace Bullying and Harassment Program

UBC strives to maintain a respectful environment for students, faculty, and staff. The links below have full details as to everyone's obligation to ensure they are maintaining a

respectful workplace free of bullying and harassment and everyone's right to work in a workplace free of bullying and harassment.

- Information on the Respectful Environment Statement, bullying and harassment, training and awareness building, as well as reporting procedures can be found at <http://bullyingandharassment.ubc.ca/>.
- [UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff](#)
- [The procedure for raising concerns with regard to bullying and harassment](#)

MA Program

Orientation/Registration

As soon as you have been accepted into the Asian Studies Master of Arts (MA) program and have your UBC student number, you should register for Asia 599B (thesis course, both terms), on Workday Student (<https://myworkday.ubc.ca/>) with your [Campus-wide Login](#) (CWL).

The academic year starts on September 1st and ends on August 31st of the following year. The Winter Session is divided into two terms: Term 1, generally from early September to late December, and Term 2, generally from early January to the end of April.

Term 1 of the Summer Session begins in early May and continues through July. Term 2 of the Summer Session begins in early July and ends in late August.

Dates and deadlines for the current academic year can be found in the [UBC academic calendar](#).

As soon as you arrive on campus, you should contact your supervisor to discuss your other coursework for the first year. It is especially important to discuss with your supervisor the language requirements (if any) for your particular program of study, and any courses that you plan to take outside the Asian Studies department. Once your program of study (including language requirement) is settled, you should fill out the MA Student Checklist (<https://asia.ubc.ca/graduate/forms/>).

New MA students may also wish to consult the Associate Graduate Advisor about their program of study and the MA requirements. An orientation session in September will answer many of your questions, but feel free to contact the Associate Graduate Advisor or Graduate Program Assistant at any time for information or clarification.

Once your coursework has been decided, you can register through Workday Student (<https://myworkday.ubc.ca/>).

Students with disabilities can also consult [Access and Diversity](#) for more on the services available to them (see also <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-accommodation-students-disabilities>). If you need any

accommodations to make your academic work accessible to you, they can make appropriate arrangements and assist you in informing course instructors.

Supervision

MA students are assigned a supervisor when they are admitted into the program. If you have any questions about who your supervisor is, or if you would like to discuss a change of supervisor, please see the Associate Graduate Advisor.

Students should meet with their supervisors at least once a term. Please be proactive in arranging these meetings.

For more on the role of graduate supervisors, see the following page on the G+PS site: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/supervision-advising>

By the end of the second term of your first year, you should be thinking about the other two members of your MA Thesis committee, in consultation with your supervisor. It is preferred but not required that one of your Thesis committee members be from outside the Asian Studies department, or be from a different geographic area in Asian Studies from your main research area (e.g., if you are in Chinese studies, a Thesis committee member from South Asian Studies or Korean Studies, etc.). Typically, at least one committee member, in addition to the supervisor, provides feedback on the thesis proposal and guidance during the writing process (see details under “MA Thesis” below).

Annual Review

An annual review is required of all MA students in the spring/early summer of each year. This is a form that you fill out with your activities for the previous year and send to your supervisor. They will fill out the rest of the form, assessing your progress, and send it back to you. When you and your supervisor have both signed the form, it should be returned to the Associate Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Assistant. A blank form can be downloaded from the [MA Program webpage](#).

The purpose of this exercise is to review the student’s academic progress, registration, and financial arrangements, and to give students an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience of the program. In turn, supervisors can give the students feedback on their progress. Forms and detailed instructions will be distributed by the Graduate Program Assistant in May.

Every effort is made to ensure that each student has satisfied all the requirements for the degree. However, **it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that, at the time of**

applying for graduation, all requirements have been met (course work, language requirement, all grades entered).

COURSE WORK

Scholarly Integrity

It is important that all new graduate students read UBC's policy on academic integrity ([Policy 85, "Scholarly Integrity"](#)) and discuss with the Associate Graduate Advisor any questions they might have.

Of particular note to graduate students is the standard that prohibits handing in the same material for more than one course. Specifically, one form of academic misconduct consists of "submitting the same, or substantially the same, essay, presentation, or assignment more than once (whether the earlier submission was at this or another institution) unless prior approval has been obtained from the instructor(s) to whom the assignment is to be submitted" (see <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/facultystaff/policiesprocedures/academic-misconduct>). It is not uncommon for students to reuse writing from previous classes (e.g., seminar papers) in their thesis. This is acceptable only with the permission of both the supervisor and the instructor of the previous class.

More information about the Academic Misconduct policy and procedures can be found here: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-misconduct>

Courses

The Master of Arts requires 30 credits of course work: the thesis (Asia 599) plus 18 more credits. Of these, up to 6 credits may be upper division undergraduate courses (300- or 400-level). No specific courses are required for the MA program; all courses should be chosen in consultation with your supervisor. Please consult the Graduate Advisor if you have questions.

You are required to get your supervisor's approval of the courses you sign up for each term, so discuss your plans with them. By the beginning of each term, your supervisor should forward the approved MA Student Course Program Checklist to the Graduate Program Assistant (copied to the Associate Graduate Advisor) indicating approval of your course list.

The Department of Asian Studies is committed to working with texts in the original Asian languages, so you may be required to complete language coursework sufficient to enable you to engage with original language texts in a scholarly manner. Language

courses at the 100 and 200 levels cannot be counted toward your MA degree, even if they are required by your supervisor. Language courses at the 300 and 400 levels can count toward your MA degree, up to the maximum of 6 credits of upper division undergraduate courses.

As indicated above, 6 credits of upper-level undergraduate courses can be counted toward your MA course requirements, but it is also possible to convert some undergraduate content (not language) courses into 500-level courses with the permission of the instructor. This will usually require you to do some extra, graduate-level work in the course. If you are interested in doing so, contact the instructor before the start of classes to inquire about setting up a graduate-level equivalent.

You may also enroll in classes as an auditor. You should contact the instructor to find out whether they will accept auditors and what their expectations of auditors are: some will expect regular attendance and the completion of some coursework, while others may have more flexible policies. Audited courses cannot be counted toward your degree requirements, but will appear on your transcript (as 'AUD,' with no mark).

MA THESIS

Ideally by the end of the first year of your MA program you will, in consultation with your supervisor, have in mind a clear, researchable thesis topic. You will prepare a proposal to be approved by your supervisory committee (which consists of the supervisor and at least one other member at this point; for purposes of approving the proposal that other member can be the Associate Graduate Advisor). Send the approved proposal to the Associate Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Program Assistant.

The G+PS Handbook of Graduate Supervision describes the thesis as follows: "A master's thesis must demonstrate that the student knows the background and principal works of the research area, and can produce significant scholarly work. It should contain some original contribution whenever possible." In the case of Asian Studies, this includes use of primary and/or secondary material in appropriate Asian languages.

For more on the purpose and nature of the MA thesis, see <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision/graduate-thesis>.

The Proposal: The MA Thesis proposal offers a preliminary description of the proposed argument of the thesis and explains the relation of this argument to existing research on the topic. It also sets out the major steps through which you plan to proceed in researching, writing, and structuring the thesis. In order to be approved by your supervisory committee (supervisor plus one other person, who may be the Associate

Graduate Advisor), the proposal will seek to convince readers who are specialists in the proposed research subject, and to explain the proposed research to non-specialist academic readers. The proposal includes a bibliography, a comprehensive list of required primary sources for the research, and a list of the most relevant and most influential (currently *and* long-term) secondary readings on or around the topic. The text of the proposal, excluding the bibliography, is typically 750–1500 words.

Note on Research Ethics: If your MA research will involve human subjects (for example, ethnographic research or any kind of systematic interviews or surveys), it will likely require approval from UBC's Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). You must indicate in your proposal whether you may need to submit an ethics application. Preparing an application can be a long process (at least a few months), and none of the research it covers can begin before the application is approved. If a review will be required for any part of your thesis research, be sure that your plan includes consideration of the time and work it will require, including regular reports to BREB during the research project and protocols around privacy and data retention. Note also that the Principal Investigator of record for all thesis research is the student's supervisor, and that both the student and the supervisor are required to complete an online research ethics course before an application can be submitted. For more about the process, consult your supervisor, the Associate Graduate Advisor, and/or the UBC BREB (you are encouraged to contact BREB staff well before submitting your application).

Supervision and Preparation of the Thesis: After the proposal as has been approved, students will initially work with a supervisor and a second committee member with expertise in a relevant field. The kind and amount of thesis supervision will be dictated by the topic, the needs of the individual student, and the preferred methods of the supervisor. Preliminary drafts, either of individual chapters or of the whole thesis, should be submitted to the supervisor as you proceed. You are encouraged to meet regularly with both members of the committee. Before the MA defence can be scheduled, a third committee member must be found, and all three members of the committee must evaluate the thesis draft. When all three members have judged it to be ready to defend, the defence can be scheduled in consultation with the Graduate Program Assistant.

The final form of the thesis must be prepared in accordance with Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies regulations:

- <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation>
- <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-dissertation-thesis-submission>

NOTE: Students must not submit the thesis for oral examination until all other requirements for the degree have been fulfilled.

Oral Defence: Once the thesis is approved by the three-member committee as ready to be defended, a final oral defence of the thesis is held. A final oral may be held at any time of the year, provided the approved committee and a Chair (appointed by the Associate Grad Advisor) can be assembled. Students planning to submit a thesis during the summer should ensure that a suitable committee will be available. The procedure for a thesis defence is described here: <https://asia.ubc.ca/graduate/masters-program/>

Students should bring to the defence a copy of the Master's Thesis Approval Form, and make sure to get the required signatures:

- <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-dissertation-thesis-submission>
- <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/forms/masters-thesis-approval>

After the oral defence, a grade is assigned to the thesis. The committee may request changes and corrections to the thesis prior to the final submission to Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G&PS). Typically, these are completed within 30 days of the defence but in the case of more substantive revisions more time may be needed. The program is only completed once the thesis is accepted by G&PS, and students must remain enrolled until that time.

All MA theses are uploaded to Circle, an on-line site that is available to a broad public (<http://circle.ubc.ca>). This means that they are likely to be read by scholars and others interested in the topic, so we make every effort to ensure that the thesis meets the standard of excellence befitting the Asian Studies department at UBC before it is finally submitted.

Submission: Submit the final, approved thesis to G+PS accompanied by the "Final Master's Thesis Approval" form that you had signed at the defence. For detailed instructions see [Submission Procedures on the G+PS website](#).

Once G+PS has approved your thesis, you will receive an email confirmation.

More information about all of the above matters, plus a time-line for planning your thesis writing and submission, is available on the [Asian Studies MA program webpage](#).

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) website

The following are some important pages on the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website:

- Managing Your Program: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program>
- Health, Wellbeing, and Safety: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/health-wellbeing-safety>
- Student Forms: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/forms>
- Graduate Student Deadlines: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/deadlines>
- Awards and Financial Aid: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/scholarships-awards-funding>
- GradUpdate Newsletter: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/about-us/newsletter/gradupdate>

PhD Program

OVERVIEW

Orientation/Registration

As soon as you have been accepted into the Asian Studies PhD program and have your UBC student number, you should register for Asia 699 (thesis courses, both terms) on Workday Student (<https://myworkday.ubc.ca/>).

Incoming students should meet as soon as possible with their supervisor to discuss PhD language requirements (see below), when/how other PhD requirements will be fulfilled, and the coursework necessary for the student's specific research area and topic.

Students who entered the program in 2015–16 or earlier are required to take **five content courses (i.e., courses other than language courses) for credit in their first year** (within twelve months of entering the program, normally September to August).

Students entering the program in 2016 and subsequent years are required to take **six courses each year in their first two years (within 24 months of entering the program). At least five of these must be content courses (i.e., courses other than language courses)**. We encourage students to take language courses as an auditor, but please note that any courses you audit cannot count towards degree requirements. Content courses should be taken for credit. Please consult the Graduate Advisor if you have questions. Students with disabilities can also consult [Access and Diversity](#) for more on the services available to them (see also <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program/academic-accommodation-students-disabilities>).

Note on eligible content courses

Undergraduate courses at the 300 and 400 levels may be taken for PhD credit (up to a limit of 6 credits), and non-language courses may be included among your five required content courses. 100- and 200-level courses cannot be counted for PhD credit.

Some upper division undergraduate courses can, with the permission of the instructor, be taken as 500 level courses if the student agrees to do extra work. If you have already received permission from your instructor to convert an undergraduate course to a graduate number (500 level), please consult the Graduate Program Assistant about how to register.

You are required to obtain your supervisor's approval of the courses you sign up for each term, so discuss your plans with them early. By the beginning of each term, your supervisor should send an email to the Graduate Program Assistant and Graduate Advisor indicating their approval of your course list.

For incoming students, once the language requirements and coursework plan are settled, the supervisor and student will complete a checklist (form on the program website) describing the course plan and the language requirements. This information is important in helping us keep track of your graduate progress, so it is vital that you send it to us as soon as the decisions are made and update it if there are changes.

An Orientation session in early September may answer most of your questions, but feel free to consult the Graduate Advisor at any time for advice, clarification or more information.

Regardless of geographic area or discipline, all PhD students in Asian Studies are required to take at least one course in each of the following four categories before proceeding to prepare for their Comprehensive Exams ("Comps"):

1. **ASIA 591** (formerly ASIA 570A 001), usually taken in your first year.
2. **ASIA 592** (formerly ASIA 570B 001), usually taken in your first year, in the second term (following ASIA 591). This is a professional development course. Students must complete this course for credit before proceeding to comps, but may—and are encouraged to—come back and audit it again in the final years of the PhD program, to polish professional development skills and job search portfolio.
3. **A pan-Asia theory course** within the department. These are courses with content cover multiple regions of Asian (South, East, Southeast, and/or West, etc.) in a theoretical and/or comparative framework. A current list of eligible courses can be found on the Department [website](#). The available courses vary from year to year.
4. **A region-specific theory/methodology course within the department**, such as Asia 581A (Research Methods and Source Materials in Korean Studies); Asia 501 (Research Methods and Source Materials in Classical Chinese Studies); or Asia 590 (Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion), etc. These courses are not offered every year for every region, so please plan ahead.
5. **A course outside the department**, focusing on a methodology or topic otherwise relevant to the student's research. Please consult the Graduate Advisor to determine whether a particular course qualifies. Typically these are graduate-

level (500-level or above) non-language courses, but in some cases an advanced undergraduate course may be permitted.

Directed reading courses may be counted as content courses and may fulfill specific requirements with the permission of the Graduate Advisor. Additional courses from these categories taken after the initial requirement has been fulfilled will still count toward the degree.

Registration for all courses is done through Workday Student (<https://myworkday.ubc.ca/>).

The academic year starts on September 1st and ends on August 31st the following year. The Winter Session is divided into two terms: Term 1, generally from early September to late December, and Term 2, generally from early January to the end of April. Term 1 of the Summer Session begins in early May and continues through July. Term 2 of the Summer Session begins in early July and ends in late August.

Dates and deadlines for the current academic year can be found in the [UBC academic calendar](#).

Language requirements

The Department of Asian Studies is committed to working with texts in the original Asian languages, so unless you already have ability in all the necessary research languages you may be required to complete language coursework sufficient to enable you to engage with original language texts in a scholarly manner. Your supervisor will determine which language(s) is/are necessary for your research program, and the level of ability you need to reach to fulfill that program. **This decision about language requirements must be communicated to the Graduate Advisor and to the Graduate Program Assistant in the first term of a new PhD student's program**, as the student will not be allowed to advance to candidacy without a clear record of their language requirements and how they have been fulfilled. In exceptional cases, a major change in research focus may entail a change in language requirements; these must be approved by the supervisor and the Graduate Advisor.

Normally students need to demonstrate the ability to read and understand texts in the target language sufficient for conducting research in that language. (In some cases, speaking ability may also be required, at the discretion of the supervisor.) That can be achieved in either of two ways:

1. Completing the 300 (or higher) level of that language at UBC (e.g. completing Japanese 301 or Japanese 310), **OR**
2. Taking a challenge exam in which the student translates a passage of scholarly prose into English. For details about the challenge exam see the [program webpage](#).

Supervision

PhD students are assigned a supervisor when admitted. Usually this person remains the student's research supervisor for the Comprehensive Exams and Dissertation, but that is not always the case. If you would like to change your supervisor or supervisory committee, please consult the Graduate Advisor.

Course Work

The university requires that students in a PhD program take a minimum of 15 credits of eligible coursework (500 level courses and up to 6 credits of 300- or 400-level courses). Asian Studies PhD students will automatically fulfil the university requirement by fulfilling the program requirements.

Annual Review

An annual review is required of all PhD students at the end of Winter Term 2 each year (due in June). This is a [form](#) that you fill out with your activities for the previous year and send to your supervisor. They will fill out the rest of the form, assessing your progress, and send it back to you. When you and your supervisor have both signed the form it should be returned to the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Assistant.

The purpose of this exercise is to review the student's academic progress, registration, and financial arrangements, and to give students an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience of the program. In turn, supervisors can give students feedback on their progress. Forms and detailed instructions will be distributed by the Graduate Program Assistant in May.

Every effort is made to ensure that each student has satisfied all the requirements for the degree. However, ***it is the student's responsibility to ensure that, at the time of applying for advancement to candidacy or applying for graduation, all requirements have been met.***

Scholarly Integrity

It is important that all new graduate students read UBC's policy on academic integrity ([Policy 85, "Scholarly Integrity"](#)) and discuss with the Graduate Advisor any questions they might have.

Of particular note to graduate students is the standard that prohibits handing in the same material for more than one course. Specifically, one form of academic misconduct consists of "submitting the same, or substantially the same, essay, presentation, or assignment more than once (whether the earlier submission was at this or another institution) unless prior approval has been obtained from the instructor(s) to whom the assignment is to be submitted" (see <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-misconduct>). It is not uncommon for PhD students to re-use previous work, including seminar papers and comprehensive examination essays in their dissertation. This is acceptable only with the permission of both the supervisor and the instructor of the previous class (or examiner, in the case of comprehensive exams).

More information about the Academic Misconduct policy and procedures can be found here: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-misconduct>

Sample Chronology of the PhD Program

Upon Arrival

- Establish language requirements with supervisor, indicating the level required in each target language.
- Choose courses, bearing in mind requirements listed above.
- Complete checklist form to communicate these decisions to the Graduate Program Assistant and Graduate Advisor.

Year One

- Complete **six total courses** (graduate and up to 6 credits at 300/400 level), of which five must be "content" courses (this number includes the required ASIA 591 and ASIA 592).
- Work on language requirements, if needed.

Year Two

- Complete **six total courses** (graduate and up to 6 credits at 300/400 level), of which five must be "content" courses. Note that this requirement only applies to students who began the program in 2016–17 or later

- Complete coursework requirements and distribution requirements, including pan-Asia theory, region-specific methodology, and methodology outside the department
- Complete language requirements (by completing an approved 300-level language course at UBC or by taking the challenge exam)
- Constitute comprehensive exam committee of three members and submit the [Research Supervisory Committee](#) form and the list of examination fields
- Compile at least one comprehensive exam reading list
- Submit Permission to [Proceed to Comprehensive Exams](#) form
- In summer, if time allows, start reading for first comprehensive exam field

Year Three

- Read for the comprehensive examination and complete written examination, meanwhile compiling remaining reading list(s), spending 3–3.5 months on each field, including up to six weeks to prepare and revise the written examination (see details below)
- After the third comprehensive examination, submit all three written exams to the committee members and schedule the oral comprehensive examination within about a month
- Complete oral comprehensive examination

End of Year Three / Beginning of Year Four

- Constitute dissertation committee (if different from previous supervisory committee)
- Present and defend dissertation prospectus, advancing to candidacy*
- Begin writing dissertation

Years Four and Five

- Continue writing dissertation.

Year Five

* According to G+PS guidelines, students are *expected* to complete their comprehensive exams and advance to candidacy within 24 months from the date of their initial registration, but students are *allowed* 36 months to complete the exams and advance to candidacy. The program usually requests an extension of this period during the student's third year, if necessary. A student who is not admitted to candidacy within 36 months of the initial registration, and who has not filed for an extension, must withdraw from the program. The Dean of Graduate Studies is not obliged to grant extensions.

- Finish writing dissertation, receive approval of supervisor and committee.
- Well in advance of the expected oral defence date, the supervisor should contact the Graduate Advisor to prepare a list of potential external examiners (non-UBC faculty who will read and write a report on the dissertation). The candidate is not directly involved in this selection and does not know the identity of the external examiner before the oral defence.
- Submit dissertation to external examiner, at least 2 months before the intended date of planned oral defence.
- Oral PhD defence. Bear in mind that the final draft of the dissertation, approved by all committee members, must be filed with the Faculty of Graduate and
 - Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) **2 months before the date of the oral defence**. Check the G+PS [webpage](#) for details of the defence scheduling timeline. Be sure to check the Doctoral Examinations Planning Tool and Checklist For Candidates and Supervisors <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/tools-planning-doctoral-exam>
- If the dissertation passes the oral defence, the committee may recommend no revisions, minor revisions to be completed within 30 days, or more substantial changes.

PhD students are allowed a **maximum of six years** to complete the program; many PhD students in Asian Studies require six years to complete their degrees.

If your program requires you to spend time in Asia or elsewhere for language work and/or dissertation research, make sure you consult with the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Assistant **before** contacting G+PS about your plans.

PROGRESS TOWARD CANDIDACY AND THESIS

PhD students achieve candidacy when they have

- a. Completed all required course work,
- b. Fulfilled the language requirement,
- c. Constituted their supervisory committee
- d. Passed the Comprehensive Examinations, and
- e. Successfully defended the dissertation prospectus.

Having entered candidacy, they can begin work on the dissertation, the culmination of the PhD program. Each of these steps is outlined below.

Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee may include research faculty members from Asian Studies, from other UBC departments, and from UBC Okanagan. Faculty from other universities may also serve on UBC supervisory committees, subject to criteria set by G+PS. The same applies to non-research UBC faculty (including professors of teaching and lecturers).

Should you wish to have a non-UBC faculty member on your committee, please have your supervisor prepare a justification and CV of the person nominated and forward these to the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Assistant, for eventual forwarding to G+PS. Information on qualifications and procedures for nominating a non-UBC faculty member can be found at:

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/supervision-advising> and
<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/non-members-faculty-graduate-studies-supervisory-committee-members>

Comprehensive Exams

The comprehensive examination process is an opportunity to develop and demonstrate expertise in your field of study. Students read secondary and primary works in three fields relevant to their chosen area of scholarship and demonstrate through written and oral examinations that they have mastered this material sufficiently to proceed to independent research on their dissertation project.

The whole process—made up of the preparation of reading lists, writing essays/exams/syllabus, and oral defence—is intended to prepare the student for the development of the Prospectus and the writing of the Dissertation, as well as to demonstrate adequate background knowledge and organizational skills to teach university-level classes in each of the exam fields in the future.

By the beginning of their second year in the program, students should have established a committee (supervisor and two members, each overseeing one exam field) with whom to work toward the Comprehensive Exams. The supervisor should be an expert in the student's primary field/discipline, and the committee members should be experts in the fields/disciplines of the student's secondary and tertiary exam fields. Committee members can be UBC research faculty members in Asian Studies or other departments; in exceptional cases professors of teaching, or faculty at other universities, may also serve on UBC doctoral committees.

The student may change supervisor or committee members with permission from the Graduate Advisor.

Exam Topics: In consultation with the supervisory committee (and the Graduate Advisor, if desired), three fields—that is, three areas of reading—are decided. These will form the basis of the Comprehensive Exams. The student then formulates a reading list for each of the exam fields in consultation with the committee member who will examine them on that field. (See below for details on the parameters of the lists.) The intent of the reading list is to allow the student to situate themselves as a scholar in a chosen field and to provide evidence of depth and breadth of knowledge in that field. A field may be geographically and chronologically focused, or it may be more methodologically oriented.

The three fields may be related in various ways to the student’s academic focus and research project. A typical arrangement is:

- a) Major or General Field, the branch of study in which the candidate’s research is expected to lie, e.g., Chinese poetry; this field is most often examined by the student’s supervisor
- b) Minor Field I, often a sub-category of the Major Field from which the thesis topic is expected to emerge, e.g., *shi* poetry of the Song period
- c) Minor Field II, which falls outside the Major Field but is relevant to the candidate’s research interests or represents an important methodology, e.g., history of the Song Period or comparative poetics

The field examinations do not need to be taken in the above order.

In consultation with the supervisor and the supervisory committee member (and Graduate Advisor, if desired), the student chooses between two exam formats, essay (for two fields or all three) and course syllabus (one field maximum, normally only in one of the two minor fields).

Essay Format

Upon completing the readings for the exam field, the student writes an original paper on a topic arising from the readings. The field supervisor should agree with the candidate in advance on a specific question or topic, which may be an up-to-date bibliographic survey of the key positions and issues in the designated field, or may be more focused on a specific thematic or methodological question in that field. The resulting essay may play a role in the student’s future dissertation, for example as a literature review. The essay will typically focus on the material from the reading list, though it may reference other sources as appropriate (it should not, however, entail extensive original research beyond the material on the list). The essay should be 6,000 to 12,000 words in length, including notes and bibliography.

Course Syllabus Format

In this format the student creates a course syllabus directed to teaching a hypothetical course at a senior undergraduate or graduate level. This will be approximately 25 pages long, double-spaced, and will include a brief rationale for the course (500–750 words); course learning objectives and goals; introduction to the course (purpose and intended audience); comments on pedagogical activities and approach; detailed description of assignments and evaluation; outline of all the classes with the themes and assigned readings (including full bibliographic details). A short summary of each reading for each class session is to be provided together with a rationale for its use. Only one of a student's three field exams can be in the syllabus format.

Comprehensive Exam Process

The following steps must be completed, **in order**, to complete the comprehensive exam process and advance to candidacy.

1. Complete all coursework and language requirements (typically at the end of the second year)
2. Before beginning work on any of the reading lists
 - a. Submit the following two forms:
 - [Research Supervisory Committee form](#), indicating who will be on the student's committee (the three field examiners)
 - [Comprehensive Examination Fields list](#), describing the three fields and their rationale
 - b. Submit at least one of the three reading lists to the Graduate Advisor (see below under Reading Lists for instructions on formatting and submitting lists); submitting more than one list at this stage, in final or draft form, is strongly encouraged
 - c. Once the above are approved, submit a Permission to Proceed to Comprehensive Exam form
3. For each field
 - a. Compile reading list and submit to the field examiner and the Graduate Advisor for approval before beginning to read (this may be done while reading or preparing the examination in another field)
 - b. Start reading (see below, under "Reading Lists," on working with committee members while reading)

- c. Pass written examination on that field before beginning to read for the next field
4. After all three written field exams are completed, share written exams with all committee members and take the comprehensive oral examination
5. Within six weeks of taking the comprehensive oral exam
 - a. Complete, collect signatures for, and submit Recommendation for Advancement to Candidacy form to Grad Program Assistant
 - b. Submit dissertation prospectus to the supervisory committee and schedule oral prospectus defence
 - c. Defend dissertation prospectus in an oral defence
 - d. Submit Approval of Dissertation Prospectus form to Grad Program Assistant

Reading Lists

Each list should be developed in consultation with the examiner for that field. All lists must be approved by the Graduate Advisor for approval **before** any reading of items on the list is begun. The Graduate Advisor may require revisions to the list even after the exam committee member for that field has approved it, in order to assure fairness and consistency across the program.

Each reading list typically consists of between 30 and 50 items. There are two types of items:

- 1) Complete books and dissertations
- 2) Shorter items: a journal article, book chapter, or other reading of comparable length, including excerpts (up to 2–3 chapters) from a monograph

Each list must contain no more than 12 items of type 1 (complete books) and no more than 50 total items. If the list includes other formats such as films, consult the Graduate Advisor on how to count such material. Typically, a film of roughly two hours would count as the equivalent of an article. The same item should not appear on more than one of a student's reading lists.

It is expected that in the student's primary field (and possibly in relevant secondary fields) the reading list will include items in the Asian language(s) appropriate to the student's topic.

Once the list is completed, the examiner sends an email communicating approval of the list to the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Program Assistant. The document containing the list should include the total number of items, broken down into counts of complete books (including dissertations), book chapters, and journal articles.

Many field examiners choose to meet regularly with the student as they read through the items on the finalized and approved reading list for that field. This should be treated as a directed reading course (typically ASIA 580), for which the student is officially registered. In this way both the student and examiner can receive credit for the work done in preparing for the field.

Field examiners should advise the Graduate Program Assistant when the student has completed the readings and is planning to begin writing the essay or syllabus.

After finishing the readings for a field, students have up to six weeks to complete the essay or syllabus, including the time needed to receive feedback from the examiner on outlines and drafts. The student and the examiner should agree beforehand on what kind of feedback to expect and on a timetable for completion.

The comprehensive exams should be started and finished within 12 months. Typically the student spends 3–3.5 months on each exam field, doing the readings and then writing the essay or syllabus. Up to six weeks of this time may be spent on writing and revising each written examination. After the last written examination is completed there will be up to one month for the committee members to read the essays/syllabus and for the student to prepare for the oral defence.

Evaluation of Written Examinations

As each comprehensive exam field is completed, the committee member in charge of that field—having read the student’s essay or syllabus—should send a message to the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Assistant indicating their approval of the written examination. Approval indicates the examiner expects that the written work could be defended at the first-class level in the oral examination.

No grade is assigned for the comprehensive examinations, however, the student will receive a course mark for any directed reading course in which they registered in conjunction with an exam field.

If the field examiner judges the paper of insufficient quality to defend orally at the first-class level, a meeting is scheduled with the student, the supervisor (if they are not the examiner for this field), and the Graduate Advisor. At this meeting the examiner presents the deficiencies in the examination and proposes a set of questions to be

addressed in a written supplement. This supplement may be up to 3,000 words in length and must be completed within two to three weeks (the deadline should be set at the meeting). The number and scope of the questions should be set in accordance with these parameters. The supplement, once completed, becomes part of the written examination. If the examiner assesses the updated examination as ready for oral examination, the student moves on to the next field or to the oral examination. If the examiner assesses the written examination as unable to achieve first-class standing, the student will be required to withdraw from the program.

Comprehensive Oral Examination

Within four weeks of successful completion of the last written examination, candidates will take an oral examination, to be based mainly on the candidate's three written field examinations. All of the questions posed on the written exams are open to oral questioning. Other questions relevant to the field reading lists also may be expected.

Once the third written examination is approved, the oral examination is scheduled. The Graduate Advisor appoints a Chair (a faculty member who is not part of the committee) for the oral exam. All members of the comprehensive exam committee must be present in person or via teleconferencing. Before the examination, the student provides the written examinations to all committee members and to the Chair.

The exam takes approximately two to three hours. The student does not give a presentation; instead the examiners start right in with questions. The student is asked to demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge of the subject areas and the material they have read. In the first round, each examiner takes about 15 to 20 minutes to pose questions or make whatever comments they have on the written exam that they supervised. The round starts with the field most distant from the Major Field and ends with the Major Field exam. After the first round of questions, the examiners are free to ask questions based on their own or the other fields. The exam may lead to a more general discussion about the fields and how they interrelate, or about the student's proposed dissertation research.

After the committee has finished its questioning, the student is asked to leave the room. The chair asks each of the examiners in turn to certify that student has passed the three fields, meaning that, taken together, the student's performance in the written and oral examinations has achieved first-class standing (80%).

If the committee agrees that student has passed with first-class standing, the student is informed that they will advance to PhD candidacy once they have presented and defended the dissertation prospectus (normally within six weeks).

The written and oral examinations in each field receive one grade: pass/fail. If any of the comprehensive exam fields is judged to be below first-class (79% or below), the student will be asked to redo the oral examination in that field.

After the completion of the oral examination the Chair notifies the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Secretary of the outcome.

If a student is required to retake the oral examination in one or more fields, a new session must be scheduled within one month, with the same chair (if available) and all committee members. The re-examination should devote about one hour to each field being re-examined. In advance of the re-examination, the committee members, in consultation with the Graduate Advisor, should provide the student with instructions on preparing for the new exam. This could include a summary of issues in their first examination, a list of specific questions to address, and/or the opportunity to open with a short presentation.

A student will be allowed to retake the oral examination only once, and will be required to withdraw from the PhD program upon a second failure in one or more fields.

The Dissertation Prospectus

The prospectus is a brief written plan outlining the purpose and content of the proposed dissertation and the process of researching and writing it. It builds on the groundwork laid by the Comprehensive Exams. It develops an argument proposing the direction in which the student expects the research proceed.

The Dissertation Prospectus is prepared in consultation with the supervisory committee, and must be **defended in a separate oral defence within 6 weeks of the comprehensive oral examination.**

Note that in some cases the membership of the student's supervisory committee may change between the comprehensive examination and the prospectus (see below under Dissertation Supervisory Committee). Such changes should be made as soon as possible after the comprehensive oral examination.

The prospectus should be written in such a way that it makes good sense to academics outside the area of specialization. It should, accordingly, include relevant explanation and detail at every stage; it is closer to a grant application or book proposal than a research essay. The Prospectus should be up to 4,000 words in length (not including bibliography), double-spaced, and should contain three components:

1. **Description and justification** This section should articulate as clearly as possible the “why” as well as the “what” of the dissertation. The Prospectus should situate the dissertation in its field, showing how it develops or departs from previous research and what the writer hopes it will contribute. The Prospectus should also outline the theoretical framework of the dissertation.
2. **Plan** The Prospectus is not necessarily a detailed blueprint, and it allows for changes of direction. You are not expected to have all your conclusions in place at this stage or to have thoroughly analyzed all your sources. However, the Prospectus should make clear the overall organization of the dissertation as envisaged at that point. It should indicate the principal sources you intend to use and offer a proposed organization of sections or chapters. It may address sources and how they will be accessed, foreseeable challenges, etc. It should include a timeline for research and writing.

Research Ethics If the dissertation research will involve human subjects (for example, ethnographic research or any kind of systematic interviews or surveys), it will likely require approval from UBC’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). Preparing an application can be a long process (at least a few months), and none of the research it covers can begin before the application is approved. If a review will be required for any part of your dissertation research, be sure that your plan includes consideration of the time and work it will require, including regular reports to BREB during the research project and protocols around privacy and data retention. Note also that the Principal Investigator of record for all dissertation research is the student’s supervisor, and that both the student and the supervisor are required to complete an [online research ethics course](#) before an application can be submitted. For more about the process, consult your supervisor, the Graduate Advisor, and/or the UBC [BREB](#) (you are encouraged to contact BREB staff well before submitting your application).

3. **Bibliography** As a research tool, this bibliography is crucial in that it locates the place of the dissertation in its field. The bibliography should be a carefully developed component of the Prospectus, shaped by whatever categories are most suitable for the topic (for example, primary and archival sources may be listed separately from secondary sources, or films separately from books). The bibliography will naturally include materials in the student’s research languages (including at least one Asian language) as well as English and other languages.

Dissertation Supervisory Committee

The student develops a prospectus and completes the dissertation under the supervision of the supervisor and with advice from the dissertation committee members.

After the conclusion of the Comprehensive Examinations, this committee may continue as the student's dissertation supervisory committee, or the membership may change: some members of the examination committee may not remain on the supervisory committee and other faculty may join and participate in the prospectus defence.

The supervisory committee may include a faculty member from another UBC department and/or institution (see Supervisory Committee above for details).

As the candidate is working on the dissertation, the committee should meet regularly, at least once or twice a year.

The Prospectus Defence

There is normally no chair for the Prospectus defence. The Prospectus defence allows the supervisory committee to communicate with each other and with the student about specific expectations regarding the timing and strategy of dissertation research and writing, and any emendations to the research plan or bibliography. A prospectus defence typically begins with a short (15–20 minute) presentation by the student introducing the dissertation project, followed by questions from the members of the committee.

No grade is assigned to the prospectus. Approval of the prospectus will be determined according to such criteria as the originality and value of the project, quality of research, and care of preparation. Should the supervisory committee decide at this stage that the program of research has not yet been adequately described and rationalized, it will invite the student, in consultation with the supervisory committee, to revise the relevant portions of the prospectus for a second delivery within six weeks. If, on this second occasion, the committee remains dissatisfied, the student will be required to withdraw from the program.

Candidacy is achieved once the Prospectus has been approved and the completed paperwork has been submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant.

PhD Dissertation

The dissertation marks the culmination of the PhD program. It is an original and independent research project that makes a contribution to knowledge in a special area selected by the student. Handling of data and authorship will be discussed with the supervisor in accordance with UBC policies SC 6 ([Scholarly Integrity; previously #85](#)) and LR 11 ([Inventions and Discoveries; previously #88](#)). See <https://research.ubc.ca/support-researchers/conducting-your-research/ubc-policies>

Meetings with the candidate and the committee should take place regularly, at least once a year, during the period when the candidate is researching and writing the dissertation. These can happen at any point in the year but are most useful at major milestones such as the completion of a dissertation chapter. The candidate should initiate the meeting by emailing the supervisor and other committee members to organize a one-hour, in-person or virtual session with all the members of committee and if needed arrange a meeting space with Department staff. The purpose of these meetings is to get feedback on the research and writing completed to that point and to check in about and adjust plans for the future.

In addition to the members of the committee, the completed dissertation is read by at least three other examiners: one external examiner (an expert in the field from outside UBC who typically sends written comments) and two university examiners, UBC faculty members who were not involved in the dissertation-writing process and who attend and ask questions at the oral defence. In both cases the examiners must have an arm's-length relationship with the candidate and they are chosen by the supervisor, not the candidate.

It is important to plan the months before completion carefully. A request to nominate an external examiner is submitted by the supervisor at least eight weeks before the dissertation is to be submitted to the examiner. It is the supervisor's responsibility to nominate the external examiner in a timely fashion; the student is not involved in the process and is not permitted to know the identity of the examiner until the oral defence.

The dissertation is sent to the external examiner at least six weeks (preferably seven weeks) before the oral defence. This version is the one that will be discussed at the defence and no further revisions to the dissertation are allowed until after the defence. Typically, after the defence the candidate is allowed 30 days to make minor revisions, but if more substantive changes are called for a longer time may be required. See the G&PS timeline here: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/examination-timeline>

For more on the form of the dissertation and procedures for submitting it, see the following Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies web pages on preparation and submission of the thesis, and preparation for the Final Doctoral Oral Examinations:

- <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation>
- <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-dissertation-thesis-submission>
- <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-examination>

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) website:

The following are some important pages on the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website:

- Managing your Program: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program
- Health, Wellbeing, and Safety: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/health-wellbeing-safety>
- Student Forms: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/resources-links/forms>
- Graduate Student Deadlines: www.grad.ubc.ca/currentstudents/resources-links/deadlines
- Awards and Financial Aid: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/scholarships-awards-funding>
- Final Doctoral Oral Exams (guide, forms, deadlines, etc.): <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-examination>
- Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Student Forms: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/resources-links/forms>
- Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Doctoral Exam forms: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/doctoral-exams-forms>