INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, PhD

The PhD program is for individuals who have already earned a Master’s degree and seek to further their expertise as scholars and practitioners of international relations. PhD students work closely with faculty advisors to develop an academic plan that best supports their dissertation research. Throughout the program students develop a comprehensive understanding of qualitative and quantitative analytic skills, international relations, economics, and regional studies.

PhD students begin their studies in Washington, DC. During the dissertation stage, students can explore opportunities to study at SAIS Europe, the Hopkins Nanjing Center, or at other prominent global institutions.

Johns Hopkins SAIS graduates are sought after by employers in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Their knowledge of economics, analytical abilities, regional expertise, diplomatic skills, international experience, language proficiency, as well as capacity to apply theory to real-world problems, give students a distinct professional advantage.

PhD Fields of Study

The following programs are considering new students for fall 2019. PhD applicants are encouraged to contact the academic program in which they are interested to learn more about PhD opportunities and be prepared to share information about potential research topics.

International Policy Areas

- American Foreign Policy
- Energy, Resources and Environment
- International Development
- International Relations
- General International Relations
- Global Theory and History
- International Political Economy
- Strategic Studies

Regions of the World

- African Studies
- Asia
  - China Studies

Faculty Advisors

Our faculty experts and scholars are internationally recognized for their scholarship, experience, and quality of teaching. They are award-winning scholars, authors, diplomats, thinkers, and senior ranking officials who are authorities on international economics and international relations and who have expertise in contemporary issues around the world.

All PhD students have a tenured, faculty advisor. The advisor has primary responsibility for coordinating the candidate’s research agenda. Another senior member of the dissertation committee or “second reader” monitors the student’s research throughout the dissertation project. Both the faculty advisor and the second reader are to be substantively involved in the student’s preparation of the prospectus and the dissertation.

While the student will work actively with the first and second readers to prepare a dissertation prospectus, the student should also consult with the three provisional committee members throughout his/her doctoral research.

Prospective and current PhD students are encouraged to use the Faculty Directory to identify individuals to approach about involvement in their research and dissertation.

PhD FAQ

What is the application deadline?

The application deadline is December 15. All materials, including official standardized test scores, must be received by the Office of Admissions in advance of the deadline.

Can holders of a bachelor’s degree apply directly to the PhD program?

Applicants must hold an MA degree from Johns Hopkins SAIS or comparable academic qualifications from another institution or be a current MA student who has completed at least twelve courses toward the degree.

What is the review process for PhD applications?
A faculty committee reviews applications and makes recommendations to admissions team. Applicants are notified of their admissions decision mid-March.

How much additional coursework is required for those who did not obtain their MA degrees from Johns Hopkins SAIS?
To meet the competence in International Economics requirement, non-SAIS MA students must complete one of the following within the first three semesters:

- Fulfill the comprehensive requirement in International Economics through a series of approved advanced economics courses.
- Pass a one-hour oral exam in economics. To prepare for the MA Oral Equivalency Exam, the student must successfully take Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, International Trade Theory and International Monetary Theory or request to sit for one or more waiver exams.
- Demonstrate competence either in two foreign languages or in one foreign language and quantitative methods of analysis.

Can coursework or fieldwork toward the PhD program be completed at off-site locations?
PhD students must be in residence at the school's main campus in Washington, DC during their first year of study. Fieldwork can begin after a student has completed all necessary courses, passed the comprehensive examinations, and successfully defended a prospectus. With advanced permission, fieldwork may be conducted at SAIS Europe or the Hopkins-Nanjing Center.

How long does it take to complete the PhD program?
A PhD candidate must complete a dissertation within five years of taking his or her first comprehensive examination. The average length of time from entry in the doctoral program to completion of the degree is five to six years.

What kind of funding is available for PhD students?
All admitted PhD students receive scholarship and stipend funding for a limited amount of time. Students with an MA from the school may receive a maximum of three years of funding, and non-MAs may receive a maximum of four years of funding. Scholarship awards are evaluated by the PhD committee on the basis of performance in class, satisfaction of degree requirements, and a written evaluation from the student’s PhD advisor at the end of each academic year to determine if the financial award will be renewed.

Are teaching or research assistantships available for PhD students?
PhD students are not required to serve as TAs or RAs, however many PhD students do acquire such positions and receive additional compensation.

What kinds of co- and extra-curricular opportunities are there?
The PhD program hosts numerous events throughout the year, including “research-in-progress” seminars led by current students, professional development sessions, alumni engagements, and other social outings. PhD students are also encouraged to take advantage of events and opportunities coordinated through the many academic programs, research centers and student organizations on campus.

Degree Requirements

**Campus:** Washington, DC and Bologna, Italy

**Duration:** Five to ten academic years, Full-time

**Course delivery:** In-person

PhD Program Structure

The PhD is divided into pre-dissertation (resident) and dissertation (non-resident) stages.

**Pre-dissertation, Resident Stage**
Pre-dissertation status lasts up to two years for students who have completed the Master of Arts (MA) degree at Johns Hopkins SAIS and up to three years for those without an MA degree from the school. Students complete coursework, comprehensive exams, and defend the dissertation prospectus.

Pre-dissertation students are on-campus full-time taking courses, attending seminars, and/or approved independent study. During this time students are required to take Research Methodology, International Economics, and Statistics and Econometrics in addition to coursework agreed up by a faculty advisory. PhD students are required to successfully pass Theories and Methods of Qualitative Political Research and Research Design and Causal Inference. Prerequisites for Research Design and Causal Inference include successfully completing Statistical Methods for Business and Economics and Econometrics, or passing a statistics or econometrics waiver.

Within six months of passing the third comprehensive exam (see comprehensive exams), students must prepare a written prospectus of the dissertation and present it in a formal defense that is open to members of the university faculty.

**Dissertation, Non-Resident Stage**
Students advance to the dissertation stage after successfully defending a prospectus and are not required to be on campus, however are still considered full-time status. Students should defend the dissertation within five years of the prospectus defense.

**Comprehensive Exams**
PhD students must select three examination areas from among the following:

- American Foreign Policy
- Comparative Politics
- Energy, Resources & Environment
- International Development
- International Economics
- International Political Economy/ Comparative Political Economy
- International Relations Theory (including International Law and Conflict Management)
- Strategic Studies
- Regional Studies:
  - Africa Studies,
  - Asia Studies (China, Korea, Japan, South Asia, Southeast Asia),
  - Canadian Studies,
  - European and Eurasian Studies,
  - Latin American Studies,
  - Middle East Studies
- Comprehensive exams from other divisions of Johns Hopkins University may be considered on a case by case basis.

PhD Dissertation

At the time of application, students will propose a research topic they would like to pursue for their doctoral dissertation. During their course of study, students will hone this topic in consultation with a faculty advisor and defend a prospectus that outlines the dissertation’s research questions, mission, and methodology.

The PhD dissertation must be an original and analytical treatment of a subject of conceptual importance. To conduct the research for, write, and defend the dissertation, a candidate will have a period of five years from the defense of the prospectus. It is understood that in fields with exceptionally difficult languages the process may take longer.