Featured School:

University of Victoria
Peter B. Gustavson School of Business
Sardul S. Gill Graduate School
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

www.uvic.ca/gustavson

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AACSBI International
PhD in International Management and Organization at the Sardul S. Gill Graduate School
University of Victoria’s Peter B. Gustavson School of Business

The Peter B. Gustavson School of Business’s strong commitment to promoting internationalization within all of its programs is visible in the PhD in International Management and Organization, whose objective is to “develop candidates with an integrated perspective on management to address complex global issues.”¹ As PhD Program Director Carmen Galang explains, two factors were behind the creation of the PhD program in 2010. First, the School had many research-productive faculty, and felt that implementing a business doctoral program would help strengthen the research culture. Additionally, high interest in such a program was expressed by students and other stakeholders, and the School felt it could help meet the demand for more PhD qualified faculty in business.

The Gustavson faculty were very active in building the doctoral program, and felt that the program should approach business doctoral education in an integrated and international way. The program is strongly positioned to students who wish to develop their academic careers in research and teaching, rather than consulting or industry careers. The program looks for individuals who have a “keen interest in and curiosity for research,” adds Galang, and the majority of students have a graduate degree in business as well as prior business experience.

Program Structure

The PhD in International Management and Organization is a full time, four year program that focuses on five areas: strategy, organizational behavior, organizational theory, human resources and cross cultural management, and business and sustainability, all from an international perspective. PhD students are funded through a combination of scholarships, research and teaching assistant fellowships, and teaching opportunities. Students are guaranteed funding for up to four years on the condition that they maintain a level of acceptable performance. Typical funding is around $20,000 CDN per year and is expected to cover living and tuition expenses.²

In the first two years, students pursue the coursework stage of the program, of which 18.0 units are required in research methods and foundations, with some flexibility to select among other course offerings depending on the chosen stream of study. Each stream involves the study of theoretical and empirical foundation topics through a series of core courses:

- Foundations of Research in International Management & Organization
- Seminar in International Management
• Seminar in Strategy & Organization
• Seminar in Global Issues of Business Sustainability
• Seminar in Cross-cultural Management
• Seminar in Organizational Analysis

Students may customize their study by selecting two elective courses offered through either the Business School’s Sardul S. Gill Graduate School or another faculty at the University of Victoria. The three streams of study that a student may pursue are:

• **Strategy and International Management**: Students learn to master the major theoretical approaches and empirical treatments in the fields of strategy and international management, building their foundation of scholarship and academic debate

• **Organizational Analysis and Cross-Cultural Management**: Students examine the behaviors of individuals and groups within organizations, study human resource management in a global context and learn how culture influences management practice

• **Sustainability and International Management**: Students embrace the role of the "triple bottom line" in international management scholarship and study the interrelations among the social, ecological, and economic dimensions of sustainability

Galang mentions that the Sustainability stream is the most popular among current doctoral students, and that the Gustavson School of Business was one of the first business schools in Canada to require that all undergraduate and MBA students take a sustainability course.

A supervisor is assigned to each student during the admissions process, at which time the student’s research interests are matched with a faculty member’s research expertise and interests. However, students are not required to have identified a research topic prior to starting the program, and can work together with their supervisor to develop a research plan.

At the end of the second year, students must pass a comprehensive doctoral candidacy exam. Students then devote the next two years of study to research and to writing and defending their theses.

**The International Perspective**

When the University of Victoria founded the Gustavson School of Business in the early 1990s it aimed to offer program specializations that were not typical in other business schools. One such specialization, international business, aligned well with the school’s approach to teaching business with an integrated and global focus, rather than through functional silos. Although the School’s undergraduate, graduate,
and post-graduate programs do offer traditional courses not specific to international business, faculty aim to incorporate an international perspective into all of the teaching and learning materials. According to Galang, the challenges faced in recruiting qualified faculty to teach with this international business perspective proved that a doctoral program specific to international business was needed.

**International Exchange/ Industry Practicum and Teacher Training**

At the undergraduate level within the School of Business, nearly 80% of students study abroad during the program. The School, according to Galang, sought to similarly encourage this activity among doctoral students. Doctoral students are thus given the opportunity to participate in an international research exchange or an industry practicum in their third and fourth years of study. Neither of these is required, but students are strongly encouraged to pursue one or both as a means of developing additional perspectives to incorporate into their research.

The School of Business and its faculty maintain a strong network of research-focused universities located in over 30 countries, and students may work on their research at any of these locations. The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), the Graduate Students’ Society (GSS), and the Vice President Research established the Graduate Student Travel Grant Fund to support travel to conferences, meetings, workshops, or research activities. All full-time PhD students are eligible to apply for a travel grant once a year.⁵

The industry practicum allows students to develop stronger connections between theory and practice and “improve their appreciation for the context of the phenomenon under study, by engaging in ethnographic or participant observation research with an organization (government, private business, not-for profit entity).”⁶ The student either can individually identify and contact organizations they would like to work with, or they can coordinate with the School’s career services office to identify appropriate organizations. The business school maintains a large network of employers, largely established through the undergraduate Bachelor of Commerce program’s co-operative experiences requirement.

Teacher training is regarded as being “an essential component of the PhD program” and students are provided with opportunities to learn how to become effective teachers. Throughout the course of the four years, students may participate in teacher assistantships for the School’s various programs. Students may opt to take a credit course with the Faculty of Education, as well as participate in a series of seminars and workshops at the University’s Learning and Teaching Center. In their fourth year, students are expected to instruct one full undergraduate course (about three hours per week for a term). Galang notes that the international research exchange and industry practicum, taken together with teaching training, are not common to the majority of doctoral programs in business, and something the School prides itself on.
Financial assistance is offered annually from the School of Business to help support periodic student events designed to develop and improve research and teaching skills. This may include funds for academic-related travel and/or attendance at conferences (specific funds are available to promote student involvement in sustainability-related conference activities).^7

The Dissertation

In the third year, students work closely with their supervisors to develop a thesis topic. Within six months of passing the doctoral candidacy exam, the student then formally defends his/her thesis proposal to the dissertation committee composed of the student’s supervisor and two other faculty members, who can be either from within or outside the business school. At the student’s final thesis oral defense, two external examiners are required to be present at the defense, one from outside the School of Business and the other from outside the University of Victoria. Students are required to submit one single bound piece of work as their thesis, and to have 2-3 manuscripts already in the publishing pipeline prior to graduation.

In addition to their publishing success, the School looks at the students’ annual progress reports, written by their mentors, as a metric of success. However, the ultimate metric, Galang explains, will be the degree to which students secure employment at a reputable institution. The PhD Program in International Management and Organization has yet to graduate its first cohort, but Galang seems confident that the goals the Program was established to achieve will be fulfilled.

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End Notes