***Ph.D. Program Handbook***

**Interpersonal and Family Communication**

**Mediated Communication**

**Organizational Communication**

**Political Communication**

**Identity, Diversity, and Communication**

**Health and Crisis Communication**

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***Updated September 2022 by***

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***Associate Professor & Director of Graduate Studies***

 **The Doctoral Program**

 **Department of Communication**

 **University of Missouri**

# PART I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This booklet is designed to help you get from the starting line (entry into the program) to the finish line (MU alum). The faculty of the Department of Communication are committed to providing optimal opportunity for professional and intellectual growth, community, and belonging.

The field of communication is pursuing some of the most important questions facing the world today. Many brilliant scholars have made it their life’s work to answer these questions. In your program, you will benefit from their effort. You will also see the vast array of questions left unasked. There are so many areas of the field that will benefit from your voice.

As you move through you program, you will be presented with every opportunity to develop the scholarly expertise necessary to make your voice heard in the field. Though it is impossible to learn everything you need to know to thrive as a scholar, you will develop the skills necessary to pursue a life of learning. Your graduate program is only the beginning of a decades-long career in pursuit of the essential questions that inspire your journey.

Your professors are life-long students who are always ready to share their questions and concerns with those interested in similar lines of inquiry. We look forward to learning with you and helping you become an independent scholar. You will see an improvement in the quality of your ideas, knowledge, and ability to pursue your questions.

The following information includes some of the basic policies and procedures that are followed in the Graduate School and in this Department. Use this booklet to help orient yourself, but always check with your advisor if you find yourself confused about anything.

### Student Responsibility

Please remember that it is your responsibility to be familiar with the information presented here and by the [Graduate School](http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/), and to know and observe all regulations and procedures relating to the program. As stated by the Graduate School: “In no case will a regulation be waived or an exception be granted because students plead ignorance of, or contend that they were not informed of, the regulations and procedures. Responsibility for following all policies and meeting all requirements and deadlines for graduate programs *rests with the student.*” (see [*Student Responsibility to Know Academic Regulations*](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/policy/student-responsibility-to-know-academic-regulations/))

### You and Your Advisor

When you begin your graduate work, the Director of Graduate Studies will assign you a faculty member to serve as your temporary advisor for the first semester based on your interests. This temporary advisor will help you select your first semester courses, answer questions, and find solutions to various concerns you may have as a new graduate student. Consider consulting with your advisor to be the first step in any important decision.

During your second semester, you are to notify the Director of Graduate Studies whether you wish to continue with your temporary advisor as your permanent advisor or whether you wish to choose a new permanent advisor. Your permanent advisor will help you shape your degree program, select your graduate committee, and may eventually serve as your dissertation advisor.

You may change to another advisor at any point. A change of advisor may occur when an advisor leaves, when an advising load needs readjustment, or when a student changes an area of study or dissertation topic. To change advisors, you must talk with your current advisor, your prospective new advisor, and the director of graduate studies. Either the advisor or the student may initiate a change of advisor. It is the responsibility of the Director of Graduate Studies as well as the student to inform the former advisor, the new advisor, and Graduate Studies of that change. Once a change of advisor has been agreed upon, the [change of program, degree, emphasis, or advisor](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/program-change-form820.pdf) form must be filled out by the student and filed to the graduate school by the Director of Graduate Studies.

### Association of Communication Graduate Students (ACGS)

The graduate students have established the Association of Communication Graduate Students (ACGS). The ACGS receives funding from student fees. This organization provides a number of opportunities for graduate students to develop social capital and receive social support. The ACGS is a great source of information about research and travel funding opportunities. Graduate students elect their own officers and conduct activities as they deem appropriate. The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the faculty advisor, although the organization is run completely by the graduate students.

## Doctoral Advisory Committee

In addition to your advisor, you will have a committee to advise you. The Doctoral Advisory Committee convenes four times:

1. To evaluate and approve the proposed plan of study
2. For the oral portion of the comprehensive examination
3. To evaluate and approve the dissertation prospectus
4. For the oral defense (examination) of the completed dissertation

The Doctoral Advisory Committee is comprised of a minimum of four members. Your advisor must be a member of your committee. At least three of the members, including your advisor, must come from within the Department.

The fourth member of your committee will typically be from another department on campus. However, you may initially choose to appoint a fourth committee member from within the department for your first two years. Prior to your comprehensive exams or your prospectus defense, you may choose to then remove one in-department committee member and replace them with a committee member from outside the department.

If you initially select an all-department committee, you need to do two things. First, tell one of your committee members that they are being asked to serve on a temporary basis so that, when you add an outside member, you do not need to “choose” who to replace. You may always change your mind if you would like to replace someone else. You may have five committee members if you don’t want to replace anyone.

There are many good reasons you may wish to change the composition of your committee at various times throughout your program. You may change direction in your course of study, a faculty member may depart, or a new hire may be particularly well-suited to your committee. If you do wish to change your committee you must, (1) consult with and receive approval from your advisor, (2) receive consent from the new member to join the committee, (3) communicate to the outgoing committee member that they will no longer serve on your committee, and (4) send a filled out and signed [change of committee form](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/cocformdigitalsignature520.pdf) to the Director of Graduate Studies.

## Ph.D. Completion Requirements

Each student must meet all [the requirements of the MU Graduate School](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/doctoral/#credits) pertaining to completion of a Ph.D. This includes making sure that **all forms** are submitted to the Graduate School in a timely manner, as outlined below.

MA Degree

It is required that doctoral students in our program have completed an M.A. degree. Most students complete their M.A. with no problems prior to joining our doctoral program. However, in rare cases, a student may be finishing their M.A. requirements while beginning their doctoral studies. In this case, the student may be placed on probation or dismissed by the Department of Communication if the M.A. is not completed in a timely manner. See the qualifying process for more details. Please communicate with your advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies if you find yourself in this position.

Hours Requirements

To be awarded a PhD, each student must complete:

* 72 total hours, including credits transferred from the M.A. degree
* Minimum of 48 hours of course work beyond the M.A. degree
* 15 hours in research methods (excluding hours transferred from MA degree)
* 6 hours in outside collateral area. This collateral area should form a coherent unit of study and relate to an area of research interest. These hours must be taken outside of the department.
* One semester of Comps hours (9050) (beyond the 48)
* Dissertation hours (9090) (beyond the 48 hours)
* Minimum 18 hours of course work at the 8000/9000 level

### Minimum and Maximum Hours

Students on assistantship or receiving federal funds should maintain fulltime status during their employment at MU. Prior to the completion of comps, this means you should take 9 hours during the fall and spring semesters and at least 4 hours in the summer. After you complete comps you should maintain 2 hours in the fall and spring semesters and 1 hour in the summer. Graduate School regulations forbid graduate students from pursuing more than 16 hours each semester or nine for the summer session.

### Transfer Credits

Although the Graduate School will allow up to 30 graduate credit hours to be transferred from other universities, that many hours are rarely accepted. Transfer credit is worked out on a case-by-case basis with a student’s advisor and plan-of-study committee, and then is subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### Required Courses

All doctoral students are required to take the following courses (or demonstrate equivalent levels of knowledge):

* 8000 (Proseminar – each semester)
* 8120 (Introduction to Communication Research Methods)
* One of the following:
	+ 8130 (Qualitative Methods)
	+ 8140 (Content Analysis)
	+ 8160 (Rhetorical Criticism)
	+ 8170 (Quantitative Methods 2)
* 9280 (Seminar in Communication Theory)
* 9050 (Research): Comprehensive exams; after completing of 48 hours of course work
* 9090 (Research): Dissertation Hours

### Additional Coursework Information

#### Pre-registration

Graduate students get first chance to register for courses. Even if you are not going to pre-register, you should obtain a permission to enroll number on the first day of enrollment. Permission to enroll numbers are given by the Academic Advisor to the Department. Most 8000/9000 level classes do not reach capacity. However, these classes typically require six students to “make,” or risk being cancelled by the College of Arts and Sciences. If you wait too long to enroll, it is possible the course will be cancelled. Because 7000 level classes fill up quickly with undergraduates, graduate students should be sure to take advantage of the early registration days to ensure they have a seat in the class.

#### COMM 8000 Pro-Seminar

Our graduate courses are supplemented by the Pro-Seminar course. All in-residence graduate students should register for the 1-hour pro-seminar course, which is taught by the Director of Graduate Studies. Pro-Sem houses the Professional Development Series and the Colloquium Series. The proseminar sessions are mandatory as part of the course grade.

The Professional Development Series takes place on alternating Monday afternoons at 3:00. There will typically be five per semester.

The Colloquium Series typically takes place on alternating Friday afternoons at 3:00. There will typically be five per semester. These sessions bring the whole department together. Our Colloquium Series is one of our most important tools in establishing a scholarly community, reinforcing our commitment to departmental values, and providing opportunities for professional socialization. There is a strong expectation that all members of our department will attend colloquium unless there is a precluding circumstance. If you cannot attend colloquium, contact the Director of Graduate Studies in advance.

#### COMM 9170 Research Practicum

Doctoral students are encouraged to take a minimum of three hours of credit in Research Practicum (Comm 9170). The practicum can be repeated in a subsequent semester for a total of six hours, if desired. During the research practicum, the student works alone or in small groups with a faculty member on original research. The practicum is designed as a valuable learning experience for the doctoral student by providing exposure to all phases of research from conceptualization to publication. The goal of the research practicum is that graduate students present individual and co-authored papers at various national and international conferences. Publications have also developed as a result of the research practicum.

#### COMM 8085 Directed Readings

You may also choose to take a directed readings course with a professor. To take a directed readings course you must ask a faculty member to supervise the directed readings. You and the faculty member will select appropriate readings and assignments.

## Residency Requirement

Typically, to meet the residency requirement students must complete at least two nine-hour semesters or three six-hour semesters at MU within an 18-month period. Because of this requirement, it is difficult, if not impossible, for students to complete their degree program by taking course work only in the summers or only on a part-time basis.

## Teaching Assistantships

### Minimum Requirements of Teaching Assistantships

Graduate teaching assistants are offered to qualified graduate students on a semester-by-semester basis. To be renewed, TAs must show satisfactory teaching evaluations and adequate progress toward degree completion. In addition, **graduate students who receive research or teaching assistantships are required register for the Pro-Seminar course, thus attending colloquium and professional development sessions** as a condition of maintaining their status.

### Years of Support

The Department has made the commitment to fund most doctoral students (i.e. those who have an assistantship as part of their offer) for four years, assuming they are making appropriate progress toward their degree. It is best to work diligently so that you can complete your degree within the four years of guaranteed funding.

### Terminating Your Assistantship

If you terminate your assistantship or fellowship at any point during the semester, you will also lose a portion of your fee waiver. The fee waiver will be pro-rated based on the number of days in the semester that you had your assistantship/fellowship, and you will be responsible for the balance not covered by the pro-rated fee waiver. This will also occur if you withdraw from the university during the semester. If you are considering terminating your assistantship/fellowship or withdrawing from the university please check with the Graduate School as to what your pro-rated fee waiver would be and what portion of your fees you would have to pay.

## Academic Honesty and Professional Ethics

This excerpt is from the Graduate School (see [*Academic Honesty & Professional Ethics*](http://gradschool.missouri.edu/academics/scholarly-integrity-ethics/scholarly-honesty-prof-ethics.php)):

Academic honesty is essential to the intellectual life of the University. Students who pass off the answers, words, ideas or research findings of another person as their own are guilty of academic dishonesty. Self-plagiarism, occurring when an individual submits identical work for more than one assignment, is not allowed. In addition to such acts of cheating or plagiarism, any unauthorized possession of examinations, hiding of source materials, or tampering with grade records are acts of academic dishonesty specifically forbidden by university rules.

According to the MU Faculty handbook, faculty members are required to report to their Department chair and the Provost’s Office all acts of academic dishonesty committed by graduate and undergraduate students. In all such cases, the faculty member should discuss the matter with the student and then make an academic judgment about the student’s grade on the work affected by the dishonesty and if appropriate, the grade for the affected course. The Provost makes the decision as to whether disciplinary proceedings are instituted. Because of the importance of honesty to academic and professional life, acts of dishonesty by graduate students may result in dismissal from the University.

# Part 2: The Doctoral Forms and Benchmarks for Success

## Scheduling Committee Meetings

In most cases there will be four committee meetings during this process. It is your responsibility to schedule these meetings in consultation with your advisor. This will include reserving a room (typically the Loren Reid Library or Switzler 111). It is often difficult to find a time that works for you and all four of your committee members, so it is wise to schedule in advance and utilize scheduling assistants such as Outlook or web-based availability programs. Consult with your peers and your advisor if you feel unsure of how to best proceed. Remember that all of your committee members will have more experience with this than you do. We are accustomed to these requests and often receive multiple such requests each year. So you do not need to worry about undue impositions. This is part of our job and we are expecting it. However, some courtesy and social grace do go a long way.

## Doctoral Program Forms

There are five forms required of all doctoral students, four of which must be filed to the Graduate School prior to graduation. These forms are available on the [Graduate School’s web site](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/forms-cs/). You are responsible for making sure the forms are filed on time.

### [D-1 Form](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/d1digitalsignatures520.pdf): Qualifying Examination Results and Doctoral Committee Approval Form

All doctoral students must fulfill a qualifying examination process (detailed in Section 3). Once the Department has determined a student has met the requirements of the qualifying process, the student is responsible for submitting a D-1 form to the Graduate School. This form declares the student has successfully completed the Department’s qualifying examination. The form asks for your name, degree program, undergraduate education, and previous graduate education,

This form also asks for the names of the four (or five) members of your Doctoral Advisory Committee. Details about the formation of this committee are provided in Section 1.

This form normally should be submitted at the same time you submit your D-2 Form (described below), but no later than by the end of your first year of course work.

### [D-2 Form](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/d2digitalsignature520.pdf): Plan of Study for the Doctoral Degree Form

This form must have the signatures of all committee members. The D-2 form is submitted after your program of study has been approved following a committee meeting in which at least four members should be present. The committee will meet to determine, in consultation with you, which courses will be appropriate for the program of study.

The proposed program of study must accompany the D-2 form. The program of study may be revised and/or updated by using the [Plan of Study Substitution Form](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/subformdigitalsignatures520.pdf).

The D-2 form should be submitted to the graduate school prior to the beginning of the students’ third regular semester of course work. If the D-2 form is not submitted in a timely manner, the student could be placed on probationary status.

Additional coursework: Students sometimes wish to take courses beyond what is on their program of study. This can be beneficial for students who want expertise beyond what they were able to get in their 48 hours of coursework. However, it can create a complication on tuition waiver (for TAs). The tuition waiver benefit for teaching assistants only applies to courses on the plan of study or for courses that contribute to the student’s communication education (content or methods). The Grad School will not waive tuition on things like violin lessons, for instance. If the Grad School has questions, they will ask your advisor or the DGS if the course is relevant to the student’s graduate program. As long as it is, we tell them so, and they will waive tuition.

Once you have completed comps, the Graduate School will only waive tuition for 2 credit hours per semester during the school year and 1 credit hour in the summer. So, if you wish to take additional coursework at that time, you should enroll in the class instead of dissertation hours. The university will bill you for the difference in tuition (e.g., 1 credit hour of tuition for a 3-credit hour class during the fall or spring semester).

### [D-3 Form](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/d3digitalsignature520.pdf): Report of the Result of the Comprehensive Examination

After the successful completion of the written and oral portions of your comprehensive exams, this form must be submitted, signed by all members of the committee, and the Director of Graduate Studies. The comprehensive examination must be completed at least seven months before the final defense of the dissertation.

### Dissertation Prospectus Approval Form—Department of Communication

This departmental form is not submitted to the graduate school. It is an internal form that is placed in your file as a formal record of your prospectus meeting and of the committee’s recommendation. Get this form from your advisor or from the Director of Graduate Studies.

### [D-4 Form:](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/D4-Dissertation-Defense.pdf) Report of the Doctoral Dissertation Defense

This is the final form that must be signed by all members of your Doctoral Advisory Committee. You must also submit the signed [Approval Page](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Approval_Esignature_Final.pdf), which goes with the completed dissertation. The Approval Page must have the signatures of all of your committee members.

The dissertation must be accompanied by a brief title of no more than 50 letters and spaces, an abstract of not more than 350 words and a brief biographical sketch in paragraph form. The typescript must include a suitable indication that it is a dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty of MU in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy. Consult the Graduate Studies’ [Guidelines for Preparing Thesis and Dissertations](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/thesis-dissertation-guidelines/) for specific information concerning the submission of the final copy of your dissertation.

## Benchmarks of Success

In the spring of each year, in conjunction with their annual review, doctoral students should provide their advisor with an updated copy of their Curriculum Vita.

Your advisor may have additional benchmarks beyond those innumerated below.

### By the end of one’s first year (end of July), doctoral students should:

* Pass the “qualifying process” (based on first semester course performance) at the conclusion of the Fall semester (Form D1 filed with the Graduate School).
* Form their Advisory Committee, in consultation with their Advisor
* Have their Plan of Study approved by end of Spring semester (Form D2 filed with the Graduate School).
* Become involved in at least one research project working with a faculty member or research team.
* Become a member of one or more professional associations (e.g., CSCA, NCA, ICA, AEJMC, etc.), submitting at least one or more papers for conference presentation.

### By the end of one’s second year / summer in the program, doctoral students should:

* Complete coursework (48 hours).
* Present research at one or more professional conferences, continuing to submit seminar papers and research for conference presentation.
* Continue to develop your research program, both with independent and collaborative research projects.
* Submit research for publication.
* Have multiple pieces of scholarship somewhere in the research pipeline. It is unlikely that anything submitted in your third year will be published before you start applying for jobs.
* In consultation with Advisor, begin discussion of possible dissertation topic. Begin thinking about writing for the literature review or pre-proposal

### By the end of one’s third year / summer in the program, doctoral students should:

* Complete comprehensive exams by end of the Fall term (completing Comm 9050 and Form D3 filed with the Graduate School)
* Request to teach available upper-level courses once comprehensive exams are passed. (Assignments for teaching upper-level courses will be made based on departmental teaching needs and course availability as well as student progress.)
* Defend the prospectus (Dissertation Proposal Approval Form) by the end of the spring semester.
* Continue to submit and present papers at scholarly meetings.
* Continue collaborative research with a faculty member or research team.
* Submit independently authored or co-authored research for publication consideration. The goal is to have multiple publications in the submission pipeline by the end of one’s third year / summer.
* Prepare job materials in late Spring and over Summer to prepare for the job market.

### By the end of one’s fourth year / summer in the program, doctoral students should:

* Conduct job search, prepare application packets, and prepare for interviews (this process typically starts in August at the beginning of one’s fourth year).
* Complete and defend dissertation typically no later than May 1 (form D4 filed with graduate studies). The deadline for May graduation is often the third week of April. This means the dissertation often needs to be ready for your committee by the start of April, which often means your advisor needs to have received, read, and returned drafts of chapters throughout February and March.
* Request to teach upper-level course if you have not yet had the chance to do so.
* Continue to submit and present papers at scholarly meetings.
* Continue independent and collaborative research and submit independently authored or co-authored research for publication consideration.

# Part 3: Examinations

## Qualifying Examination Process

Our qualifying exam process is linked to the first year GPA. At the conclusion of a doctoral student’s first semester, a student passes the qualifying exam if they achieve at least a 3.3 GPA and have been awarded a Master’s (MA) degree. If a doctoral student does not earn a 3.3 GPA in their first semester, they will be placed on probation and will need their second semester grades to bring their cumulative GPA to a 3.3. If a doctoral student has not been awarded an MA degree by the end of their first semester, then they will be placed on probation and will have the second semester to be awarded their MA degree. Failure to meet the GPA and/or MA requirements of the Department’s qualifying examination process automatically prevents candidacy.

The Director of Graduate Studies shall notify in writing any student who has failed to pass the qualifying examination process that they will be placed on probation during the second semester. The student will be reminded that for their probationary status to be removed, and to be allowed to continue their doctoral program in the Department, they must meet the GPA and MA requirements stated above. If this does not occur, the student will be notified in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies that failure to satisfy the qualifying examination process terminates their candidacy for the doctoral degree in the Department of Communication.

## Comprehensive Examinations Process

### Com 9050 Research

During the semester after the you has completed all 48 hours of course work (typically the fall of your third year), you will enroll in Comm 9050 Research. If you have earned an “incomplete” grade for a course that is on the program of study, the “I” grade must be changed to a letter grade before the you can enroll in this course. Students need to be enrolled for two credit hours after completing coursework in order to maintain full-time status and retain their teaching assistantship. Typically, students enroll in 1 credit of Comm 9050 and 1 credit of Comm 8000 Pro-Seminar. You need to complete the comprehensive examination while enrolled in Comm 9050. This course will be graded satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

### Exam Format

The comprehensive exam allows students to (1) consolidate the expertise they have accumulated through coursework, (2) demonstrate mastery of the theories, methods, and content central to their degree, and (3) rehearse the written and oral articulation of a scholarly identity.

The comprehensive exam consists of 15 hours of written examinations divided as follows. Twelve hours will be completed over the course of two weeks following one of the two options outlined below. The remaining three hours will to be devoted to a *Dissertation Exploration* written in consultation with the doctoral advisor between the written exam and the oral defense.

## The Written Exam – 12 Hours

The 12-hour written exam may be taken as a series of six 2-hour timed questions to be completed in the department or as a series of six take-home exam questions. Details of each option are outlined below. Students will select all of one option, not a hybrid of both.

### Option 1: In-house Exams

Doctoral students will respond to six questions over a fourteen-day period. Twelve total hours will be allocated for these six questions and each question will be answered in a 2-hour block.

The members of the student’s Doctoral Advisory Committee prepare the exam questions. A single committee member may write no more than three exam questions. The student should consult with each committee member to seek suggestions to assist in preparing for the examination. In general, the exam covers the student’s areas of specialization. The exams will be over theory, content, and methods. A minimum of two exam questions will cover research methods.

It is not required that the Outside Member write a question. However, if the Outside Member has relevant expertise, the student will often invite at least one question from the Outside Member.

In a circumstance in which the Outside Member does not submit a question, their role will be to advise and audit. In other words, they will help ensure the process is fair to the student and maintains rigorous standards. They will also participate in the discussion of the Dissertation Exploration and help the student conceptualize the dissertation proposal.

In consultation with each questioner, students will compose a reading list representing the range of content over which they will be examined. Students are permitted to bring a physical copy of the reading list with them into the examination room. However, the list may only consist of the citation to the sources. No notes on the material may be included. In other words, students may bring a non-annotated bibliography to the exam.

A student should arrange a writing location with the advisor. The student may use their own personal computer. However, they may not access the internet, any personal notes, or any external resources during the exam.

The logistical process will proceed as follows:

1. Reserve a room in Switzler Hall according to your desired schedule. If you are not familiar with the process of reserving a room you can contact the Chair or DGS. Typically, students reserve Room #110 (Loren Reid Library), Room #221, or Room #304 (Focus Group room).
2. Send your comps schedule to [Jacob Owen](http://jacobowen@missouri.edu). Your schedule will include (a) the question topic, (b) the faculty asking the question, (c) the day and time it is to begin. Copy your advisor on the email. Jacob will collect questions from your committee and send them to you via email at your scheduled question time. You will also log your start and end time on the document as a time-stamp. Write “started” and “finished” at the top of the document. Email your completed response to Jacob at the conclusion of your two hours.
3. You will need to prepare your device for the exams. The exams are closed notes so you will need to close all files, programs, and windows other than your email application (to receive questions and send answers) and your word processor to view questions and write your answers. As noted above, you are permitted your reading list. However, you should bring a physical (printed) copy of the reading list rather than an electronic version on your testing device. You should also remove clutter from your desktop so the digital space is clean.

For students with various disabilities, special considerations are available. The Director of Graduate Studies and ADA coordinator and will review each individual situation.

**Option 2: Take-home Exams**

Doctoral students will respond to six questions over a fourteen-day period. Each response should be no more than 2500 words, not including references.

Students will receive all questions on the first day of their exam period. A minimum of two answers must be submitted within the first week. All answers must be submitted at the conclusion of the fourteen-day exam period.

The members of the student’s Doctoral Advisory Committee prepare the exam questions. A committee member may write no more than three exam questions. The student should consult with each committee member to seek suggestions to assist in preparing for the examination. In general, the exam covers the student’s areas of specialization. The exams will be over theory, content, and methods. A minimum of two exam questions will cover research methods.

It is not required that the Outside Member write a question. However, if the Outside Member has relevant expertise, the student will often invite at least one question from the Outside Member.

In a circumstance in which the Outside Member does not submit a question, their role will be to advise and audit. In other words, they will help ensure the process is fair to the student and maintains rigorous standards. They will also participate in the discussion of the Dissertation Exploration and help the student conceptualize the dissertation proposal.

In consultation with each questioner, students will compose a reading list representing the range of content over which they will be examined.

The logistical process will proceed as follows:

Send your comps schedule to [Jacob Owen](http://jacobowen@missouri.edu). Your schedule will include (a) the question topic, (b) the faculty asking the question, (c) the day you are to begin your 14-day writing period. Copy your advisor on the email. Jacob will collect questions from your committee and send them to you via email on your scheduled start date. When you have completed an answer, you will email your response to Jacob. Remember that at least two answers must be sent prior to the end of the first week.

For students with various disabilities, special considerations are available. The Director of Graduate Studies and ADA coordinator and will review each individual situation.

## Dissertation Exploration – 3 Hours

The dissertation exploration should be approximately 2500 words in length and should not exceed 3500 words (excluding references). The essay is to be completed within two weeks of finishing the written exams. The oral defense can then be scheduled two weeks after the committee has received a student’s written answers and this essay. It is permissible for this essay to have some conceptual overlap with another portion of the exam. However, this overlap must be planned in advance with the advisor to ensure that there is sufficient conceptual distinction between the content of the dissertation exploration and any exam question.

Students will select one of the following paths.

### Path A – Dissertation Rationale

Students will develop a pre-prospectus on the topic they plan to use for their dissertation. A pre-prospectus provides an opportunity to organize a possible dissertation topic and receive feedback on that topic from your committee. This will typically include a literature review section that describes existing research on the topic to illustrate what is already known. This will be followed by research questions or hypotheses that the proposed project will address. A pre-prospectus will also typically include a method section that provides details about how the proposed research project answers the research questions and/or tests the hypotheses. Students who develop a pre-prospectus are not required to use the idea for their actual dissertation. It’s possible that a student could learn from this process that a different topic is ultimately needed.

### Path B – Dissertation Literature Probe

Students will summarize the literature in an area they plan to use for their dissertation. The essay will focus on two tasks. First, it will demonstrate what is already known about the topic. This section should provide detail about how scholars have generated evidence in support of their findings and make an overall assessment of the strength of evidence for each “known” finding. This first section will constitute a bulk of the essay. The second section will identify critical questions that remain unanswered, or areas in which the existing evidence is unsatisfactory. Here, the student will make a strong argument that there is need for research on a specific question or set of questions based on the gap between what is already known and what needs to be known. Presumably, the dissertation will be designed to fill this gap. However, as above, a student may decide through this process that they do not wish to pursue this line of inquiry and change topics prior to the dissertation.

### Path C – Dissertation Topic Exploration

Students will explore and summarize literature on three topics. These topics do not need to be related. Each summary will be a condensed review of literature to identify what is known and what needs to be learned in each topic area. The student will also forecast possible dissertation projects within each of the three topics. Though students are not bound to one of these topics for their dissertation, the intention is for this process to help the student select among competing interests for the dissertation.

## Oral Exams

Comprehensive examination defenses must occur during the fall or spring semesters and may not be held during summer semesters or University breaks. At least two weeks after completion of the written portion of the comprehensive exam, but no more than one month after the dissertation exploration has been submitted, the student’s committee will meet for the oral segment of the exam. As a result of the combination of written and oral segments, your committee will pass judgment on your performance. They will vote pass or fail. A positive vote by at least four of five committee members is required to pass the exam (if the student’s advisory committee consists of four members, then a positive vote of the entire committee is required for the student to pass the exam). If in the oral defense a student is unable to respond to committee members’ concerns about their written exams the student may be asked to make revisions or be required to do rewrites. In the case of minor revisions, the Advisory Committee Chair will withhold signatures on the D3 form until the revision(s) is/are completed to the satisfaction of the committee member(s) requesting the revision(s). In the case of rewrites, the committee will indicate failure on the D3 form and the student will be required to rewrite the failed portion(s) of their original exam following the rewrite procedures described below.

## Revisions

A revision constitutes a minor portion of an exam that needs to be revised. If there are more than two exams that need minor revisions, then this would constitute a failure and require a rewrite (see below). If the revisions are not deemed satisfactory by the committee member(s) requesting the revision(s), then this results in a failure. The student will then take a second comprehensive examination (i.e. rewrites) after waiting 12 weeks.

## Rewrites

A rewrite occurs when there are significant errors and deficiencies that were not adequately addressed in the oral defense. After waiting 12 weeks, the student will respond to new questions on the failed portion(s) of the original exam. Upon completion of the rewrites, a second oral defense will take place with the entire committee to determine if the student has passed or failed. Failure to pass two comprehensive examinations automatically prevents candidacy.

# Part 4: The Dissertation

### Continuous Enrollment

Once you have passed Comm 9050, you must maintain continuous enrollment. You should be enrolled in Comm 9090 Research for one semester hour each fall and spring semester and one semester hour each summer session. You should also enroll in one semester hour of Comm 8000 Pro-Seminar each fall and spring. Failure to continuously enroll until the doctoral degree is awarded terminates your candidacy.

## Prospectus Meeting

Once you have passed Com 9050 Research, you will work with your adviser to develop a complete research prospectus or proposal. This includes an extensive rationale and review of literature. In addition, it includes writing research questions or hypotheses and a proposed methodology. The writing of this prospectus will involve numerous revisions before it is ready to defend. However, what you have written will be part of your final dissertation, typically the first two or three chapters. Your advisor may ask that other committee members participate in the process.

Once your advisor and you are satisfied that the proposal is ready for review, you will provide a copy of the prospectus to all the members of the committee. At least two weeks later, the committee will convene to discuss and approve the prospectus. Prospectus defenses must occur during the fall or spring semesters and may not be held during summer semesters or University breaks. It is typical for the committee to make changes in the proposal.

It is appropriate for students to be considering dissertation topics throughout their program. A number of students have used their research practicum as a springboard for their dissertation. However, under no circumstances should a student begin collecting data for a dissertation until after the faculty have approved the proposal at the prospectus meeting**.** Any data collected before the prospectus is approved may not be appropriate for the approved prospectus.

## Oral Defense of the Dissertation

Once your committee has approved your dissertation prospectus, you will work closely with your advisor on collecting data and writing the final dissertation. This will again involve numerous revisions. Your advisor may ask other committee members to assist in this process. Once your advisor and you are satisfied that the dissertation is suitable, you will provide copies of the complete dissertation to all the members of your committee. Then, at least two weeks later, you will schedule the oral defense of your dissertation. *It is encouraged that dissertation defenses, like the prospectus defense, occur during fall or spring semesters, however summer dissertation defenses may be held at the committee’s discretion and availability.*

The oral defense provides an opportunity for your committee members to explore the nature of your dissertation with you. The defense may take any form that the committee feels is appropriate to enable a sound judgment concerning your qualification for the doctorate. Committee members are looking for your ability to articulate your work with sufficient ease and mastery to warrant the conferring of the doctorate. At least four members of your committee must be present at the oral defense.

It is normal for the committee to ask for a number of changes in the dissertation at this time. These changes must be made before the final dissertation copy is submitted to the graduate school.

The candidate must be enrolled to defend the dissertation. The defense can only take place when MU is officially in session (not between sessions). A report of the examination that includes the signatures of all members of the committee is sent to the Graduate School prior to the deadline for the anticipated date of graduation.

### Dissertation Timeline

The above stipulations imply a timeline for the dissertation process. The deadline for filing the D4 is often the third week of April (for a May graduation). Because the committee must have the dissertation two weeks in advance of the meeting, you will need to have it ready for committee at the start of April. You should therefore work closely with your advisor on a timeline. Your advisor may often need a week or more with individual chapters to provide feedback, and the drafting/feedback process is iterative – often requiring more than one exchange of drafts. Thus, to ensure a document is ready for the committee at the start of April, students and advisors are often exchanging drafts of the final chapters in February. March alone is not likely sufficient for this process.

### Grading of COMM 9090 Research

Effective Spring Semester 1994, dissertation research hours (9090) will be graded on an S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis.

### Dissertation Formatting & Submission

See the [Graduate School website](https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/thesis-dissertation-guidelines/) for the most up-to-date guidelines and rules for formatting and submitting your dissertation. The Graduate School will also post relevant dates and deadlines for dissertation submission and graduation.

# Part 5: Policies

In this section, you will find policies relevant to the doctoral student in Communication. This is not an exhaustive list, and other policies may exist beyond those included here. However, this will provide you with a good start to learning about the policies that may affect you.

## Reasonable Rate of Progress for Doctoral Students

Effective Fall 2000, a doctoral student will have no more than **five years** to complete their coursework and comprehensive exams. The Department has developed a list of **Benchmarks** to help students gauge their progress through the program (see below). On petition of the student and the student’s Department, the Graduate School may grant an extension of this time limit.

Effective Fall Semester 1994, a doctoral student will have no more than **five years** after passing the comprehensive examination to complete the doctoral degree. On petition of the student and the student’s Department, the Graduate School may grant an extension of this time limit. Departments specifically reserve the right to re-certify currency in the discipline. This may involve additional coursework and/or retaking comprehensive exams.

The Department will develop departmental guidelines by which we will consider requests for extensions for more than five years to work on the dissertation. All requests for extensions are to be endorsed by the Director of Graduate Studies and accompanied by a description of the process whereby currency in the discipline was re-certified.

## Graduate Students Teaching Advanced Classes

Courses are scheduled to meet the curriculum needs of the undergraduate program of the department by the chair and the academic advisor. Advanced classes include all stand-alone courses taught by a graduate student, including 2000, 3000, and 4000 level. The Department Chair will make course appointments in consultation with the advisor.

Selection criteria are the following:

1. The student must have successfully completed the comprehensive exams process.
	1. If a completed D-3 has not been filed by the end of the semester preceding the graduate student’s stand-alone course assignment, the graduate student will be re-assigned to teach an appropriate course based on department needs.
	2. Passing comprehensive exams does not guarantee assignment to an advanced stand-alone course.
	3. Assignments are also based on departmental teaching needs and availability.
2. Fourth-year doctoral students will not be allowed to teach an advanced course unless they have successfully defended their dissertation prospectus by the end of Spring semester during their third year. Teaching assignments for the fall term are made by the end of the preceding spring semester; therefore, it is expected that students who request to teach an advanced course in the fall should complete their prospectus defense by this time. If a fall teaching assignment is made before the prospectus is successfully defended, the defense must be completed (or defense meeting scheduled) no later than the end of Spring semester or the graduate student will be re-assigned to teach an appropriate course based on department needs.
3. Graduate students who have relevant expertise in a professional field (e.g., media production, etc.) will be allowed to teach an advanced stand-alone course before successfully defending their comprehensive exams.
4. Throughout their tenure, it is our aim that graduate students will teach no more than one stand-alone advanced class (which they may repeat), and will teach or assist with no more than three different courses in total (which includes teaching Comm 1200 and also assisting with lab sections of Comm 2100 and Comm 3050).
5. In consultation with the Chair, the graduate student will select and request an appropriate faculty mentor by the end of the semester preceding their advanced stand-alone course assignment. A faculty mentor is required only for the first time a graduate student teaches a given advanced class.
6. A faculty member may receive compensation for up to 2 mentees per academic year. Faculty mentors will: (1) approve the syllabus, (2) observe students teach, and (3) meet to discuss progress. Faculty mentors may also provide teaching materials, such as lecture slides and exams, at their discretion. Grade appeals, etc., will still go to the Chair.

## Leave Policy for Graduate Students

The Department of Communication recognizes that graduate students have a variety of long-term family obligations that may from time to time make it difficult to complete their responsibilities as a graduate student or teaching assistant. These obligations include but are not limited to birth or adoption of a child, long term illnesses or death of family members or close friends, and so forth. In the case of such obligations, the Department of Communication will attempt to make reasonable accommodations to support the student and fulfill the obligations for instruction and for maintaining the standards of the graduate program.

In such instances, graduate students are encouraged to make their advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Chair aware of the circumstances at the earliest possible date. In making accommodations for long-term obligations, the Department will consider the following options:

* Reduced teaching loads for teaching assistants.
* Reduced course workload
* Extensions of teaching assistantships beyond the usual four years after a leave
* Extensions of deadlines for work in courses
* Extensions of the 5-year limit on completing the course work or extensions of the 5-year limit on completing the dissertation. These extensions must be granted by the Graduate School, but the Department will recommend and support such requests.

## Verser and Alumni Graduate Student Support Fund

### Fund Distribution Guidelines

At the beginning of each academic year, the department will determine the amount of money available for distribution to graduate students. Then, the Director of Graduate Studies will distribute an announcement to all current graduate students asking them to apply for the funds. Currently, there is one cycle of funding in the Fall semester of each academic year. Applications must include the approved form and be returned by the deadline for that distribution period.

The faculty will form a Grant Awards Committee of three voting members with the Director of Graduate Studies serving as the convener. The funds will be distributed based on the following priorities:

* First Priority – Dissertation/Thesis Grants: These grants are associated with the dissertation or thesis. For grants associated with the dissertation or thesis, preference will be given to Ph.D. students who have passed comprehensive exams and to M.A. students who have completed their coursework.
	+ Funding is more likely if the prospectus has been approved or the advisor believes approval is likely in the near future.
	+ Funding is also more likely to go to projects that have not previously been funded with a Verser award.
	+ Funds may be used to print surveys, mail surveys, purchase tapes for recording, purchase data, travel to collect data, conduct phone interviews, and the like.
	+ Funding is unlikely for costs of standard equipment (e.g., computers), but could be used for specialized equipment or software needed to complete the research project.
	+ Funds may not be used for normal costs of travel to and from Columbia or the cost of printing the dissertation.
* Second Priority – Research Grants: These grants are associated with research conducted as part of the degree program (research practicum or independent research hours). Use of the funds follows the same guidelines as for Dissertation/Thesis Grants.
* Third Priority – Convention Travel Grants: Travel grants will be funded only if money is still available after requests for the first two categories have been funded. Priorities for travel grants will be as follows:
	+ Travel to special meetings or workshops
	+ Students on the job market (generally fourth year students or beyond)
	+ Students presenting papers at a conference
	+ Students serving as respondents or chairs.
	+ Students who are not engaged in a job search or are not listed on the program are not likely to be funded.

Other Guidelines:

* Quality of the application: Quality of the proposal and justification for the budget can influence whether a proposal is funded and/or the amount awarded, particularly when the funds available cannot be divided into meaningful amounts for all applicants.
* Any funds not distributed during a particular (year/semester) will be added to the principal or be available for distribution the following semester/year.

Students approved for funding must present receipts to the financial officer of the department prior to disbursement of the funds. In some cases, the financial officer (Martha Crump) may be able to make purchases directly for you, so please check with her.

If a funded student fails to request reimbursement or fails to present receipts by June 15th of the academic year in which they receive funding, then that funding will be withdrawn. In this situation, the student may reapply for funding during the next cycle.

## Termination Procedures and Appeals

### Annual Review Process

Each year during the first part of the spring semester, each “in residence” graduate student will complete an annual review process, in consultation with their advisor, to assess the student’s progress in completing their degree, research, and service. First, graduate students will submit an updated CV to their advisor. Next, faculty will meet with their advisees to provide feedback on the student’s progress and set goals for the coming year.

In March or April, following graduate students’ annual review meetings with their advisors, the graduate faculty of the Department will meet to conduct its annual assessment of each graduate student’s progress. The Director of Graduate Studies calls this meeting. Each advisor describes the level of progress towards degree completion for each of his or her advisees.

This meeting is designed to identify problems regarding sufficient progress or quality of work at an early stage in the student’s program. Any problems identified will be addressed with a personal meeting (or phone call, if out of town) between the student and the advisor. A follow-up letter will be sent by the Director of Graduate Studies and will confirm the main points of the faculty concerns and deliberations.

It is at this time that the student would be notified if they are not making satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. Specific conditions for making satisfactory progress are to be outlined at this time, such as submission of a chapter of the dissertation, a meeting with the advisor, or some acceptable indication that the student is making sufficient progress.

If difficulties persist, the student risks being dismissed from the program. The student may be placed on probation for a period of at least 30 days. Notification of probation will be in writing. The notification will explicitly state that the student is now on probation and will outline specific actions which must be accomplished by a specific date for the student to be deemed in good standing by the Department and removed from probation. The notification letter will come from the Director of Graduate Studies.

If the student does not comply with the conditions of probation, a letter (signed by the Director of Graduate Studies) will be sent to the student with notification of dismissal from the degree program. This letter will inform the student of the right to appeal, first, to the Department or program, and second, to the Graduate Faculty Senate, along with the procedures for the appeal process (Dismissal Policy and Appeals Process for Graduate Students Amended by the Graduate Faculty Senate on April 23, 2002). A copy of the Department/program’s letter must be sent to the Vice Provost/Dean at the same time it is sent to the student. If the student decides to appeal the Departmental/program dismissal, the appeal process will take effect. As long as a student is in an appeal process, the student should maintain enrollment and continue working on degree program requirements. Students must complete the Department/program appeal process prior to considering an appeal to the Graduate Faculty Senate. If the student does not appeal the Department/program’s dismissal, the Graduate School will send the student an official notice of dismissal from the program.

Dismissing a student from a degree program does not dismiss the student from the University of Missouri. Once official notice is received, the student’s status will be changed to “unclassified graduate student,” as long as there is no grade point average problem. Unclassified graduate students may transfer to another university or to another degree program at MU.

## Probationary Status

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 or better GPA to be in good standing. If you fall below a 3.0 you will be placed on probation. If at the end of the following semester the cumulative GPA is 3.0 or better, the probationary status will be removed. If you fail to raise the cumulative GPA to 3.0 you may, on the recommendation of the Department, be allowed a second and final probationary semester. You will be subjected to dismissal upon failure to raise the GPA to 3.0 by the end of the second probationary semester, or at any time that the semester or cumulative GPA falls below 2.0. Note: Summer Session is not counted as a semester.

To graduate, a student must have an overall GPA of 3.0 in all graduate courses taken at MU. (see [Grading & Credit Policies](http://gradschool.missouri.edu/academics/progress/grading-credit.php))

A student may count one course toward graduation with the grade of “C.” However, if the student receives a C in a second course, they will be dismissed from the graduate program. Receiving C’s in 2 or more classes automatically prevents candidacy.

Students who fail to meet other requirements of the PhD program (e.g., failure to complete the M.A. degree in a timely manner) may be placed on probation.

If the stipulations of a student’s probation are not met by the student, then they may be dismissed from the Department of Communication graduate program and the University.

### Grade Appeal Procedures

In the event that a student is unable to resolve a complaint about a grade with the instructor of the course, a grade appeal procedure may be initiated. The Director of Graduate Studies shall serve as an ombudsperson to receive grade complaints and appeals about faculty and teaching staff from the student enrolled for graduate communication credit. The Director will appoint a committee to consider each complaint/appeal. The composition will be the responsibility of the Director who may or may not serve on the committee. Such committees should have representation from each sector of the Department. The student will be asked to describe the nature of the complaint and offer supporting evidence in writing. This complaint will be forwarded to the faculty member/teaching staff who will respond in writing. The committee will advise the chair of the Department and the Director of Graduate Studies of the resolution of the grievance in writing. In the event the Director is involved in the appeal, the Department chair will appoint a substitute. (Policy on Grade Appeal Procedure approved at Faculty Meeting: October 14, 1994)

### Exemption from Required Courses

A doctoral student may apply for exemption from enrolling in any of the required graduate courses in the following manner:

* Submit to your advisor a letter indicating why you believe you should be exempt from a particular course. Your rationale should include a copy of a course description, a copy of a course syllabus, and a sample of your work written specifically for a comparable graduate course taken at another institution. The goal is to provide data to indicate your previous mastery of the material covered in the course under question as it is currently taught in our program.
* That written documentation will be reviewed by your advisor, and if they agree with your assessment of your abilities, then they will forward the materials to the appropriate faculty member (the instructor for the course). That faculty member may request a personal interview to further assess your abilities within a particular field.

Note: these exemptions are typically only granted for those who have recently graduated from a quality graduate program, and who took such courses no more than five years ago.

Receiving an exemption from a course does not reduce the total number of hours required to complete the Ph.D. or the number of research methods hours needed to graduate. Rather, it allows the student to take a more advanced course in the same or a different area of interest. So, for example, a student who receives an exemption from Comm 8120 (Introduction to Communication Research Methods) can then take a more advanced statistics course or an alternative research methods course.

### Summer Defenses

Comprehensive examination and prospectus defenses must occur during the fall or spring semesters and may not be held during summer semesters or University breaks. It is encouraged that thesis and dissertation defenses likewise occur during fall or spring semester, however summer thesis and dissertation defenses may be held at the committee’s discretion and availability.

## Awards

The following graduate student awards are presented at the Department’s spring Graduate Student Awards Reception:

### Graduate Achievement Award

This award is presented to the outstanding graduate student in the Department of Communication who demonstrates excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service. The active graduate students in the Department select this award winner.

### Loren Reid Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award

The faculty select two graduate teaching assistants to receive the Loren Reid Teaching Award. This award is presented to an outstanding graduate student who demonstrates excellence in teaching, inspires learning, practices creative thinking and shows a generous spirit toward students.

### The Frank & Lila Gilman Memorial Fellowship Award

The award was established by Wilbur Gilman, a 1924 graduate of the College of Arts and Science, in memory of his parents. The award comes with a very generous stipend. This award recipient is selected by the faculty and is presented to an outstanding graduate student to recognize superior research achievement. The recipient has been active in conducting research and has demonstrated excellence in quality of work and commitment to advancing knowledge in our field.

### Outstanding Service Award

This award is selected by the faculty and is presented to an outstanding graduate student who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to provide service to the Department.