

**Doctoral Program in Communication Studies
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

**Graduate Handbook of Policies and
Procedures**

For students entering 2010-11 and 2011-12

**[Students who were admitted prior to 2010 should check
the paper copy or consult the Graduate Student Services Manager.]**

Introduction

This handbook contains the policies that structure graduate study in the Department of Communication Studies at UNC. Students are responsible for making certain that procedures, deadlines, requirements, and policies described here are met. If there are questions about any of the policies described here, a student should consult with his/her adviser first. If there remain questions, s/he should ask the Director of Graduate Studies (DoGS). The website of the Graduate School also may provide answers to questions that arise.

All students are admitted to the program as doctoral students. The sections in this handbook cover department policies governing the period from entry into the program through the defense of the dissertation. If a student enters the program with a bachelor's degree, s/he can earn a master's degree along the way. Interests sometimes change, so some students decide to leave the program with the M.A. rather than continuing to pursue the Ph.D. Policies regarding the M.A. option are also contained in this handbook.

All policy documents are subject to review and change, and this is no exception. Over the next few years, this handbook will take on a new structure and with some revision of a few of the policies. **Importantly, the student is covered by whatever version of this handbook was in place at the time s/he was admitted.** Although some revisions may occur to your year's handbook after you've begun the program, these will not entail changes in the requirements you must meet. Any changes will consist of clarifications to policies, changes in language to align with the Graduate School Handbook, or minor, non-substantive edits (including moving or copying of important information into multiple sections for clarity).

The handbook, in recent years, has been structured as a list of "frequently asked questions." That structure remains, although some of the FAQs have been removed from this document and the information moved to documents about admission, etc. To ensure clarity and consistency across time, the numbering of items remains stable, although the numbers will no longer follow in perfect sequence. For example, FAQs 1-11 and 18 were about admission, and so that information has been reformatted and will be moved to other areas of the website and brochures. As policy adjustments are completed, the FAQ structure of the handbook will be phased out altogether. But that will take time. The faculty decides policy changes democratically, and democracy is frequently slow. Also, any *major* policy revisions must be approved by the Graduate School, which also slows the process. Hence, we will have "messy" handbooks for awhile. We hope that will not create problems.

Changes made to any version of the handbook are dated; all of these changes are for clarification only. Each version (now according to date of admission) will be a little different, as substantive revisions to policy occur. Any such revisions will be reflected *only* in the handbooks for newly admitted students. Please feel free to consult with the DoGS for answers to questions about these clarifications and revisions.

Students who entered the program prior to 2010 should consult their paper copies or see the Graduate Student Services Manager for information.

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1-11. Items updated and moved to admissions materials.

12. For how many hours do I need to enroll in order to get a tuition waiver and assistantship? (Item revised for clarity, spring 2012)

You must be a full-time student. Before completion of coursework, to be “full-time” you must enroll for 9 hours. (The UNC Graduate School, not the department, imposes this rule for students who are teaching one course, assisting in two courses, or doing other service of approximately 20 hours/week. Because the state underwrites a substantial portion of all UNC students’ expenses, it expects UNC to encourage students to take full course loads and complete degrees in a timely manner.)

If you have completed your coursework and have only dissertation hours remaining in your program, you may take fewer than 9 hours and still be considered a full-time student (rules for student loans differ).

13. Will the department cover my tuition if I enroll for hours after the university’s add period?

No. The University gets appropriations from the legislature based on the number of student hours that are registered on the last day to add courses. Because the university does not get funding for courses added after that date, students must absorb the additional costs. Make sure that you adhere to UNC’s deadlines, even if you are taking courses at other universities in the area.

14. Can I get tuition remission or in-state tuition awards during summer sessions?

No. You must pay your own tuition and fees during summer sessions.

15. How are teaching assignments made?

Each semester, the Assistant Chair of the department circulates a form, soliciting student teaching assignment interests. This form must be completed in consultation with your adviser, who must approve your selections. Assignments are made with these considerations in mind:

1. Teaching assignments are guided by a number of criteria: departmental needs, faculty evaluation of teaching experience, past courses taught, overall professional development, and progress toward the degree. Your preferences are given strong, but not overriding, consideration.

2. To qualify to teach a section of your own course, you must have completed at least 18

hours of graduate classes, assisted in the course (or its equivalent) you wish to teach, and have strong teaching evaluations from faculty whom you assisted in teaching. You must also be making progress toward the degree. If you meet these requirements, you are qualified to teach your own section of a course and may be asked to do so when sections are available.

3. Teaching assistants are not normally assigned to assist faculty with 400-level courses, with the exception of some media courses. If you would like to assist with an advanced undergraduate course, please list the course, professor, and how the course is relevant to your professional development. Also, please have the professor provide a letter explaining why your assistance is necessary and describing your responsibilities. Please note that, if you are assigned to a 400-level course, the course's enrollment may be increased.

4. The range of course offerings in relation to the needs of the undergraduate curriculum may change from term to term. Unanticipated changes in courses offered and resulting opportunities for graduate students to, for example, occasionally teach courses of their own design, may occur between the time teaching interests are first solicited and the beginning of the semester to which they apply. We will do everything to keep such changes to a minimum, but you need to remain aware that any such changes result from a variety of factors, some of which are beyond our control. At times such changes may mean a delay in the circulation of the final graduate teaching schedule until the issues resulting from such issues are resolved.

16. *How much time should I expect to devote to assisting a large class?*

The general expectation is that you will devote an average of 10 hours/week to each quarter-time assistantship (usually assisting one course). Hours will vary across the semester. For instance, T.A.s may spend more time on assisting in courses in weeks that involve grading papers or exams, and less time in others.

17. *With whom should I raise concerns about a particular teaching assignment?*

After assignments are made and before the start of the term, you may consult directly with the Assistant Chair.

During the course of a particular assignment, consult first with the teaching supervisor and then, as necessary, with the Director of Graduate Studies.

18. *Item updated and moved to admissions materials.*

19. *What are the degree requirements?*

The Ph.D. program requirements have 7 components, which are explicitly laid out in the Plan of Study:

1. Core courses (4 courses), introducing students to foundational research and professional paradigms;
2. Elective research courses (10 courses), organized by two “lines of inquiry” and including courses necessary to achieve appropriate methodological competence;
3. Optional minor/certification in an area outside of Communication Studies;
4. Language proficiency (as determined in consultation with the student’s adviser);
5. Additional elective courses, as necessary to pursue the designated research questions;
6. Professional development courses (4 credit hours);
7. Completion of requirements for candidacy and graduation (successful completion of written comprehensive exams, oral defense, and oral defense of the dissertation).

While the essential structure of the program is the same for all students, each student’s program will vary because of the differing designation of primary research questions. Based on these questions, each student will identify two lines of inquiry that must be pursued through coursework and supplemental research (possibly including fieldwork) in order to begin to answer the primary questions. The core courses and structure of the program thus provide a firm foundation for interdisciplinary communication study.

20. *How many independent studies or hours of “directed research” can I take?*

No more than 9.

21. *How do I enroll for courses at other universities?*

If you are interested in taking a course on another campus, you will need to fill out the Inter-Institutional Approval Form (http://registrar.unc.edu/files/2012/03/CCM1_042585.pdf). The form will need to be signed by your adviser, the Graduate School and then forwarded to the Registrar’s Office. For more information on Inter-Institutional Registration, please go to <http://registrar.unc.edu/registration/special-enrollments/inter-institutional-programs/>

22. *How many 500-600 level courses can I take?*

600-level courses are considered bridge courses; they are open to graduate and undergraduate students. With the approval of their committees, doctoral students may take up to 9 hours of credit below the 600-level.

23. *May I take courses below 600 or taught by advanced graduate students? (Item revised for clarity, summer 2013)*

Courses numbered below 500 (in any department) will not count toward the minimum number of hours for completion of the Communication Studies doctorate. In some cases, a student's adviser and/or committee may recommend that s/he take such a course, if taught by a faculty member, for background or remediation purposes, but it still will not count toward the minimum.

Both departmental and university policies state that graduate students may not grade other graduate students.

24. *How long will it take for me to complete the program?*

Completion of the Ph.D. program normally requires 4 years beyond the M.A.

25. *What is a "Plan of Study"?*

The Plan of Study refers both to the course of a student's overall career and a working document used to plan it. The document addresses the student's career in two parts: Coursework and Teaching Focus. The first part is intended to help students record and imagine appropriate coursework, given primary research interests. The second part is intended to help students correlate research with teaching interests anticipating postdoctoral fellowships and/or university teaching positions.

The Plan of Study is developed around primary research questions, with the expectation that these questions—and plans for related coursework and research—will evolve. You prepare the Plan of Study in consultation with your adviser. The planning document should be reviewed and revised for annual submission to the Director of Graduate Studies.

The Plan of Study has 7 components:

1. Core courses providing introductions to foundational research and professional paradigms;

2. Research courses defined by your overall, evolving research question(s), divided into two group groups or “lines of inquiry,” including 1 course min. defining your area of Methodological Competence;
3. Minor/certifications (*optional*);
4. Achievement of language proficiency (*determined in consultation with your adviser*);
5. Additional courses;
6. Participation in research and professional development opportunities, including two required courses, 702, “Teaching in Communication Studies” and 907: “Research Practicum in Communication Studies” a.k.a. “Buff and Polish,” as well as departmental and cross-university colloquia, research groups, and workshops; independent performances, media productions; and regional, national, international conferences/conventions;
7. Completion of a doctoral dissertation, under direction of a doctoral adviser.

Note: In general, of course, the majority of your courses should come from the program conferring your degree (copied from Item #27 for clarification, summer 2013) .

26. Can I petition to change any of the requirements of the degree program, for special circumstances? (Item revised for clarity, fall 2012)

In rare and well justified cases, the Graduate Studies Committee may approve a petition for a change in degree program requirements. If a student wishes to submit such a request, s/he should write a petition, addressed to the Director of Graduate Studies, that specifies exactly what the requested change is and makes the case for why it should be approved. The petition should be accompanied by a letter of support from the student’s adviser. The petition must be submitted and approved *prior to* the student acting on the requested change. All petitions will be considered by the Graduate Studies Committee.

27. Can I get transfer credit? (Item revised for clarity, spring 2013)

You may transfer credit from graduate-level coursework not taken to fulfill requirements of another degree. (In other words, you may not “double dip” or count the same credits towards two degrees.) Transfer requests will be reviewed on a course by course basis.

To petition for transfer credit, follow the process for petitioning outlined in #26 above, and include with your petition the syllabus from each relevant course you wish to transfer.

Only courses in which a grade of “P” or better (or its equivalent) may be transferred. If approved, courses for which you receive transfer credit will be considered part of your coursework for the degree. You may be expected to defend material from these courses as part of the comprehensive exam process. Authority for final approval of transfer credit rests with the Graduate School.

For more information, please see the Graduate School Handbook, <http://handbook.unc.edu>. The Graduate School does not limit the number of hours that can be transferred into a doctoral program to meet course requirements. In general, of course, the majority of your courses should come from the program conferring your degree.

28. *What if I want to pursue a minor?*

You are encouraged to pursue one or more independent or established minors/graduate certificate programs. Typically a minor consists of 15 credit hours in courses listed (or, if cross-listed, originating) in academic units other than Communication Studies.

Coursework for a minor should be developed in consultation with and approved first by either your adviser in Communication Studies or a faculty adviser in the program or department offering the minor/certificate program (e.g., Curriculum in Women's Studies, University Program in Cultural Studies) and then by the DoGS, per submission of the Plan of Study form.

Unless otherwise stipulated by the program overseeing the minor or certification, courses taken for minor credit may be cross-listed with those identified with First and Second Lines of Inquiry. Note that completing a minor or certificate program may increase your total numbers of credit hours.

29. *How are graduate courses graded?*

Graduate coursework is evaluated on a scale of H (high pass), P (pass), L (low pass), and F (failing). Generally students should expect to receive a P for excellent work. The grade of H is reserved for truly exceptional work. The grade of L is awarded to work that barely meets minimal expectations.

30. *What are the norms and expectations for seminar papers?*

All graduate seminars must include a significant written component. The aims of this requirement are to give students plenty of opportunities to engage with course content in original and productive ways, to develop research skills and interests, and to prepare for the discipline and practice of research presentation and publication. Research papers may be significant steps in developing an overall research agenda. Essay assignments may vary but typically require students:

- to investigate a particular area of interest per those stipulated on the course syllabus or by the course instructor(s);
- to integrate assigned and relevant, supplemental readings in thorough discussion of related topics;

- to develop a focused research question, explication and justification, and basic methodology;
- to prepare a clear, complete, and compelling argument.

Any paper handed in should reflect the student's best thoughts and best writing. It is not appropriate to submit early drafts, unless invited or approved by the instructor. Papers of all types should be drafted and revised, proofed and revised, until the student is satisfied that this is the best work that he/she can produce for this assignment. All work should be fully, appropriately documented, following APA, MLA, or Chicago Style handbooks.

Students are encouraged to pursue integration of course topics and research interests across the span of their graduate careers. However, students may not submit the same paper for two classes except by prior arrangement with the instructors, in which case the student and instructors should develop a common, substantially extended or otherwise modified assignment. To the limited extent that this might occur, the two courses would presumably already, significantly overlap.

31. *What if I get a low pass or failing grade in a course?*

You must complete 700 with a minimum grade of P in order to continue registering for classes.

You must complete all coursework with an average of "P" or better. If you receive one "F," or nine credit hours of "L," you become academically ineligible to continue in the doctoral program.

32. *What if I need to take an Incomplete in a course?*

Your course instructor is not obligated to give you an "IN" or grade of "Incomplete." Should you feel an Incomplete is necessary or warranted, you should request an "IN" from your instructor in person, simultaneously making arrangements for completion.

You have approximately one year from the time the IN is assigned to have it changed into a permanent grade. If you exceed that deadline, the IN will default to an F.

The deadlines are posted on the Registrar's calendar (<http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-calendar/>).

To change the grade, you need to fulfill the requirements for the class and submit a Grade Change form. You may obtain the Grade Change Form from the Graduate Student Service Manager. Complete the first portion; ask your instructor to complete the rest, and return to the Graduate Student Service Manager. She/he will then submit the form to the Registrar. The Registrar will change the IN into a permanent grade on the student's transcript.

For related questions, see the Graduate School handbook (<http://handbook.unc.edu/>).

33. *Do I need to learn a language?*

The department strongly encourages you to acquire speaking and/or reading proficiency in one non-English language. Appropriate acquisition of language proficiency should be determined in consultation with your adviser.

34. *What are the areas of teaching emphasis in the department?*

Graduate and faculty teaching in the department tend to focus on these overlapping areas:

Courses in *Communication and Cultural Studies* focus on the relationships between cultural practices or discourses and the broader social contexts of power within which they are produced, circulated and consumed and that they help to construct. By taking discourse as productive of social reality and power, and thus contextually bound, cultural studies is concerned with finding ways to better describe social contexts—including institutions, organizations and practices of social power and everyday lives--and the ways that they are shaped by political discourses. Whether based on models of text and ideology, communication, ritual, identity, hegemony, globalization, institutional discourse or everyday life, cultural studies is a contextual and interdisciplinary practice open to a wide variety of methods, theories and objects of study.

Courses in *Interpersonal and Organizational Communication* focus on how symbolic interactions create, sustain, and alter personal, social, and professional relationships. Interpersonal communication scholarship includes, among other things, the study of how communication reflects and creates personal and social relationships and how communication is used to obtain personal goals. Organizational communication scholarship includes the study of how communicative practices define and sustain corporate, nonprofit, and community contexts.

Courses in *Media Studies* focus on the histories, processes, and consequences of the systems of film, television, sound (including radio and music), new media and communication technologies, and popular culture. They examine a broad range of issues, including questions of aesthetics and pleasure, interpretation, representation and ideology, identity and subjectivity, production and reception, power, politics and ethic, and time and space. The Media Studies curriculum reflects faculty interests in international, national, and community media systems, the influences and uses of those media, and their relations to broader social and cultural contexts. The department also offers undergraduates an emphasis in Media Production.

Courses in *Performance Studies* focus on performance as it occurs in social, political, everyday, and cultural life. They address theoretical and practical issues in the embodiment of literary, personal, vernacular texts; rites, festivals, spectacles, and

carnivals; gendered, raced, classed, and ethnic identities; and traditional, avant-garde and alternative theater events. Drawing on and contributing to interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research, performance studies courses engage the power and pleasure of performance to invite change, to enrich subjectivity, and to heighten awareness of the nature of complex political and cultural scripts and the possibilities for representation in action to intervene on constructed social realities.

Courses in *Rhetorical Studies* attend to the power of words, discourses, symbols and elements of material culture in public life. Rhetorical Studies focuses both on the persuasive strategies of symbols and discourses in order to understand better how such strategies succeed or fail, and on the effects of rhetorical practices in generating identities, political commitments, and modes of public life. Through the use of an extensive range of critical and interpretive methods, scholarship in rhetoric focuses on the ways texts come to have meaning for and effects on an audience, whether the text is a speech, printed publication, television program, film, or public ritual. Rhetorical theory aims ultimately to enable voices to be heard and citizens to be empowered to construct identities and interests that are meaningful for them and the larger society.

35. *Item updated and moved to professional development section of the website.*

36. *How do I get an adviser?*

The Director of Graduate Studies will assign you an interim adviser at the start of your graduate program. The interim adviser will help you select first-year courses, provide general support and ongoing orientation to the graduate program, and advise you in the initial preparation of your Plan of Study.

Interim advisers may be changed, if desired, with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

You should anticipate inviting one faculty member to serve as your primary adviser and Chair of your doctoral committee by the end of your first year.

37. *What does my adviser do? (revised spring 2013, because attached document has been eliminated)*

Your adviser is your primary point person in the department.

Your doctoral adviser helps you to develop your Plan of Study. He/she provides reasonable support for and monitors your overall progress. Your adviser is expected to report significant lapses in progress to the Director of Graduate Studies and, under these circumstances, to confer appropriately with you.

Your adviser is also the Chair of your doctoral committee. She/he works with you to develop an appropriate doctoral committee; oversees development, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive exams; and directs completion of the dissertation proposal and dissertation.

As Chair of the doctoral committee, she/he is responsible for :

a) organizing a meeting of committee members to review comprehensive exam reading lists and to prepare exam questions;

b) submitting final exam questions to the Graduate Student Service Manager for confidential distribution to the student;

c) leading evaluation of exams, proposal, and dissertation with committee members and in formal defense meetings (including advising committee members of department procedures);

d) reporting the outcomes of the evaluation of written exams (pass, retake one or more questions, fail), oral defense of comprehensive exams (pass, revision, fail), and oral defense of the dissertation (pass, pass with expected revisions and possible additional review, fail) by filling out and submitting Part II “Report of Approved Dissertation Project” (<http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdcomm.pdf>) to the Graduate Student Service Manager, who in turn forwards the form to the Graduate School.

38. *If I am an M.A./Ph.D. student, what is the process for completing my M.A.?*

All M.A./Ph.D. students must successfully complete the 3-part, third-term M.A. exam in order to continue in doctoral studies. While the student completes one portion of the M.A. exam in consultation with a faculty adviser, the M.A. does not involve composition of a separate committee. The exam is structured to include as many faculty as possible, to honor students’ accomplishments and to ensure that students are prepared to pursue doctoral research.

The exam is offered in three parts:

1. Seminar paper

Each student will submit a finished writing sample (which may or may not be performance or media-production centered, depending on the student’s coursework and accomplishments). This paper is generally assumed to have been completed as part of a course taken in the graduate program at UNC, approved by the instructor of that course. The paper should generally be 12-20 pp. in length and may anticipate conference presentation and/or submission for publication.

Rationale: The paper is meant to allow students to take advantage of courses completed during their first year and to encourage students to develop papers they are comfortable sharing with faculty colleagues.

Due: With submission of the research proposal in mid-November, exact date TBD.

Evaluation: Taking into account the instructor's final grade of H, P, L, or F on the paper completed for class, the GSC will review all papers for final approval (each member of the GSC will read 2-3 sets of 1. seminar papers and 2. research proposals).

2. Preliminary research proposal

Each student will develop a short research proposal (6-8 pp.) in consultation with a supervisory faculty member who has agreed to serve in this capacity and with whom the student will enroll in Comm 992 "Non-Thesis Option" in the 3rd semester of coursework. Each student should make arrangements for supervision of Comm 992 before the end of the second term. In consultation with his/her supervising faculty member, the students may wish to begin development of the research proposal during the intervening summer months.

The proposal should:

- Develop a research question.
- Explicate related epistemological and methodological issues.
- Define the value and potential contribution of such a project.

Note that, while the student may wish to refer to related studies, this proposal does not require a full literature review or explanation of method. It is intended to be a preparatory exercise, anticipating development of a dissertation proposal.

Rationale: Through intensive mentoring, M.A. students will practice the essential, preliminary components of thesis/dissertation research.

Due: With submission of the seminar paper in mid-November, exact date TBD.

Evaluation: Taking into account the supervising faculty member's approval of the proposal, the GSC will review the proposal for final approval (each member of the GSC will read 2-3 sets of 1. seminar papers and 2. research proposals).

Note: the supervising faculty member for Comm 992 may or may not be the student's interim adviser and/or the instructor of the course from which the student is submitting the seminar paper.

3. Written Exam

Students will take a 4-hour "sit-down"/in-house exam. He or she will be responsible for selecting and responding to 2 out of the 5 questions. Questions will be based on prior coursework. While members of the Graduate Studies Committee will ask faculty for input on questions (including syllabi from their respective courses), the GSC will be responsible for developing questions that cross particular courses and require students to synthesize preliminary coursework.

A single exam date will be set for the entire M.A. cohort. Students will receive questions one week in advance of the scheduled exam. Students may enjoy a full complement of collaborative study methods but must develop independent exams in accordance with the Honor Code.

At the end of the 4-hour period, students should digitally submit the written exam to the Graduate Student Service manager, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the supervising instructor for Comm 992.

Rationale: The written exam will, as generously as possible, help students begin to integrate coursework and research interests. It will also determine basic competency to continue advanced study. The common exam is designed to be both efficient and flexible, and to provide a core experience for the M.A. cohort.

Evaluation: The GSC will invite 2 faculty members to be readers for each of the five questions. Faculty reading responses to those questions will evaluate them on a P/F basis, P constituting endorsement of successful completion of written exam requirements for the M.A. and continuation in the doctoral program.

In general, to the extent that concerns emerge regarding any one student, the M.A. adviser and any other relevant faculty will be engaged in review of the M.A. exam portfolio. As necessary, the DoGS, in consultation with the chair of the Department, will be responsible for final adjudication.

39. *Can I choose to discontinue doctoral studies and still get an M.A.? (revised spring 2013 for clarity)*

Yes. A minimum of 30 credit hours and successful completion of the third-term M.A. exam qualify a student for conferral of the M.A. degree.

40. *Who can or should be on a doctoral committee? (Item revised for clarity, fall 2012)*

A committee of at least five members is required. A majority of the members, including the adviser, of a doctoral committee (and a majority of the people passing the student on an examination or approving a doctoral dissertation) must be regular members of the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate Faculty from Communication Studies. “Regular” member means a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, with full appointment or joint appointment in Communication Studies. It does not include adjunct faculty members of the department. The committee should include at least one member who is not a regular member of a Communication Studies faculty. The student is responsible for inviting faculty to join his/her committee. The composition of the committee should reflect the student’s intellectual commitments. Ordinarily, the doctoral committee remains the same from approval of the comprehensive exam¹ and dissertation prospectus through

completion of the dissertation.

If the student has a minor field of study, at least one member of the committee must represent the minor field. In the case of a joint minor involving two academic programs, one faculty representative on the committee for both minors is sufficient, provided that both minor programs agree that the faculty member can adequately represent each minor course of study.

The student is expected to consult with members of the dissertation committee at frequent intervals throughout the progress of his or her research.

Once your doctoral committee has been confirmed, notify the Graduate Student Service Manager so that he/she can prepare the Doctoral Committee Composition and Report of Approved Dissertation Project form (<http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdcomm.pdf>). This form should be submitted to the Graduate School before or filed concurrently with any action reflecting prospectus approval.

41. *What does my committee do?*

Your committee members prepare and evaluate your comprehensive exams. They support the development of and evaluate your dissertation proposal and dissertation.

Because the comprehensive exams are so closely linked to the foundations of your dissertation research, the department strongly recommends inclusion of all committee members in the preparation and implementation of the comprehensive exams. Similarly, the full committee is encouraged to participate in the exams and/or proposal defense.

The exams *may* be prepared and evaluated by a minimum of 3 faculty members, however. The oral defense of the dissertation *must* be attended by a minimum of 5 committee members.

More specifically, committee members:

1. review proposed reading lists in informal consultation with you (upon your initiative) prior to formal review with the committee as a whole;
2. prepare comprehensive exam questions with other committee members;
3. evaluate written exams (committee members should notify the chair of the committee of any serious concerns prior to the oral defense);
4. participate in an oral defense of the exams;
5. participate in an oral defense of the dissertation proposal (ideally, this occurs at the same meeting as the oral defense of the exams);
6. guide your research based on the proposal;
7. guide the writing of the dissertation in the manner agreed upon by the committee as a whole (based on respective areas of expertise and interest, committee members may be especially significant to development of particular chapters);

8. conduct the final oral defense of the dissertation.

42. *What steps do I take in preparation for the Ph.D. comprehensive exams?*

1. Exam dates:

In consultation with your adviser, identify appropriate exam dates. You may not take comprehensive exams until you have completed all coursework or unless you are concurrently taking final coursework, including 907: Research Practicum.

Alert the Graduate Student Service Manager to the precise dates and times of your exam schedule as soon as possible.

2. Reading lists:

In consultation with your adviser and committee members, develop 3 reading lists - 2 based on your designated lines of inquiry and 1 reflecting your relationship to the broad field of Communication Studies. You should begin preparing these lists well in advance of the semester in which the exams are to be taken. Each list should include a short preamble (1 paragraph) identifying and briefly explicating the line of inquiry as well as any guidelines or criteria that may help your committee understand your approach to selection.

Note that the third exam is not a review of the field of communication or of any of its subdisciplinary parts per se. Rather it requires the student to locate his/her study *in relation to* the field. See previous exams (held in the office of the Graduate Student Service Manager) for examples. The reading list should be prepared accordingly.

In the course of preparing your reading lists, be sure that all committee members understand the basic nature of your intended study. Distributing a one-page working summary is strongly recommended.

Reading lists are neither dissertation bibliographies nor comprehensive lists of readings related to a student's research interests but a selection of approximately 20-30 works (books and/or key articles) essential to respective lines of inquiry.

3. Pre-exam schedule:

3 months in advance of the anticipated exam dates, submit the reading lists and a 2-3 pp. statement of dissertation research interests to your adviser for committee review. As indicated above, each list should be headed by a short paragraph summarizing the student's understanding of the designated line of inquiry and consequent criteria for selection.

2 months prior to the anticipated exam dates, your committee will meet to discuss and revise the reading lists and to develop the written examination. You are not present at this meeting. During the meeting, your adviser will seek committee members' perceptions of your academic needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Collaboratively, the committee will review and amend the reading lists and develop 1 question for each of the three parts of the written exam. *Note to faculty: in order to develop the highest level of collaboration and review across disciplinary interests, this meeting should be held in person.*

Plan to meet with your adviser shortly after this meeting to discuss appropriate ways of studying for the exam and completing the dissertation proposal in a timely fashion.

43. *What is the format of the comprehensive exams?*

The written comprehensive examination consists of three consecutive (not simultaneous) parts.

Parts 1 and 2 are take-home essay exams. Questions for these exams require integration and development of the first and second lines of inquiry designated on your Plan of Study represented by your first and second reading lists. You have 1 week to complete each essay for each of the first two parts. Each essay should be fully developed, coherent, clear, and appropriately documented.

Part 3 is what is conventionally referred to as a 4-hour "sit-down" exam. It is taken without notes, books, or other materials, and under the Honor Code. Students should locate a relatively private space in Bingham for this portion of the exam (the adviser may be able to make his/her office available). This part of the exam assesses the student's ability to locate his or her work and its assumptions in relation to the field of Communication Studies.

Questions are given to you at the start of each exam period. They are not provided in advance.

Responses to each of the week-long exams are expected to be the equivalent of an approximately 20 page paper in substance and style. They should reflect careful development and editing. The length of the 3rd exam will obviously be limited by the time allowed and will vary by the question. Students are on their honor not to use notes, books, or other materials in development of the 3rd exam.

Each student should make arrangements to receive questions from his/her adviser or the GSSM at the start of each of the three exam periods. Some advisers may wish to receive an email confirmation of start and end times.

44. *How do I schedule the exams?*

Consult with your adviser about an appropriate timeframe. Confirm specific dates with the Graduate Student Service Manager.

45. *Who schedules the exam defense meeting—and when does it happen?*

You schedule the defense meeting (anticipate 2 hours), in consultation with your adviser and committee members. The defense meeting must occur within 4 weeks of the completion of the comprehensive exams (allowing for weekends and academic calendar breaks). In general, all defense meetings should be scheduled within the academic year or by the end of the Spring exam period. Note that faculty are neither required nor expected to be available to meet after the end of the Spring term or before the beginning of the Fall term.

In order to ensure timely evaluation, schedule your defense meeting well in advance of taking, or at the time of scheduling, the exams.

Please notify the Graduate Student Service Manager immediately of the confirmed date and time of the defense meeting. Contact him/her as well for assistance with room reservations.

Ideally, students will defend their comprehensive exams and dissertation proposals in a single meeting. Doing so tends to focus development of the exams and to facilitate progress toward completion of the dissertation. In consultation with their advisers, students may choose to take and defend comprehensive exams separately from submission and defense of the dissertation proposal. If you plan to defend your exams and proposal in a single meeting, you must submit the final proposal to the committee 10 days-2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting.

46. *What happens during a comprehensive exam/dissertation proposal defense meeting?*

As noted above, a student may determine in consultation with his/her adviser that it is appropriate to separate the comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal defense meetings. For those students defending their exams and proposal in a single meeting, the basic protocol is as follows:

The student and committee gather at the appointed time and place, anticipating 2 hours total. The dissertation adviser asks the student to step out briefly to give the faculty a chance to share their perspectives on the exams and proposal, and to discuss directions for the meeting. The student returns and faculty pursue questions about the exams (the chair may choose to invite faculty from outside the department to begin the round of inquiry). About 40 minutes later (more or less depending on discussion) the adviser will signal transition into discussion of the proposal--at which time the student will have a

chance to make 4-5 minutes of comments. These comments should not summarize the proposal per se but indicate questions, reflections, and points of concern. This is the student's opportunity to set the tone and direction of the meeting. The committee will respond with questions and discussion, knowing that this is a key moment in the collective development of the project. The adviser will bring discussion to a close with about 20 minutes remaining; he/she will ask the student to step out again while the committee reviews the defense. The student will then ritually return to learn results and recommendations.

47. *How are the exams evaluated?*

All members of the doctoral committee evaluate all parts of the exam. Committee members need not assign grades to the exams but should alert the Chair of the committee about serious concerns in advance of the scheduled defense meeting.

Within 1 month of the completion of the written comprehensive exams, the committee meets with the student to conduct an oral examination that uses the written exams as a point of departure but assumes that the student has command of the full reading lists.

At the conclusion of the defense meeting, the committee will determine by consensus whether the student passes or fails each part of the written exam and whether the student passes the oral exam.

The committee may ask you to retake one part of the written exam. In that case, the committee must develop the new question(s) within 2 weeks of the defense meeting. The student must submit answers within one week of receiving the question(s). A student who does not pass 2 or 3 parts of the exam fails the written comprehensive exam. A student who fails the exam may retake it only 1 time and only after the semester in which the exams were first taken has passed.

The committee may determine that the oral exam should be continued at a future date. The student may retake the oral exam only 1 time and only after the semester in which the initial oral defense occurred has passed. It is expected that a second or continued oral exam will be at least as, if not more, rigorous than the first.

Be sure to copy the Graduate Student Service Manager on submission of all exams.

Submit hard and electronic copies of your approved proposal to the Graduate Student Service Manager immediately upon completion of the proposal defense meeting.

48. *May I see copies of other students' exams in preparation for my own?*

You may review copies of exams Parts 1 and 2. These are maintained in a file in the office of the Graduate Student Service Manager for your perusal. The file should not be removed from the office.

You are strongly cautioned, however, against basing your expectations for questions or evaluation on prior examples. Your exams will be specific to you, your plan of study, and your committee.

Be sure to copy the Graduate Student Service Manager on the submission of each part of YOUR exams.

49. *What is a dissertation proposal?*

A dissertation proposal clearly identifies and explains the primary research question you wish to pursue; the methodological concerns and commitments you will bring to the study; your justification for pursuing it; the scope and limitations of the study; and a timeline for completing the dissertation. It may include a literature review and/or chapter summaries/outline. Consult with your adviser and committee members about additional expectations.

The proposal is typically 20-25 pp. in length and must be submitted to the committee no less than 1 week prior to the scheduled defense meeting.

50. *May I see copies of other students' proposals?*

Yes. Copies of approved proposals are maintained in a file in the office of the Graduate Student Service Manager for your perusal. The file should not be removed from the office.

Note, however, that expectations for your proposal will be specific to you, your dissertation research, and your committee.

Be sure to submit electronic and hard copy of YOUR approved proposal to the Graduate Student Service Manager immediately upon completion of the proposal meeting.

51. *How is the proposal evaluated?*

The proposal is evaluated in a defense meeting, ordinarily held in conjunction with the oral defense of the written exams. Discussion of the proposal will include recommendations for developing the dissertation. At the conclusion of the meeting, the

members of your committee will approve the proposal, require minor or major revisions to the proposal, or fail the proposal.

52. Do I need to get university approval for my dissertation study?

The university must review and approve all studies involving human subjects before research begins. The aim of the Institutional Review Board is to ensure ethical conduct among research scholars. Students in Communication Studies should submit applications for IRB approval to the Social and Behavioral Review Board. Students typically seek IRB approval after the dissertation proposal is approved but must gain approval before conducting any preliminary research or applying for off-campus research grants. See the “Guide to IRB Process” on the Office of Human Research Ethics website (<http://research.unc.edu/Offices/human-research-ethics/index.htm>).

53. *When do I become a Ph.D. candidate?*

Once you have successfully completed the written exams, oral defense of the written exams, and oral defense of the proposal. At this time, you are officially “A.B.D.” (All But Dissertation)!

Note that many grants and fellowships require that you achieve candidacy status before application and/or award.

54. *What IS a dissertation?*

The dissertation consists of a fully documented written analysis of a problem that extends the knowledge and/or the theoretical framework of the field, and reflects your competence to conduct independent research using appropriate methodologies.

55. *How many dissertation hours do I take? (revised for clarification, spring 2013)*

You are required to complete a minimum of 6 hours of dissertation credit after being admitted to candidacy. (There is no maximum.) These hours are in addition to required minimum of 46 hours of coursework (61 hours for a student entering with a baccalaureate degree). Please be aware that you need to be registered (and you will need to pay) for the three hours of dissertation in the semester you defend your dissertation. The University will also charge you student fees even if you are not using any of the University’s services, facilities, etc. If you are a non-NC resident, your cost for those three credit hours will be almost three times higher than the price for the same hours paid by NC Residents.

56. *How long do I have to complete the dissertation?*

As specified by the Graduate School, all work for the doctoral degree, including transfer work, must be completed within eight years from the date of initial registration in the doctoral program.

57. *What if I need an extension?*

When extenuating circumstances warrant, a student in good academic standing may request one extension of the degree time limit for a definite, stated period of time (up to one year). You must first complete the [Request for Extension of Time Form](#) which requires a statement of support from your adviser and approval from the DoGS. The DoGS will then forward the petition for extension to the Graduate School. Ordinarily, an extension of the degree time limit may not be extended.

58. *Who schedules the dissertation defense meeting—and when does it happen?*

You schedule your final defense meeting once you and your adviser agree that the dissertation is complete and defensible.

Please notify the Graduate Student Service Manager immediately of the confirmed date and time of the defense meeting. Contact him/her as well for assistance with room reservations.

As you anticipate completion you may wish to consider scheduling the defense meeting at least 2 weeks prior to the Graduate School's deadline for dissertation submission for December or May graduation, allowing sufficient time for revisions per the committee's recommendations and formal review by Graduate School staff. Please note that faculty are neither obliged nor expected to be available during the summer, except to the extent that they are involved in Summer School.

You must submit the final dissertation manuscript, including complete documentation, full bibliography, title p., table of contents, and list of illustrations (as applicable), to your committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting.

59. *How is the dissertation evaluated?*

The dissertation is evaluated in a rigorous discussion with committee members. At least 5 committee members must be present (possibly to include one by phone or video) at the defense meeting. Committee members may provide notes or written commentary but are not obliged to do so.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee will determine whether the dissertation passes or fails, and/or what revisions are required before submission to the Graduate

School.

Your Chair fills out and submits the Doctoral Exam Report Form (<http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdexam.pdf>) to the Graduate Student Service Manager. Once the final changes to the dissertation are made and the dissertation is ready to be submitted online, the Chair signs his/her final approval on the same form and submits the form to the Graduate Student Service Manager, who in turn forwards the completed form to the Graduate School.

Follow the Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Guide for dissertation submission (<http://gradschool.unc.edu/etdguide/>).

60. *Is my progress in the program monitored? (revised for accuracy, spring 2013)*

Yes. You are expected to revise and resubmit your plan of study annually. The Graduate Student Service Manager maintains a file of all forms recognizing “benchmark” progress: completion of comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal defense, and dissertation defense, as well as students’ comments on their annual progress per the review protocol described below.

Annual review protocol

We ask all students to meet with their advisers annually to review completion of goals for the year and to assess challenges, new directions, and objectives for the following year. This is a kind of personal summit intended to give you and your adviser a chance to get a grip on “the big picture”: where have you been, where are you going? As such, this is a critical part of developing an active research trajectory that begins with your enrollment in graduate school and carries you through a successful career.

By the end of classes each spring semester:

All students should submit the revised plan of study (with adviser approval) to the GSSM;

All students should also submit the annual survey to the GSSM, along with his/her curriculum vitae and “blurb” for the website.

61. *Can you give me a picture of progress towards completion of the Ph.D.?*

Semester 1

Interim adviser assigned

Course work initiated, including required courses: 700, 702



Semester 2

Course work continued, including core course
Chair of doctoral committee selected
Plan of Study submitted to the DoGS
(reviewed, revised, and resubmitted every second semester thereafter)



Semester 3

Preliminary doctoral Committee formed
Course work continued, including core course



Semester 4

Coursework completed, including core course and COMM 907: Research Practicum



Semester 5

Comprehensive examinations completed
Dissertation proposal approved



Semester 6

Work on dissertation



Semester 7

Work on dissertation continues
Apply for graduation



Semester 8

Dissertation completed
Final oral defense of dissertation
Acceptance of dissertation by Graduate School
Degree conferred

62. *Item updated and moved to professional development section of the website.*

63. *What UNC policies should I be aware of?*

See the Graduate School's Graduate Student Handbook (<http://handbook.unc.edu/>) and all notices sent regularly by administrative offices. In particular, see:

Ferpa Policy <http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/policies-procedures/student-rights/student-privacy-rights/upm-21-access-to-student-records/>

Prohibited Harassment <http://www.unc.edu/depts/eoada/PDF/HarassmentPolicy.pdf>

The Honor System http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/stu_aff.html#Honor

¹ This wording (particularly “comprehensive exam”) is predicated upon an upcoming proposal having to do with exam policy in the Department. One of the minor recommendations will be that the exam currently called the “qualifying exam” be changed to “comprehensive exam” to align with the Graduate School’s language and thus to avoid confusion. If that wording change is not approved by the Department, then the language can be changed back to the current lingo.