

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

**Graduate Handbook of Policies and
Procedures**

For students entering 2018-19 and later

Note to Prospective Students: This is a copy of the Graduate Handbook for those students who entered the program in 2018-19. There may be some changes to the policies and procedures for those entering the program in future years. Any such changes will be entered into this document as they are approved.

Introduction

This handbook contains the policies that structure graduate study in the Department of Communication 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 advisor 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.

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 and/or to other sections of the website. 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.

Any handbook revisions will be reflected *only* in the handbook for newly admitted students. Please feel free to consult with the DoGS for answers to questions about these clarifications and revisions.

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¹ The term “comprehensive exam” has replaced “qualifying exam” throughout this document (spring 2013) to avoid confusion with the terminology of the Graduate School.

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1. *For how many hours do I need to enroll in order to get a tuition waiver and assistantship?*

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 make take fewer than 9 hours and still be considered a full-time student (rules for student loans differ).

2. *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.

3. *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.

4. *How are teaching assignments made?*

Each semester, the Director of Graduate Studies circulates a form soliciting student teaching assignment interests. This form must be completed in consultation with your advisor, 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, academic standing, 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 Director of Graduate Studies.

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

7. 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;
4. Language proficiency (as determined in consultation with the student’s advisor);
5. Additional elective courses, as necessary to pursue the designated research questions;
6. Professional development training (6 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.

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

No more than 9.

9. 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](#). The form will need to be signed by your advisor, the Graduate School and then forwarded to the Registrar’s Office. For more information on Inter-Institutional Registration, please go to <http://advising.unc.edu/policies-and-procedures/interinstitutional-registration/>.

10. *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 advisors, doctoral students may take up to 9 hours of credit below the 600-level.

11. *May I take courses below 600 or those taught by advanced graduate students?*

Courses numbered below 500 (in any department) will not count toward the minimum number of hours for completion of the Communication doctorate. In some cases, a student's advisor 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. If such courses are offered at another university and are geared primarily toward graduate students, an exception can be made provided that both the student's advisor and the DGS grant permission in advance.

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

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

You should be able to complete the Ph.D. program within 5 years. See the "milestone" tables at the end of this handbook for details.

13. *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 advisor. 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 advisor*);
5. Additional courses;
6. Participation in research and professional development opportunities, including two required courses, 702, “Teaching in Communication Studies” and 907: “Practicum in Professional Development,” 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 advisor.

Note: In general, of course, the majority of your courses should come from the program conferring your degree.

14. Can I petition to change any of the requirements of the degree program, for special circumstances?

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 advisor. 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.

15. Can I get transfer credit?

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 #14 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](#). 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.

16. 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.

Coursework for a minor should be developed in consultation with and approved first by either your advisor in Communication or a faculty advisor 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.

17. 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.

18. 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; and
- 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.

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

The student must complete *each* of the required courses with a grade of P or higher. If a student receives a grade of L or F in a required course, s/he may repeat the course once. If the grade for the retake is still lower than a P, the department's obligation to provide further funding for the student to continue in the program will end.

Students must complete all coursework with an average of P or higher. If a student receives one F or nine credit hours of L, s/he is automatically ineligible to continue in the doctoral program.

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

Taking an "IN" or grade of "Incomplete" is highly discouraged. Only under *exceptional circumstances* will such a grade be permitted, but your course instructor is under no obligation to assign such a grade. Should you feel an Incomplete is necessary or warranted, you should request an "IN" from your instructor in person, simultaneously making arrangements for completion.

Per Department policy, if an IN is given, your instructor can set a deadline of up to, but not exceeding, one semester (from the date the IN grade was assigned) for you to complete unfinished work and have the grade changed. If you exceed that deadline, the course instructor will change the IN grade to an F. If documented exceptional circumstances persist, the student may appeal the deadline with the Director of Graduate Studies, but the DGS is under no obligation to allow an extension. (Graduate School

policy stipulates that IN grades will default to an F after one year, so if the DGS grants an extension, the IN grade cannot exceed one year total.)

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](#).

21. *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 advisor.

22. *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.

23. *How do I get an advisor?*

The Director of Graduate Studies will assign you a first-year advisor at the start of your graduate program. The first-year advisor 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.

First-year advisors 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 advisor and Chair of your doctoral committee by the beginning of your first year. You must do so if you entered the program with a Baccalaureate degree (e.g., B.A.) but no master's degree, so that you may prepare for the Qualifying Exam.

24. *What does my advisor do?*

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

Your advisor 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](#)” to the Graduate Student Service Manager, who in turn forwards the form to the Graduate School.

Your advisor is your primary point person in the department. Ideally, he/she will provide not only effective advice and supervision but mentorship.

25. If I was admitted to the doctoral program with a baccalaureate degree (e.g., B.A.), what is the process for completing my M.A. along the way? Policy revision approved by the Graduate School, September 2013.

All students admitted to the program with a baccalaureate degree (e.g., BA) but no masters degree (e.g., MA) must successfully complete the 3-part, third-term Qualifying Examination in order to continue in doctoral studies. The Qualifying Exam consists of: (1) a two-part written exam, (2) a substantial research paper revision, and (3) an oral defense of the written exam and the paper.

A. Qualifying Exam Committee and Enrollment

1. The student should identify an advisor and invite him/her to serve in that capacity, before the end of the second semester of coursework. The student should notify the Graduate Student Services Manager who the advisor is.
2. The second member of the committee will be appointed by the Graduate Studies Committee in consultation with the student and his/her advisor. The objectives are to ensure representation of diverse intellectual commitments and to involve as many faculty members as possible across student committees.
3. The third member of the committee will be a member of the Graduate Studies Committee. The objective is to ensure that there is equivalence across all students' exams.
4. The full committee should be constituted by the end of the second semester of coursework. All members of the committee will be regular graduate faculty members in the Department of Communication (tenured or tenure-track, full appointment or joint appointment in Communication). The student should provide the committee copies of all the course syllabi from his/her first two semesters of coursework, to facilitate composition of the exam.
5. Any member of the qualifying exam committee may be invited by the student to continue as a committee member for the student's further work in the doctoral program, but there is no requirement for any or all to continue.

B. Composition/Assessment of the PhD Qualifying Exam:

1. Two-Part Written Exam. Each student's written portion of the Qualifying Exam, taken within a single week near the beginning of the third semester (see C. 1 below), will consist of two three-hour questions. Questions will not be made available to students in advance. The questions will draw upon the substance of the courses the student has taken and will commit him/her to consider connections among the contents, by comparison/ contrast, synthesis, application, analysis, drawing of implications, assessment, etc. The student may use notes and/or source materials during each portion of the exam.

The written exam will be evaluated in terms of the student's grasp of and facility with the substance of the questions (e.g., intellectual issues or controversies, relationships among theoretical concepts, etc.) and of the quality of his/her arguments and writing.

- a. The first three-hour portion of the exam will be a common question posed of all students taking the exam (or set of common questions from which each student may choose), composed by the GSC or its representatives on the students' committees. It will focus upon concepts from core courses and/or other courses in common taken by the students taking the exam at the same time.

b. The second three-hour portion of the exam will be a question composed by the individual student's full committee, reflecting the student's coursework and his/her interests.

c. At the end of each three-hour period, the student should submit digitally the written exam to his/her advisor, the other two members of his/her committee, and the Graduate Student Services Manager.

2. Research Paper Revision. The student should submit to his/her committee a research-based paper revised substantially from one of the courses taken in the first two semesters of the program, with a strong preference for a course taught by a regular member of the graduate faculty in the department. The paper should be turned in by the time of the first three-hour exam (See B. 1 above). It must be solo-authored, but the student may seek advice for revisions from his/her advisor and/or the instructor of the course in which the paper was written. The paper should be between 20 and 25 pages (exclusive of references) and will be evaluated by the student's committee in terms of the quality of: the research base, the arguments, the claim to significance, the writing, and the adherence to general norms of research paper writing.

3. Oral Defense. An oral defense will be convened within three weeks of the end of the written exams, presuming that all other portions of the Qualifying Exam have been passed (see D below). As a precondition of moving toward the oral defense, the student must have passed (with majority P grades on each component) the written exam and paper, and must have turned in to the committee an up-to-date plan of study. The defense will be an opportunity for the student's committee to pose questions of the student vis-à-vis the two written exam answers and the paper and to advise regarding the plan of study. Some questions posed may range beyond the territory of the written exams and paper, but with due consideration of the student's coursework and other educational background. This component of the exam will evaluate the student's ability to respond knowledgeably and directly to questions posed, which may range from basic knowledge questions to questions about the implications of a position, its limitations, its likely or possible applications, etc. The oral defense may not be taken until all other portions of the exam are passed (see D below).

C. Timing of the PhD Qualifying Exam:

1. The written exam will be scheduled during the first two weeks of the third semester of coursework. All students taking the exam will be scheduled for the same date and time.

2. The student's committee should grade the written exam and paper and peruse the Plan of Study within a week of receipt from the student. Each committee member should notify the advisor of his/her grades.

3. An oral defense of 1 ½ hours should be scheduled by the student in consultation with his/her committee to convene within 2-3 weeks after the end of the written exam. The oral defense will be held at that time, presuming notification by his/her advisor that the paper and written exam have been passed and that the Plan of Study has been turned in.

D. Evaluation and Outcomes of the PhD Qualifying Exam:

1. The student should enroll at the beginning of the third semester for Comm 992 (Non-Thesis Option). Depending on the advice of the student's committee, Comm 992 may be taken in addition to, or as part of, the regular nine units of coursework in the third semester. The student's advisor should be the instructor of record for Comm 992. The committee will decide, by consensus or majority, whether the student has passed the Qualifying Exam, whether s/he should be awarded the M.A., and whether it is advisable for the student to continue in his/her doctoral program.

2. The student's committee grades each exam question, the paper, and the oral defense according to the standard H-P-L-F system. A majority of the committee must assign P or higher to each component (paper, written exam, and oral defense) for the student to pass the Qualifying Exam. If, in the third semester, the student's committee passes the student on all parts of the Qualifying Exam, the advisor will assign the grade determined by the student's committee for Comm 992. And the advisor will turn in the appropriate paper work indicating that the student has passed the Qualifying Exam:

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/documents/mform1.pdf> and

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/mform2.pdf>. The advisor should also notify the student in writing (copied to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Student Services Manager) of the committee's decision that it is/is not advisable for the student to continue in the doctoral program. If the committee does not deem continuance in the Ph.D. program to be advisable based on the Qualifying Exam, the student has the right to retake the Exam.

3. If the student does not pass all parts of the Qualifying Exam in the third semester, s/he may retake any or all parts as advised by his/her committee. The student may retake the oral defense or relevant parts of the written exam near the beginning of the fourth semester (after three months have elapsed since the third-semester exam). In case a retake is required on the paper, the student may begin work on that immediately upon receiving direction from his/her advisor and should turn in the revised paper on a date during the fourth semester stipulated by the committee.

4. Because a student is allowed to retake any or all portions of the Qualifying Exam that his/her committee has determined to be not acceptable—the written exam, the research paper, and/or the oral exam—a report of the outcomes will be

made to the Graduate School only after any retakes have been evaluated by the committee. Moreover, if a retake is prescribed, the student will be assigned a grade of Incomplete in Comm 992 until the retake has been evaluated.

E. Retaking the Qualifying Exam

1. The student may retake any or all parts of the exam (as per the committee's direction) only one time. If a retake is advised, a grade of Incomplete (IN) should be assigned in Comm 992 at the end of the third semester. A retake of either or both questions from the written exam may be satisfied by answering one or two new questions or sets of questions or by a substantial rewriting of the original question(s), depending on the committee's decision and direction. A majority of the committee must assign a P or higher for a retake to be successful. A retake of the paper portion typically will require further revision of the original paper, but the committee may stipulate submission of a different paper. A majority of the committee must assign a P or higher for this retake to be successful. In rare cases, a student may be asked to repeat the oral defense. A majority of the committee must agree to a P or higher for this retake to be successful. In the case of a successful retake of any or all parts of the PhD Qualifying Exam as required by the student's committee, the committee should submit a written recommendation to the student (copied to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Student Services Manager), regarding the suitability of the student for further work toward the PhD. If the majority of the three-person committee recommends against the student's suitability, and the Graduate Studies Committee concurs in this recommendation, the department's obligation to provide further funding for the student to continue in the program will end. If a recommendation is made that the student should not continue in the program, s/he may still be awarded the MA, as determined by the committee. The student must have completed 30 units of coursework (including 24 units in the Department) in addition to the exam to qualify for the MA.

2. All retakes of any portion of the PhD Qualifying Exam must be completed by the end of the fourth week of the student's fourth semester. Retakes of any part of the written exam (see B. 1 above) will be administered during the second week of the fourth semester. If a required retake is not completed within that time frame, the student's committee will report that the student has failed to pass the written exam. If all or part of the repeated exam is taken by the fourth week of the fourth semester, but the result is unsatisfactory to the committee, the student's advisor will report that the student has failed to pass the requirement. In either circumstance, the advisor will complete the appropriate paperwork (see D.2 above) and submit a written recommendation to the Director of Graduate Studies (with copies to the student, to the Graduate Student Services Manager, and to the Chair of the Department) that it is not advisable for the student to continue in the program. The full committee should be involved in these decisions.

3. Any retake of any portion of the exam should involve all of the original committee members in the evaluation. Any exception to that must be adjudicated by the Graduate Studies Committee, upon the filing of a written petition by the student and an accompanying written endorsement by the advisor. The GSC may opt to require that the student move ahead with the same committee or may opt to appoint a replacement if one is deemed necessary. If the Graduate Studies Committee is unable to resolve a conflict about the exam, the Department Chair will be the final arbiter.

26. *If I entered the program with a master's degree, do I need to take the Qualifying Exam?*

No.

27. *Can I choose to discontinue doctoral studies and still get an M.A.?*

Yes. Should any PhD student opt to discontinue his/her program of study and to earn the MA in lieu of continuation, s/he may do so by completing 30 units of coursework (including 24 units in the Department) and passing the Qualifying Exam. Please note that the Qualifying Exam typically is administered only in the fall semester. So, if a student decides late to opt for the MA, s/he may have to petition the GSC for a special administration of the exam in his/her fourth semester or to enroll the following fall semester to take the exam. If s/he opts to discontinue, however, s/he will not be eligible beyond the fourth semester of coursework for assistantship support.

28. *Who can or should be on a doctoral committee?*

A committee of at least five members is required. A majority of the members, including the advisor, 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. "Regular" member means a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, with full appointment or joint appointment in Communication. It does not include adjunct faculty members of the department. The committee should include at least one member who is from another discipline and who is not a regular member of a Communication 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 exam 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](#). This form should be submitted to the Graduate School before or filed concurrently with any action reflecting prospectus approval.

29. *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.

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

1. Exam dates:

In consultation with your advisor, 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: Practicum in Professional Development.

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 advisor 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. 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 advisor 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 advisor 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 advisor shortly after this meeting to discuss appropriate ways of studying for the exam and completing the dissertation proposal in a timely fashion.

31. *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 advisor 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.

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. Exams should not exceed 25 pages, all inclusive. 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 advisor or the GSSM at the start of each of the three exam periods. Some advisors may wish to receive an email confirmation of start and end times.

32. *How do I schedule the exams?*

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

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

You schedule the defense meeting in consultation with your advisor and committee members. Please allot 90 minutes for each component (comps and proposal) or 180 minutes if combined. 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 advisors, 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.

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

As noted above, a student may determine in consultation with his/her advisor 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 advisor 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 advisor 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 advisor 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.

35. 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.

36. 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.

37. *What is a dissertation proposal?*

A dissertation proposal (also known as a “dissertation prospectus”) 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 advisor and committee members about additional expectations.

The proposal is expected to be 20-25 pp. in length; any increases in this expected length should be negotiated with one’s advisor. The proposal must be submitted to the committee no less than 1 week prior to the scheduled defense meeting.

38. *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.

39. *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.

40. *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 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](#).

41. *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.

42. *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.

43. *How many dissertation hours do I take?*

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 48 hours of coursework (63 hours for students 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.

44. *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.

45. *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 advisor 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.

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

You schedule your final defense meeting once you and your advisor 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.

All dissertation defenses are open and public. This means that individuals other than your committee members (e.g., other students, faculty, family members, friends) are permitted to attend the oral component of the dissertation defense. Non-committee members *will not* be permitted to ask questions or attend the deliberation or debriefing components of the defense. Once your defense date is set, the Graduate Student Service Manager will advertise the event to Department of Communication faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

47. *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](#) 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.

48. Is my progress in the program monitored?

Yes. The Graduate Student Service Manager maintains a file of all forms recognizing “benchmark” progress: completion of exams, dissertation prospectus defense, and dissertation defense, as well as outcomes of students’ annual reviews.

Annual review protocol

Annual reviews of progress will provide you with direct feedback about your areas of strength, places for improvement, and expected timelines for completing tasks. Each year, the department will conduct a formal collective review of graduate students. First, students will meet with their advisors by April 1 of each year to review their progress toward milestones (see milestone forms below). Second, in April of each year, the Graduate Student Services Manager will solicit comments from the full faculty about each student’s progress and performance based on the faculty members’ specific exposure to students (e.g., as teaching supervisors, committee members, seminar instructors). The Graduate Student Services Manager will collate responses and submit them to advisors. Third, the faculty will meet to discuss student progress and provide feedback, which will be synthesized by students’ advisors and communicated in writing to students (with a copy to the Graduate Student Service Manager) by May 1 of each year.

By the end of classes each spring semester:

All students should submit to the Graduate Student Service Manager an updated CV, an updated milestone checklist, and a revised plan of study (with advisor approval). All students should also submit the annual survey to the GSSM, along with an updated “blurb” for the website.

49. What UNC policies should I be aware of?

See the Graduate School's [Graduate Student Handbook](#) and all notices sent regularly by administrative offices. In particular, see:

- [Prohibited Harassment](#)
- [FERPA Policy](#)
- [The Honor System](#)

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

See detailed milestone tables on the following pages.

Milestones (for students entering with an M.A.)

Milestone	Deadline	Date Completed	Advisor's Signature
<i>Year 1</i>			
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
<i>Year 2</i>			
Select permanent advisor	October 31		
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
Form doctoral committee	May 1		
<i>Year 3</i>			
Complete course work (except Comm 907)	December 15		
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
Complete comprehensive exams	May 15		
Defend dissertation prospectus	May 15		
<i>Year 4</i>			
Conduct dissertation research	All year		
Research and consult with advisor about dissertation funding (e.g., internal and external fellowships)	Fall		
Complete Comm 907	December 15		N/A
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
<i>Year 5</i>			
Go on job market	Fall		
Apply for graduation	February (deadline varies)		
Complete, defend, and file dissertation	April (deadline varies)		
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
<i>Professionalization Activities</i>			
Published papers (list places published; at least one 1 st authorship)	1.		

	2. 3.	
Presented at academic conferences	1. 2. 3.	
Performances		
Grant(s)/Fellowship(s) received		

Milestones (for students entering with a B.A.)

Milestone	Deadline	Date Completed	Advisor's Signature
<i>Year 1</i>			
Form qualifying exam committee (in consultation with advisor and GSC)	March 20		
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
<i>Year 2</i>			
Qualifying exam approved	September 30		
Select permanent advisor	October 31		
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
Form doctoral committee	May 1		
<i>Year 3</i>			
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
Complete course work (except Comm 907)	May 15		
<i>Year 4</i>			
Complete comprehensive exams	September 30		
Defend dissertation prospectus	September 30		
Conduct dissertation research	All year		
Research and consult with advisor about dissertation funding (e.g., internal and external fellowships)	Fall		
Complete Comm 907	December 15		N/A
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A
<i>Year 5</i>			
Go on job market	Fall		
Apply for graduation	February (deadline varies)		
Complete, defend, and file dissertation	April (deadline varies)		
Send updated CV to advisor & Graduate Student Service Manager	April 1		N/A
Submit Plan of Study and Milestone Checklist to Graduate Student Service Manager	April 15		N/A

<i>Professionalization Activities</i>		
Published papers (list places published; at least one 1 st authorship)	1. 2. 3.	
Presented at academic conferences	1. 2. 3.	
Performances		
Grant(s)/Fellowship(s) received		