

Academic Policies and Procedures
Handbook
for Graduate Work
in the
**Ph.D. Program in
Mass Communications**

Offered by the
School of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Wisconsin – Madison

June 2024

Program Overview

Why a Ph.D. in Mass Communications?

The Mass Communications doctoral program was created in 1950. Since then, Wisconsin has been a leading school in producing Ph.D.s and research in mass communication. Although enrollments vary somewhat over time, there are typically between 70 and 90 doctoral students in the program. The program is administered by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The job market in this field is healthier than it is in most academic disciplines, and the majority of our Ph.D. graduates continue to enter college/university research and teaching jobs in mass communication. The SJMC has been recognized as the top Ph.D. program in student placement and network hiring centrality (Barnett et al., 2010). In addition to academic positions, the scholarly and scientific skills acquired in doctoral work are in demand in such areas as market/audience research, governmental agencies, nonprofits, and the media industry.

What is research?

Research involves a process of inquiry, discovery, understanding, dissemination, response, and replication. Research consists of a systematic and purposive search for answers to as yet unresolved questions. It culminates in discovering and reporting to others knowledge that was not previously available. In practice, each discipline's standards of evidence, method, and presentation of research are guided by systems of peer review. Doctoral study provides the opportunity to learn these standards and procedures, and culminates in peer review of a student's research by his/her doctoral committee. Command of the discipline is tested in the preliminary examinations; the ability to apply this knowledge by executing original research is tested by the dissertation and oral defense of it.

What is the "discipline"?

There are several related academic disciplines in the field of mass communication. Since these disciplines employ different methods of gathering, testing, and presenting research evidence, most of our students specialize in one or, at most, two of these disciplines, combining courses and seminars in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication with complementary work in related departments. Since many specialized disciplines can be applied to the study of mass communication, each doctoral student is expected to put together a combination of courses, seminars and committee members that compose a sensible -- even though unique -- whole.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Wisconsin Ph.D. in Mass Communications is a unique strength. In addition to the quality of mass communication faculty, many UW-Madison departments in related areas are also rated highly by the National Research Council's ranking of doctoral programs. Ph.D. students in our program at Wisconsin enjoy unique breadth and depth of faculty expertise, regardless of their chosen concentration.

The interdisciplinary nature of the program is reflected, in part, by the breadth of coursework chosen. In addition to communication courses, students must take classes in several outside departments and programs. Students must demonstrate that they have the theoretical background and methodological training necessary to write the dissertation and to conduct research in the field of study after graduation.

Program Philosophy

The Ph.D. in Mass Communications promotes high quality training in research, teaching, and service, opportunities for deep collaboration with faculty and students, a strong advisor model, and a vibrant, convivial community in order to prepare our students for their careers, whether they be inside or outside the academy.

Faculty Advisors, Degree Programs and Committees

How is the advisor selected?

When a student is admitted to the program, the SJMC provides two initial faculty contacts to each student. Students should seek permanent advisors by the end of the first year of graduate study. Generally the permanent advisor should be a faculty member whose methodological expertise and research interests match closely those that the student intends to acquire. While no faculty member is obliged to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, invitations are usually accepted except where the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve the student's needs better. A student who later decides that a different faculty advisor would be preferable should discuss this with the current advisor and then feel free to seek the change.

Selection of an advisor, or a change of advisors, should be based on fit between the faculty member's ability to guide the student expertly into the chosen area of research. When you have selected, or change, advisors inform the Graduate Program Manager.

What is the role of the advisor?

The advisor serves multiple roles: first, to assist the student in acquiring the highest level of knowledge in mass communication and research competence that is possible; second, to chair the doctoral committee that will determine whether the student has performed acceptably on the preliminary examination and the dissertation; third, to assist in the Ph.D. candidate's job search and fourth, to support pedagogical training. Knowing the procedures and requirements of the University is the student's responsibility, not the advisor's. Since the advisor's role varies from case to case, students should discuss the role and their specific expectations with their advisors or prospective advisors. Both parties have a responsibility to make their expectations understood.

How is a student's program determined?

Student and advisor choose a combination of courses, seminars and methods classes that they mutually agree match the student's needs in developing knowledge in mass communication and research competence.

A program proposal must be submitted to the Graduate Program Manager in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication prior to the last semester of coursework. The program proposal contains a student's long-range research goals, and the coursework that has been taken, or that is proposed to be taken, in the doctoral program. The proposal is reviewed by the Graduate Committee in the SJMC. The Graduate Committee may require modifications in the program and the student's exam.

What is included in an acceptable program of study?

The program of study is a blueprint, which, if completed successfully, should result in breadth and depth of knowledge in a discipline and the ability to carry out original research. An acceptable program of study consists of courses in the student's research methods in addition to a coherent set of courses and seminars designed to provide substantive expertise in the student's chosen area of study in mass communication and related disciplines. Specific ingredients in the program of study are negotiated in discussion between the student and advisor, subject to approval of the student's committee and the Graduate Committee in the student's home department.

The total amount of coursework required consists of at least 65 credits of advanced and research-oriented courses and seminars taken as a graduate student (including relevant courses from the master's program). Courses in skills and performance or academic subjects unrelated to the chosen research specialty do not count toward this requirement. Courses completed as a master's student or at another university may apply, but only if related to the student doctoral research specialization. Thesis credits earned from the SJMC master's program do not count toward the doctoral program. If a student changes from one research discipline to another within the broad area of mass communication, courses relevant to the initial focus would not necessarily apply in meeting this expectation.

The general goal of this formal coursework is to bring students to an advanced level as indicated by independent work in research seminars. The exact number of courses in a student's total doctoral program is determined at the time the program proposal is reviewed by the Graduate Committee in the student's home department. Program proposals include: a statement from the student providing a rationale for the proposed course work and choice of doctoral committee members, chronological and topical outlines of course work, and a letter of endorsement from the student's advisor. Specific information on program proposals may be obtained from the Graduate Program Manager in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

How does a student assemble a doctoral committee?

Each student will assemble a doctoral committee for prelims and the dissertation in consultation with the advisor. Alterations may occur if members are unavailable or if the planned dissertation focus shifts slightly, requiring somewhat different expertise. The doctoral committee members are chosen by the student, in consultation with the advisor, usually after some courses and seminars with each potential member have been taken. The student invites faculty members to serve on the doctoral committee; such an invitation need not be accepted, but in most cases, it is. In selecting faculty to serve on a doctoral committee, advisors and students should seek to gather a set of people with expertise in the student's area of training, the dissertation focus, and career goals. The advisor and student should strive to balance breadth and depth. Doctoral committees consist of five faculty members. Doctoral committees feature a minimum of two faculty from within SJMC and two faculty external to the field of communications.. The SJMC does not consider faculty in Life Sciences Communication or Communication Arts as being "outside" committee members, nor does it consider communication scholars outside the UW to be "outside" committee members.

Following completion of the preliminary examination, if the advisor and the student decide that the dissertation requires a research specialty for which somewhat different committee membership is appropriate, changes should be made as soon as practical (described in the Program Proposal section).

Program Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree

What are the minimum requirements for the Ph.D.?

1. 3.50 cumulative grade point average.
2. 65 credits minimum in theory and methods/statistics courses, selected in consultation with the faculty advisor and approved by the Graduate Committee of the student's home department. Attendance in J901 is required for new Ph.D. graduate students.
 - The credit total includes coursework taken as a Master's student (or at other universities) as long the courses are approved as appropriate for the focus of the degree program.
 - Courses in which the student earns a grade below B do not count toward the 65 credit minimum, but they do count in the cumulative GPA.
3. Training in the responsible conduct of research. See the Graduate School website for details of how to access the CITI training on [Responsible Conduct of Research](#) through Learn@UW.
4. Approval of the Ph.D. program proposal by the SJMC Graduate Committee.
5. Passing the preliminary examination.
 - Students are required to complete 32 credits minimum as registered graduate students on the UW-Madison campus before they achieve dissertator status.
6. Successful oral defense of dissertation before the student's five-member doctoral committee.

What goes into the Ph.D. Program Proposal?

The Program Proposal must be submitted prior to the last semester of coursework. The student must clear all incompletes prior to approval of the proposal.

Ph.D. program proposals are comprised of four documents, detailed in items 1 through 4 below:

1. **Cover letter from the faculty advisor** including a description of the student's research and how it fits within the academic discipline; a discussion of the appropriateness of the student's methodological approach
2. **Cover letter from the student** including a brief description of the student's educational background; a statement of overall research interests; an explanation of the dissertation research and methodological approach; the expected date of prelims; the intention to complete a minor and the area of concentration. (**Note:** Doctoral students in mass communications are not required to complete a minor. Students who elect to complete a minor [Option A, see Minors in <http://grad.wisc.edu/education/acadpolicy/guidelinesindex.html>] should contact the department in the area of concentration and identify and explain the minor coursework in the program proposal.) Student must also include a list of the five doctoral committee members and their departments, as well as a brief explanation of their suitability to serve on the committee.

The committee members should have agreed to be on the doctoral committee prior to their inclusion on the list.

The doctoral committee should reflect the conceptual and analytical interests of the student. At least two of the five committee members must be external to the field of communications.

(Note: Students are not required to have three committee members from inside the major department. Doctoral committees are frequently comprised of three (or even four) faculty members from outside the major department. The faculty advisor must, however, be from the SJMC. Faculty with more than a 0% appointment in SJMC are considered to be program faculty.)

Doctoral programs should reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the Ph.D. in Mass Communications. In addition to communication courses, students must take classes in several outside departments and programs. Students must demonstrate that they have the theoretical background and methodological training necessary to write the dissertation and to conduct research in the field of study after graduation.

3. **List of proposed and completed coursework.** (Follow Sample Format Below)

For item #3, list only the M.A. or M.S. courses that are germane to the Ph.D. program; provide cumulative credits and grade point averages (GPAs) for each university.

- Including work taken at the master's level, students must complete a minimum of 65 semester credits. Thesis credits do not count as part of the 65 credits.
(Note: Courses taken on a quarter-hour basis count as 3/4 of one semester credit. 12 quarter hours = 9 semester credits.)
- Up to 3 credits of colloquium can count towards the 65 credit minimum in the Program Proposal. One credit will be derived from J901 .
- Doctoral students must maintain a 3.5 cumulative GPA on all graduate courses taken at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in order to meet satisfactory progress criteria. Courses graded B and above count toward the minimum 65 credits required for the degree.
(Note: Indicate grading scale—if other than 4.0—for courses taken at other universities.)

Frequently Asked Questions

When should I submit my Ph.D. program proposal?

You should submit your program proposal when you have: a) clearly defined your dissertation topic, b) decided, in consultation with your advisor, who your five doctoral committee members will be, and c) at least one semester of coursework remaining in your program. Your proposal will be evaluated in relation to your stated research focus to determine whether you are prepared to handle the theoretical and methodological requirements of your research.

Who reviews Ph.D. program proposals?

The Graduate Committee, with the Professional MA Director recusing if they are not a member of the graduate faculty at UW-Madison, with the Graduate Program Manager as an ex officio member, evaluate and approve/reject/send back for revision program proposals.

When are program proposals reviewed?

The departmental Graduate Committee reviews program proposals twice each year—generally in November and April. Since the meeting date varies from semester to semester, students will receive email notification when proposals are due. You should submit an electronic copy of your proposal to the Graduate Program Manager.

How do I make changes to my program proposal once the Graduate Committee has approved it?

Students may change up to two courses and up to one doctoral committee member in consultation with the faculty advisor, without having to file a revised program proposal. Notify the Graduate Program Manager of all course substitutions.

If more changes are needed, then the proposal changes should be summarized in one page and returned for the Graduate Committee for approval. Students who change more than two courses or more than one committee member, or who change the focus of their dissertations, must submit a revised proposal.

Given the uncertainty of course offerings in future years, many students anticipate the problem of having to make course substitutions by listing an alternate course selection. (e.g., Soc. 360 or Ed Psyc 760)

How many independent study (699, 999) credits can I count as part of my program?

You may count a maximum of nine independent study credits, and with no more than six credits of independent study with the same instructor, toward the 65-credit minimum. In unusual circumstances, students with highly individualized programs of study may petition the Graduate Committee to count more independent study work, as long as no more than six credits are taken from any one instructor. To petition, the student must explain the lack of upper-level classes and seminars in the area of specialization.

Which courses/credits don't count toward the Ph.D. and should be excluded from the program proposal?

- Thesis credits (enrollment in 990)
- Audited and Pass/Fail courses
- English as a Second Language courses
- Professional courses (e.g., newswriting, reporting, editing, advertising, public relations practices)
- Courses with substantially overlapping content (e.g., J658 and Sociology 544)
- Independent study where the primary purpose is to conduct a research project.
- Independent study classes taken in lieu of paid employment (e.g., in exchange for organizing a conference, handling tasks associated with faculty research—running subjects, supervising student workers, data collection and analysis)

Which courses/credits require an explanation so that my program can be evaluated?

On a separate sheet, append information about:

- Courses taken at other universities:
 - Provide a description of course content or cut-and-paste the course description from the university's online catalog.
 - Explain the course numbering system if it is different from UW-Madison's. (e.g., Some universities number graduate courses at the 100- and 200-levels.)
 - Explain the grading system if it is different from UW-Madison's. (e.g. Some universities don't grade on a 4.0 scale.)
- Independent study courses. Describe course content, the work you did, and with whom.
- Independent research courses. Although 999 credits taken as a research project do not normally count, these credits can be considered when the primary purpose is to enhance theoretical understanding of the field. For an example, see p. 13.
- Lower-level theory classes (those numbered 400 and 500). These classes are normally considered to be precursors to graduate-level work. Justify their inclusion in your program and explain how they were "enriched" (e.g., what work you did beyond that required for undergraduates.)
- Courses that combine theory and professional content. Explain how these classes contribute theoretically to your doctoral program and why this expertise is essential to the goals of your research.
- Courses completed more than five years ago. Provide a rationale for including this work as part of your program and explain how you have remained current with the subject matter.

Sample Program Proposal Format

It is important that you to adhere to the sample program format show below. Proposals that deviate from the overall format sample will be returned to the student to be reworked and will be evaluated the following semester.

Program by Academic Semester

A. Courses Taken at Other Institutions: Sogang University, Korea

NOTE: List only the courses that apply to the Ph.D. program

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Content Area</u>
Fall 2020					
MC 602	Communication Theory	3	A+	Hsu	Comm Theory
MC 508	Communication Research	3	A	Kim	Methods
MC 712	Cyber-Communication	3	A	Hong	Social Media

Spring 2021

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MC 652	Theories of Broadcasting	2	A+	Chong	Comm Theory
MC 505	History of Mass Media	3	A+	Kang	History
MC 610	Mass Media and Society	3	A+	Soo	Comm Theory

Fall 2021

MC 625	Multivariate Statistical Analysis	3	A+	Jung	Methods
MC 650	Mass Communication Effects	3	A	Zei	Methods

Spring 2022

MC 576	International Communication	2	A+	Hong	International
Total Credits & Cumulative GPA			25		4.3/4.5

B. Courses Completed at UW-Madison

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Content Area</u>
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Fall 2022

J 658	Communication Research Methods	4	A	McLeod	Methods
J 618	Mass Comm. & Political Behavior	4	A	Shah, D.	Pol Comm
J 901	Colloquium: Mass Communication	1	CR	Wagner	Comm Theory
J 801	Mass Communication & the Ind.	3	A	Riddle	Comm Theory

Spring 2023

J/P 829	Political Communication	3	AB	Cramer	Pol Comm
J 808	Mass Communication History	3	A	McGarr	History

Fall 2023

LSC 902	Public Opinion in Science	3	AB	Scheufele	PolComm/ Public Opinion
J 812	Qual Res. Methods	3	A	Robinson	Methods
ComArts 967	Structural Equation Modeling	3	A	Foster	Methods

Spring 2024

Psyc 711	Information Visualization	3	A	Schloss	Methods
J 999	Independent Study	2	A	Culver	Ethics
EdPsych761	Stat Methods to Education II	3	A	Pollack	Methods

Fall 2025

J 818	Comp. Approaches to Comm.	3	A	Yang	Methods
J 803	Mass Comm. And Culture	3	A	Palmer	Comm Theory
Total Credits & Cumulative GPA			41		3.93

Advancing Toward the Ph.D.

What are the fundamental steps for advancing toward the Ph.D.?

- Receiving a yearly advisor evaluation, approved by the graduate committee, noting whether progress toward the Ph.D. exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or does not meet expectations.
 - The process by which an advisor makes their evaluations is something you should discuss with your advisor when you ask a faculty member to serve as your advisor.
- Working with your advisor, make plans to take prelims within one year of completing course work.
- Within 1-2 months of completing prelims, meet with your advisor and doctoral committee members about a timeline for completing and defending the doctoral dissertation.
- Typically, the dissertation should be defended within 12-18 months of attaining dissertator status. This may vary by the nature of the research the student is conducting.

The Preliminary Examinations

What are the preliminary examinations?

The preliminary examination—"prelims"—is a comprehensive examination that is taken after a student completes all course work required for the doctoral degree. Prelims test a student's mastery of knowledge acquired through graduate study—knowledge of the area of specialization, understanding of the literature of the field, and ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to original research problems.

The exam consists of five questions—one question is submitted by each of the five members of the student's doctoral committee. Some faculty limit the scope of prelim questions to content covered by the student's course work; others require additional reading and study. Since faculty approaches to prelims are highly individual, it is the student's responsibility to learn the expectations of each committee member. Generally, exam questions are tailored to the student's area of specialization and program of research. One exam question will focus on research methodology appropriate to the dissertation.

Who serves evaluates the preliminary examination?

The doctoral committee serves as the examiners for the prelim though, due to sabbaticals, resignations, and retirements, it may be necessary for a student to find a substitute committee member. The doctoral committee comprises five tenure-track faculty members—the faculty advisor and four committee members who are chosen by the student in consultation with the faculty advisor. At least two committee members must be from outside of the field of communication (i.e. outside of the SJMC, Life Sciences Communication, and Communication Arts at UW-Madison and faculty in communication fields at other institutions). Students often have three "outside" committee members, four on rare occasions. Students should have selected their doctoral committee members by the time they submit their program proposals

for review. If the composition of the committee changes between the time the doctoral program is approved and the student takes prelims, notify the Graduate Program Manager.

How do students prepare to take prelims?

Students normally take several courses in each area of the examination. It is strongly recommended that at least one course be taken with each committee member. To begin exam preparation, students should identify topics of interest within the examination areas. Students then meet with each member of the doctoral committee to: 1) discuss specific areas of interest, 2) define, broadly, the parameters of the exam question, 3) determine the examination format—take home, 4-hour closed book, 8-hour open or closed book, or 72-hour take home (open book)—which is the prerogative of each committee member, 4) review the faculty member's expectations for the student's performance on the exam, 5) learn the criteria used in grading the exam. A clear explication of the student's research interests help faculty write exam questions appropriate to the student's specialization(s).

It is the student's responsibility, in consultation with the faculty advisor and committee members, to determine what method of study is most appropriate for exam preparation. Students should produce a comprehensive reading list for each examination area and submit these lists to committee members for approval. Once reading lists have been compiled and approved, students generally complete a critical analysis of each of the readings and faculty examiners are expected to ask questions that can be answered using the scholarship on the reading list.

When studying for prelims, students might wish to consider such questions as: What do other researchers say about your area of specialization? How would your research relate to work done by others in field? How would you link the unique elements of your research program into a coherent entity? What questions about the field remain unanswered? How might you study and answer those questions in the future?

As exam preparation progresses, students should schedule follow-up meetings with committee members to flesh out their ideas, to clarify their understanding of readings and expand on earlier discussions with faculty. Students need not limit themselves to content covered on reading lists when writing prelim answers, but should draw upon all aspects of their academic expertise.

Many students take prelims during summer, though others take them during academic semesters. Typically, they spend one or two months in intensive study after spring semester ends, then have taken the exams so that they may be evaluated before the July 15 deadline. Students who take prelims during the academic year generally spend the semester studying for prelims while they complete the last of their required courses, and then have taken the exams so that they may be evaluated before the December 15 deadline.

Who writes prelim questions?

The faculty advisor solicits prelim questions from each doctoral committee member and explains exam procedures and expectations to outside committee members. It is the advisor's prerogative to suggest question content to individual committee members to ensure that the exam covers all of the relevant subject areas. It is also the faculty advisor's responsibility to ensure that prelim questions do not overlap significantly. While the broad parameters of the questions should be agreed upon in advance by the examining faculty member and the student the actual prelim questions may not be shared in advance with the student.

Are sample exam questions available for student perusal?

Past prelim questions are available. Contact the Graduate Program Manager.

What are the rules that govern prelims?

From the Graduate School:

To be eligible to take prelims, students must have a Graduate School Preliminary Examination Warrant. Departments, not students, request prelim warrants, in writing, at least three weeks prior to the exam. However, it is the student's responsibility to communicate their plans to take prelims with their Graduate Coordinator weeks in advance of the deadline to request a prelim warrant.

Before the Graduate School issues a warrant, it checks to be certain students have met specific requirements. 1) Students must have removed all grades of incomplete and progress—except for J990, Thesis—from their records. 2) Students must have met the university's residency requirement by taking a minimum of 32 credits on the UW-Madison campus as registered doctoral students. 3) Students who earned bachelor's or master's degrees at other universities, must have filed original transcripts that show degree conferral at the Graduate School.

Once the Graduate School has issued the preliminary examination warrant, students may sit for the exam. The warrant is sent to the Graduate Advisor, and is kept in the student's file until prelims are evaluated.

From the Program in Mass Communications:

Students must have their exams evaluated by July 15 to qualify for fall dissertator status, December 15 for spring dissertator status.

What is the format for the Preliminary Examinations?

The exam is made up of 5 questions, one written by each doctoral committee member. The exam as a whole is expected to cover a breadth of topics and include at least one methods question. All questions must be completed within 20 business days.

The faculty member writing the question determines the format of his or her question in consultation with the student and the student's advisor. Format options include: 4-hour closed book, 8-hour open book, 8-hour closed book and 72-hour take home.

After completing their exams, students have a short time, no more than one week, to proofread their work and add a reference list to each answer. They are not permitted to make substantive changes to their answers during this time period.

How are prelims evaluated?

Prelims are graded on a Pass/Revisions Required/Not Pass basis; there are no "high" or "low" pass scores. A grade of Revisions Required means that the student will revise the answer to the question and resubmit it for a second evaluation from the committee member that posed the question. A grade of Not Pass requires the student to answer a new question. Students are graded on their knowledge of the subject area, their capacity for original thought and analysis, and their potential to carry out a program of independent research, which is required to

complete the dissertation. Exhaustiveness of reporting is not the main criterion for evaluating prelim answers.

It takes 4 weeks to learn the results of the preliminary examination. Committee members are responsible for providing a written judgment of the student's response to their question and, where expertise permits, they are encouraged to read and comment on the other four questions. Committee members report their evaluations to the faculty advisor who then notifies the student of the outcome. Where there is disagreement among committee members about a student's response to an individual question, the greatest weight is given to the assessment of the committee member who posed the question. To ensure that students qualify for dissertator status in the semester following completion of prelims, faculty are required to grade prelims and to sign the student's warrant no later than the first week of class in the new semester.

Students who do not pass one or two prelim questions are required to respond to a new question for each question they did not pass. Remedial action is determined by the faculty member who posed the original question. Students who fail three or more prelim questions may be required to take additional course work or complete a semester of independent study and research before being allowed to retake a partial or full preliminary exam. Students may also be dropped from the doctoral program. Remedial action is determined by a majority vote of the full doctoral committee.

Students who pass prelims pick-up the prelim warrant from the Graduate Program Manager. They should get the signatures of each committee member and return the signed copy of the warrant to the department. She will fill in degree data, get the department chair's signature, and make a copy of the prelim warrant for the student's file. Students then file the warrant with the Graduate School Ph.D. Examiner, 229 Bascom Hall, by the beginning of the third week of class. Once the prelim warrant is filed at the Graduate School, students are officially recognized as doctoral candidates or, in academic parlance, as dissertators.

What is dissertator status and when is it conferred?

Students who have met all major and minor doctoral program requirements, passed the preliminary examination and filed the prelim warrant with the Graduate School are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. in Mass Communications. They are officially recognized by the university as "dissertators" at the beginning of the semester after these requirements are met. Students who complete prelims by the July 15 deadline can expect to become dissertators in fall semester. Students who meet the December 15 completion deadline become dissertators in spring semester.

What are registration requirements for dissertators?

Once dissertator status is conferred, students must maintain continuous registration until they complete the doctoral degree. This means they must enroll for three graduate-level credits (courses numbered 600- and above, 300-599 courses can be counted if clear rationale is provided and approved in the program proposal) fall and spring semesters; summer registration is not required unless the student plans to defend the dissertation and graduate during summer session.

Dissertators normally register for three credits of J990, Thesis. On rare occasions students may take a three-credit course or seminar—directly related to the student's dissertation research—post-prelims. Because students are expected to complete all coursework before they take prelims, the faculty advisor must write a justification and submit it to the Graduate Program Manager for

the student's file.

Registration for three credits gives dissertators full-time student status and tuition and fees are based on a special rate structure.

Students who register for more than three credits, take audited or pass/fail courses, or enroll in non-degree related classes—foreign language, physical education, or special interest courses—lose dissertator status and are charged at the regular graduate student rate.

Students who fail to maintain continuous registration are assessed a degree completion fee equal to twelve times the current pre-credit rate at the time the dissertation is deposited at the Graduate School. (In practical terms, the student is charged for four semesters at the current dissertator rate.)

Completing Your Dissertation

- Review the “[Guidelines for Electronic Deposit of Ph.D. Dissertations](#).”
- Get your advisor's approval to set an oral/dissertation defense date.
- In consultation with your advisor, set a plan for distributing early and final drafts of your dissertation with your doctoral committee members. Negotiate with your committee to determine how many weeks they will require to review the final draft prior to your defense date.
- Set an oral/dissertation defense date with your doctoral committee as early as reasonably possible (note that it often takes up to 8 weeks to schedule a suitable time with all members of your committee).
- Inform/email your department of your defense date and the list of your doctoral committee member names in order to initiate your warrant (this process must be initiated more than three weeks prior to your oral defense date).
- Schedule a conference room for your defense.
- Bring the defense warrant and other relevant documents to the defense.
- Make any edits/changes and re-submit to your advisor and committee members who have requested to see them.
- Have your doctoral committee members sign your warrant and return the signed warrant to the department. You will receive a pdf version of the warrant to upload when you submit the dissertation.
- You will receive separate information regarding commencement. Note that students can participate in commencement prior to completion of the defense. For more information about commencement, go to <https://commencement.wisc.edu/>. You must apply to graduate by the deadline each semester in order to place your name in the commencement program.

Academic Matters

What constitutes making satisfactory progress?

1. Doctoral students must earn a minimum 3.5 cumulative grade point average by the end of the second semester in residence and must maintain that GPA for the duration of the degree program.
2. Doctoral students who earn grades of “incomplete” must remove those grades in the semester following their occurrence. A course proposal cannot be approved until all Incompletes are removed.
3. Doctoral students should complete their preliminary examinations within 3-6 months of completing their coursework.
4. Doctoral students must maintain steady progress toward completion of the degree, including final oral exam and deposit of dissertation. Full-time doctoral students can expect to spend 4-6 years earning the degree. The time to degree completion varies for part-time students.
5. Doctoral students must satisfy all Graduate School [degree requirements](#).

What are the expectations for professional conduct in the program?

The Mass Communications Ph.D. Program holds expectations for the highest level of academic integrity and expects professional and respectful conduct in all interactions. Misconduct can result in dismissal from the program.

Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:

- Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation
- Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise
- Forges or falsifies academic documents or records
- Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others
- Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance
- Assists other students in any of these acts

Examples include but are not limited to: cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation; paraphrasing from the web without crediting the source; using notes or a programmable calculator in an exam when such use is not allowed; using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own by not properly crediting the originator; stealing examinations or course materials; changing or creating data in a lab experiment; altering a transcript; signing another person's name to an attendance sheet; hiding a book knowing that another student needs it to prepare an assignment; collaboration that is contrary to the stated rules of the course, or tampering with a lab experiment or computer program of another student, using Artificial Intelligence technology in a way not sanctioned by a seminar professor, Ph.D. advisor, or dissertation committee member.

Chapters 14 and 17 of the University of Wisconsin Administrative Code describes misconduct in detail. Visit the [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) website for more information.

Also see the Graduate School guidelines on [Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

How are grievances handled?

Students who feel that they have been treated unfairly have the right to a prompt hearing of their grievance. Such complaints may involve course grades, classroom treatment, various forms of harassment, or other issues. Any student or potential student may use these procedures except those graduate assistants whose complaint is covered by campus policies for teaching assistants.

Procedures for student grievances:

- The student should speak first with the person toward whom the grievance is directed. In most cases, grievances can be resolved at this level.
- If this conversation does not yield satisfactory results, the student should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies in the SJMC.
- Should a satisfactory resolution not be achieved at that level, the student should contact the program's Grievance Advisor to discuss the grievance. The Graduate Program Coordinator can provide students with the name of this faculty member, who facilitates problem resolution through informal channels. The Grievance Advisor is responsible for facilitating any complaints or issues of students. The Grievance Advisor first attempts to help students informally address the grievance prior to any formal complaint. Students are also encouraged to talk with their faculty advisors regarding concerns or difficulties if necessary. [University resources for sexual harassment](#) concerns can be found on the UW Office of Equity and Diversity website.
- If the issue is not resolved to the student's satisfaction the student can submit the grievance to the Grievance Advisor in writing, within 60 calendar days of the alleged unfair treatment.
- On receipt of a written complaint, a faculty committee will be convened by the Grievance Advisor to manage the grievance. The program faculty committee will obtain a written response from the person toward whom the complaint is directed. This response will be shared with the person filing the grievance.
- The faculty committee will determine a decision regarding the grievance. The Grievance Advisor will report on the action taken by the committee in writing to both the student and

the party toward whom the complaint was directed within 15 working days from the date the complaint was received.

- At this point, if either party (the student or the person toward whom the grievance is directed) is unsatisfied with the decision of the faculty committee, the party may file a written appeal. Either party has 10 working days to file a written appeal to the College.
- Documentation of the grievance will be stored for at least 7 years. Significant grievances that set a precedent will be stored indefinitely.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has established policies governing student conduct, academic dishonesty, and sexual and racial harassment. The Graduate School also has procedures for students wishing to appeal a grievance decision made at the college level. These policies are described in the [Academic Guidelines](#).

Funding and Financial Support

Tuition amounts are set by the Board of Regents of the UW System on an annual basis in the summer for the following academic year. Visit the Office of the Registrar web site for information on tuition costs: http://registrar.wisc.edu/tuition_&_fees.htm

Several forms of financial aid are available for graduate students: graduate assistantships (including research, project, and teaching assistantships), fellowships, scholarships and loans. Graduate assistantships at the rate of 33% and above cover the cost of tuition and provide a stipend. As research, project, or teaching assistant, students work on research projects or assist faculty in teaching selected undergraduate courses. Advanced Opportunity Fellowships are available for qualified minority or economically disadvantaged nonminority students.

Some students who are admitted to the program are admitted with a promise of four years of funding support. This support will provide tuition remission, a graduate stipend, and benefits as directed by the Graduate School. Students with four year funding guarantees will be eligible to serve as a teaching assistant, a project assistant, a research assistant, or an instructor of their own course. They can also apply for funding to cover years of study that go beyond the fourth year.

Students admitted without a funding guarantee are eligible to seek funding on an academic yearly basis for a teaching assistant, project assistant, research assistant, or instructor position. Students can also apply for funding outside of the SJMC. Funding application requirements are detailed by the Graduate Program Manager each year.

Assistantships

Many of our graduates are funded through assistantships, working under the direction of a faculty member from the joint program, or in one of numerous other departments and programs that regularly look to the joint program to provide them with students with strong communication skills.

Most graduate students who receive support serve as teaching, research, or project assistants. Assistantships are typically part-time positions that pay a stipend every two weeks during the academic year. Additionally, positions that are 33.33% or more (based on a 40-hour work

week) pay all tuition for the students and also make the students eligible for comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Additional information about assistantships may be found on the [Graduate School's website](#).

Financial Aid

Students who are U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents can apply for Federal Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) and for Federal Work-Study through the Office of Student Financial Aid <http://www.finaid.wisc.edu/>. Eligibility is based on financial need. OSFA also offers emergency short-term loans to qualified students. For information about the cost of attendance, visit <https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions/cost/>.

Other Assistantships and Hourly Employment

Other employment opportunities are available both on campus and in the community. Openings for full and part-time jobs for students and spouses are listed on the Student Job Center web site <http://jobcenter.wisc.edu/>.

The SJMC guidelines for hourly work, funded by a member of the department, are as follows:

Pay Range: \$20.00 - \$23.00/hr

- Hiring rate should be appropriate for work being done, difficulty of job, and level of experience or knowledge to hold such position.
- Students returning to work for any person/project should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if a pay increase is appropriate.
- Graduate students do not qualify annual hourly pay increases.
- Salary Rates of \$24.00 - \$25.00 should only be used in extraordinary circumstances and are not expected to be pay rates that graduate students are hired into on a regular basis.

Travel to Meetings and Conferences

An important part of the professional development of graduate student is the participation in professional meetings and conferences. Consult your advisor about the appropriate venues for you to attend. Some advisors may have access to funds to help support travel costs. Students should also explore volunteer opportunities at conferences to offset registration costs. Students who have been accepted to present at an academic conference are eligible to apply for [Conference Presentation Funds and Research Travel Funds](#) from the Graduate School.

Each year, the SJMC offers an internal research funding opportunity for graduate students to conduct research. Application details are available from the Graduate Program Manager.

Health and Wellness

All enrolled graduate students are eligible for [University Health Services](#). There is no charge to students for many basic services including counseling sessions, because services are paid through tuition and fees. Personal health and wellness services are also available in addition to medical services. A list of wellness programs can be accessed here: <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/>

Securing Health Insurance Coverage

Graduate students who hold an appointment as an assistant of 33.33% or more or who have a fellowship may be eligible for health insurance and other benefits. *Contact the* staff benefits and payroll coordinator in the unit where you have been hired to select one of several health care plans within 30 days of your hire date.

All enrolled graduate students, including those without an assistantship or fellowship, can use the services of University Health Services (UHS), the campus health clinic. Many services are provided at no extra cost, including outpatient medical care during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. UHS is located in the Student Services Tower at 333 East Campus Mall, 608.265.5000. For more info, visit the UHS web site at www.uhs.wisc.edu.

Prescription medications, emergency room visits and hospitalization are not included in UHS benefits. Therefore, supplemental insurance covering these drugs and services is recommended for all students and is required for international students. The UHS Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) is an excellent option for many students. Contact the SHIP office at 608.265.5600 for more information.

Disability Information

Students with disabilities have access to disability resources through UW-Madison's McBurney Disability Resource Center. As an admitted student, you should first go through the steps to "Become a McBurney Client" at

<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/students/howto.php>

Additional [non-academic] disability campus resources (not found through the McBurney Center) can be found at

<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/services/nonmcburney/index.php>

The UW-Madison Index for Campus Accessibility Resources can be found at

<http://www.wisc.edu/accessibility/index.php>

Additional information can be found at

<https://employeedisabilities.wisc.edu/disability-accommodation/>

Mental Health Resources On and Off Campus

University Health Services (UHS) is the primary mental health provider for students on campus. UHS Counseling and Consultation Services offers a wide range of services to the diverse student population of UW-Madison. They offer immediate crisis counseling, same day appointments and ongoing treatment. Go to the [UHS website](#) or call 608-265-5600.

UHS service costs are covered for students through tuition and fees.

There are many mental health resources throughout the Madison community, but UHS Counseling and Consultation Services is the best resource for referrals to off-campus providers. Call 608-265-5600 for assistance in finding an off-campus provider.

The 988 hotline is another excellent resource for those in mental health distress:

<https://988lifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>

Additional Information for International Students

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires student visa holders to register with UW-Madison prior to beginning your academic program in the United States. The UW-Madison International Student Services (ISS) office coordinates an orientation to assist students with complying with this requirement. For more information, contact ISS office in room 217 of the Red Gym, 716 Langdon Street, telephone 608.262.2044, e-mail iss@studentlife.wisc.edu, or visit their [website](#).

International Student Services (ISS) is your main resource on campus and has advisors who can assist you with visa, social and employment issues. Schedule an appointment to meet with an advisor.

All new international students attend the ISS Mandatory Orientation Program. This is required by both the university and federal visa regulations. At the orientation, new students will register their arrival on the F or J student visa and gain information on maintaining legal status while attending UW Madison. The orientation also offers information on how to get involved in ISS and campus programs, and how to take advantage of services available both on and off campus. Visit their website for [orientation information](#).

1. The online [Guide for International Students](#) is a comprehensive and valuable resource for international students and is sent to international applicants initially when they apply for their I-20. The guide provides appropriate resources and information on any of the following topics:
 - Obtaining a student visa
 - Maintaining immigration status
 - Academic/enrollment requirements for international students
 - Employment options for international students
 - Student Life
 - Consult the Graduate School [Guide to Student Life](#).
 - International Student Services (ISS) sponsors [programs](#) for international students.
 - [Madison Friends of International Students](#) (MFIS) is an organization of volunteers that offers services and programs to international students and their families.
 - Living in Madison
 - Dependents – visit the ISS website for more information about resources available for [dependents](#).
 - Housing - learn about UW Madison campus, including [university housing](#) and [off campus housing](#).
2. **Sufficient Funds**

International applicants are required to have [sufficient funds](#) to cover their expenses completely while attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
3. **English Language Proficiency**

Ph.D. Program in Mass Communications

Every applicant whose native language is not English, or whose undergraduate instruction was not in English, must provide an English proficiency test score. Your score is considered too old, and will not be accepted, if it is more than 2 years old from the start of your admission term. Country of citizenship does not exempt applicants from this requirement. Language of instruction at the college or university level, and how recent it has been, are the determining factors in meeting this requirement.

Applicants are exempt if:

- English is the exclusive language of instruction at the undergraduate institution; **or**
- they have earned a degree from a regionally accredited U.S. college or university not more than 5 years prior to the anticipated semester of enrollment; **or**
- they have completed at least two full-time semesters of graded course work, exclusive of ESL courses, in a U.S. college or university, or at an institution outside the U.S. where English is the exclusive language of instruction, not more than 5 years prior to the anticipated semester of enrollment.
(update with Typical Numbers for TOEFL or IELTS)
- The minimum required scores that will be considered acceptable are:
Minimum TOEFL requirement: 92 internet (iBT);
- 580 paper-based test (PBT)
Minimum IELTS requirement: 7.0
- Minimum MELAB requirement: 82

Under certain circumstances, and with program approval, admission **may** be granted with the following scores. However, as a condition for admission, an English assessment test (ESLAT) will be required upon arrival, and any recommended English as a Second Language (ESL) course must be completed successfully in your first semester. Below are the ranges in which an ESLAT will be required:

- TOEFL (iBT) 80-91
- TOEFL paper based 550-579
- IELTS 6.5
- MELAB 77-81

4. International Teaching Assistant Training

The [ITA Training Program](#) is a pedagogical training program that helps non-native English speaking TAs (or potential TAs) to improve their classroom teaching skills. The program focuses on three areas essential to good teaching.

- **Pronunciation and Communication Skills:** Language practice to make classroom speech more clear and effective.
- **Presentation Skills:** Digitally recorded teaching presentations, tutorials, and peer feedback.
- **Cultural Background:** Discussion of the TA's role, undergraduates' expectations of a TA, and the unique aspects of the US educational system.

In addition to regular class sessions, individual tutorials are scheduled to watch videotaped presentations. The course is offered every semester, fall, spring and summer. The course carries no credits. There are no fees and no required texts. A packet of material from a copy shop will be assigned.

Students may enroll in ESL 370 the same way you enroll in your other classes. There are no credits or fees for this course. If you have questions, please contact ITA:

<https://esl.wisc.edu/ita-training/>