

Requirements for the M.A. and Ph.D. Degree

As a matter of principle, the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences undertakes to adapt each program of study to the needs of each graduate student. We have no rigid requirements for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. We do, however, require that all teaching assistants participate in our teaching assistant training program and enroll in CAS 602, Supervised Experience in College Teaching, during their first year.

We also require that every student complete an acceptable research methods course within the department and develop appropriate competencies in cognate disciplines relevant to his or her research. Beyond these expectations, however, our presumption is that all graduate students will determine with their graduate committees the specific programs of study that will best prepare them for their scholarly and professional careers.

With few exceptions, the requirements of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees are identical to those of the Graduate School. In no instance do departmental requirements supersede those of the Graduate School. Each graduate student is responsible for ensuring that he or she meets all Graduate School requirements.

Minimum Requirements for the M.A. Degree

1. A minimum of 30 credits (Except in unusual circumstances, credits earned for independent study [CAS 496 and 596] may not be counted toward fulfilling M.A. degree requirements. In addition, credits beyond the minimum of 30 do not automatically count toward the minimum specified for the Ph.D. degree for those who advance to the Ph.D. program.)
2. At least 3 credits of course work in communication outside the area of specialization
3. At least 3 credits of course work in communication focusing on a research methodology relevant to the student's research area (appropriate course work to be designated by the student's committee)
4. A total of 6 hours of CAS 600 within the minimum of 30 for the M.A. degree
5. An M.A. thesis
6. An oral examination in defense of the thesis. The candidate and at least two members of the M.A. committee (including the chair) must be physically present at the thesis defense. A favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the committee is required for passing.
7. Satisfactory academic progress. Consistent with Graduate School regulations, a graduate student who fails to maintain satisfactory scholarship or to make acceptable progress in a degree program will be dropped from the program. Satisfactory progress for full-time students normally implies the completion of all degree requirements within a period not to exceed two consecutive calendar years. A cumulative grade-point average below 3.00 for any semester may be considered as evidence of unsatisfactory scholarship. Action to address this situation may be initiated by the department Head, the Graduate Officer, or by the chair of the student's committee.

Minimum Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree

1. At least 3 credits of course work in communication focusing on a research methodology relevant to the student's research area (appropriate course work to be designated by the student's committee)
2. A total of at least 36 credits beyond the M.A.
3. At least 15 of these 36 total credits outside communication. When the candidate's adviser and committee consider it appropriate, course work completed in an M.A. program may be counted toward the 15 credits. If such course work is applied, the candidate is still expected to earn a minimum of 36 credits beyond the M.A. degree.

4. A minimum of 21 credits in communication arts and sciences beyond the M.A. degree. A total of 6 independent research credits in communication [CAS 596] may be counted toward the 21-credit minimum.
5. A candidacy examination
6. A written and oral comprehensive examination
7. A dissertation
8. An oral examination in defense of the dissertation
9. Satisfactory academic progress. Consistent with Graduate School regulations, a graduate student who fails to maintain satisfactory scholarship or to make acceptable progress in a degree program will be dropped from the program. Satisfactory progress for full-time students normally implies the completion of all degree requirements within a period not to exceed three consecutive calendar years. A cumulative grade-point average below 3.00 for any semester may be considered as evidence of unsatisfactory scholarship. Action to address this situation may be initiated by the department Head, the student's committee, or by the chairperson of the student's committee.

Requirements for the Ph.D. Dissertation

Writing a dissertation has several aims. First, it should demonstrate the *level of competence* a Ph.D. candidate has attained, as well as his or her ability *independently* to identify an important research question or set of questions, design a study to answer the question(s), identify primary sources or acquire relevant data, and conduct analyses appropriate for determining the answer(s) to the research questions. Although the dissertation is supervised by both an adviser and a committee, it should reflect the student's readiness to function on his or her own in contributing to the advancement of knowledge within pertinent areas of disciplinary specialty. Second, the dissertation provides an opportunity to hone research skills. Some of this occurs via interaction with members of the candidate's advisory committee. Other skills develop through introspection, reflection, and practice. A third aim is for the student to establish the foundations of an ongoing program of research that will help him or her to advance within the academic profession or other relevant one to which scholarly inquiry is central. Accordingly, we expect that the dissertation will lead to publishable work appropriate to the student's area of scholarly specialization. A reasonable expectation is two to three articles in respected refereed professional journals or, if appropriate, a book with a reputable publisher.

The Prospectus

The first formal step toward completing the dissertation is the development of an acceptable prospectus. The determination of whether or not a prospectus is ready for assessment by the candidate's advisory committee is the responsibility of the adviser. This requires that the rationale for the project and the design of the study be as good as collaboration between the student and the person supervising the research can make them. Satisfying this criterion allows the student to maximize the value of the input from committee members.

Prospecti vary in length according to the student's area of research and the expectations of his or her adviser and committee. In Rhetoric, a prospectus of 20 pages would be reasonable to expect. In Communication Science, prospecti of 50 to 100 pages are more the norm. At minimum, a prospectus should address the following matters:

1. A statement of purpose that addresses the question, "What problems will be solved by the research, or what contributions to knowledge will be made by the project?"
2. A review of relevant scholarship, including both disciplinary and interdisciplinary literature and foundations relating to the research problem, the relevant theoretical perspectives, and the methodologies to be employed in the study.
3. An enumeration of the research questions or hypotheses that will guide the research, and (if appropriate) a discussion of expected outcomes.
4. A discussion of the design of the study, including plans for archival research or for the acquisition and analysis of data.

Although every student and every dissertation is different, a rule of thumb is that students should expect to spend at least a year completing their dissertation *following approval of the prospectus*.

Advising

During your first week on campus, the Graduate Officer will help you select a member of the faculty to serve as your temporary adviser. Your temporary adviser will assist you in selecting courses for your first semester and in answering any questions or problems you might have as you begin your graduate program.

The assignment of a temporary adviser lasts for only that first semester. Early in the second semester, you should notify the Graduate Officer whether you wish to continue with your temporary adviser, or whether you wish to choose a different adviser. Your adviser will help you in planning your degree program and in selecting your graduate committee. In general, the committee established during your second semester of study will remain in place through the completion of your degree. By this time, you also should have selected an area of concentration for your degree.

The Graduate Officer should be notified of your choice of an adviser, as well as of any subsequent changes in the make-up of your committee. If you have any questions about choosing an adviser or your committee, see the Graduate Officer. It is your responsibility to choose your adviser and your committee members and to discuss your program with them. Do not postpone this discussion. Keep in mind that your adviser and your committee must approve a plan of study consistent with your career plans and interests.

M.A. Calendar

1. Your temporary adviser is appointed prior to the start of your first semester. As noted earlier, the function of the temporary adviser is to help you select courses for your first semester and to answer any questions you may have as you begin your graduate program.
2. Your attendance is required during the orientation period prior to the start of the fall semester. This program includes teaching assistant training and meetings to discuss the graduate program and departmental policies. You also will register for your first semester of classes during the orientation period.
3. Prior to, or early in your second semester, you should notify the Graduate Officer whether you plan to continue with your temporary adviser or chose a new adviser.

4. With the assistance of your adviser, you will identify a committee of at least three qualified members, and upon the recommendation of the adviser, the Head or Graduate Officer will name those individuals as the committee of record. Once the committee composition is official, you will need to schedule a meeting with the members to conduct a program review no later than your second semester, and preferably early in that semester. Changes in the composition of the committee require approval by the Head or Graduate Officer and should be requested only in such instances as departure of existing members from the faculty, significant alteration in a previously approved program of study, the need for particular expertise not possessed by extant members, and irreconcilable personal differences unrelated to the quality of the candidate's academic performance.
5. During your first year of graduate study, you should have made substantial progress toward determining the kind of research you will do in completing a thesis (or original research project for the non-thesis option) and toward acquiring the special methodological competencies that kind of research requires.
6. If you plan, through attendance at two summer sessions (preceding and following appointment as a graduate assistant), to complete your degree in one year, you must have a thesis proposal completed and accepted by your committee no later than the spring semester. It is possible for full-time graduate students to complete work for the M.A. in two semesters, but those with appointments as graduate assistants should plan on at least three semesters.
7. For graduate assistants, the writing of the thesis should be completed early in the spring semester of your second year. Financial support for graduate assistants pursuing the M.A. degree is not typically continued beyond a second year of full-time study.
8. The defense draft of the thesis must be circulated to all members of the advisory committee for approval and prior to its being typed in final form a minimum of two weeks in advance of the oral defense. The defense may cover the thesis and the general field of communication. After the committee has approved the thesis, it should be typed in final thesis form. Be sure that you follow the regulations published in the Graduate School Thesis Guide. You may obtain a copy from 115A Kern Graduate Building or by visiting the Graduate School web page:

<http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/enroll/thesisguide.html>

When your thesis has received final approval, you should deliver the original copy to the Graduate School, a bound copy to the departmental office for the departmental library, and—as a professional courtesy—a bound copy to your adviser.

9. Advancement to the Ph.D. program is not automatic. M.A. candidates who wish to advance to the Ph.D. program must submit a formal letter of application, as well as three letters of recommendation from appropriate faculty. If granted admission to the Ph.D. program, and upon successful completion of the M.A. degree, the Graduate Officer or department Head will notify the Graduate School of the change in the applicant's degree status.

Ph.D. Calendar

1. Prior to your acceptance as a candidate for the Ph.D. degree, you should plan to remove any deficiencies noted as a condition of admission. You should plan your total program, which includes designated areas in communication and proposed work outside the department. The subject area for the dissertation ordinarily is discussed at the time of the candidacy examination.
2. Prior to completion of 12 credit hours of graduate work beyond the M.A., and not later than your second semester of full-time study in the Ph.D. program, you will take a candidacy examination. This is an oral examination conducted by three or four members of the department's graduate faculty and a graduate faculty representative of your outside field(s). The purpose of this examination is three-fold: (a) to determine whether you have achieved a level of learning and

understanding sufficient to justify formal acceptance as a doctoral candidate; (b) to discover what further study is required to bring you to the competency required for the degree you seek; and (c) to secure approval of a program of course work and independent study required to achieve the competencies you need to have to qualify you to conduct the dissertation research you are considering, as well as later in your academic and profession life. The particulars of each doctoral candidate's program of study and research are defined on the basis of the candidacy examination. You must complete all requirements for the Ph.D. degree within eight years of your acceptance as a candidate.

Prior to the candidacy examination, you will prepare in writing, and in consultation with your adviser, a statement concerning (a) why you seek the Ph.D. degree, (b) your background of studies including a list of relevant courses already taken and pertinent experience, (c) your proposed program of further study that includes courses you intend to take, and (d) the general area of research you propose for your dissertation. Provided that the candidacy examination leads to your acceptance as a candidate, you will prepare, in consultation with your adviser and your committee, a document outlining the form and content areas of your comprehensive exams. After your admission to candidacy and consultation with you, your adviser will recommend to the department Head or Graduate Officer the membership of your committee (See Graduate Student Committee Procedures: <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/policies/faculty/committee.html>). Assuming endorsement, the department Head or Graduate Officer will then recommend that the Dean of the Graduate School appoint your committee. Changes in the composition of the committee require the concurrence of the department Head or Graduate Officer and should be requested only in such instances as departure of existing members from the faculty, significant alteration in a previously approved program of study, the need for particular expertise not possessed by extant members, and irreconcilable personal differences unrelated to the quality of the candidate's academic performance. Since the Graduate School appoints Ph.D. committees, only it has the authority to approve changes in their membership.

NOTE: No student seeking the Ph.D. degree will be admitted to candidacy before the completion of his or her master's degree, nor is progression to the Ph.D. program automatic. M.A. candidates should not be taking course work toward the Ph.D. degree prior to completion of the M.A. degree requirements or prior to advancement to the Ph.D. program.

3. Following your acceptance as a doctoral candidate, the department expects that you will take such course work as you and your committee have agreed on, pass the courses necessary to complete the requirements appropriate to your degree program, pursue independent reading in the areas of your specialization, and familiarize yourself with the principal professional journals in communication and related fields. The department urges you to become a member of state, regional, national, and international professional organizations and will assist, as far as it can, in making it possible for you to attend the conventions of such professional associations. The department expects the period of doctoral study to be devoted not simply to formal study, but also to apprentice participation in the professional enterprises of your chosen academic field.
4. When your required course work is complete, you will, with the approval of your adviser and committee members, schedule a comprehensive examination.
5. The comprehensive examination may consist of fourteen to sixteen hours of responding to questions from your committee "in house," or it may involve writing research papers over a specified period of time in response to questions from your committee. The character and content areas of the written portion of your comprehensive exam will be determined by your committee immediately following your admission to candidacy. Shortly after the written examinations are completed, you will be given an oral examination by the members of your committee.

In general, the comprehensive examination covers in depth the areas of your specialization and your outside field of study. The examination always includes questions designed to determine your competency to interpret theoretical postulates and research findings in your area of specialization and your preparation to do research of the sort you have proposed. Questions will

also cover three or four areas related to your principal subject of study. The areas covered in the examination should reflect your overall program of study and will be specified in a document prepared by you and your committee at the time of your admission to candidacy. For example, if you specialize in public address, four hours of the comprehensive examination might be devoted to the history of public address, two or three hours to contemporary public address, two or three hours to rhetorical theory and criticism, and two hours to communication theory. From two to four hours would be devoted to questions on the outside field. It is the responsibility of the committee chair to review questions submitted by committee members in advance of the exam to insure that they conform to the plan agreed upon at the time of your admission to candidacy.

Comprehensive examinations traditionally have been written "in house," although exceptions to this rule are now common. In-house comprehensive examinations are ordinarily scheduled during the second full week of classes in the fall semester and the first full week of April for spring semester.

You must be registered for the semester in which you take comprehensives. This also includes summer session if you receive an exception to schedule comprehensives during that time.

Following the oral portion of your comprehensive examination, your committee will decide by majority vote whether you have passed, failed, or are to be given an opportunity to take all or part of the examination again, under specified conditions, at a specified date. Failure by two or more members of the committee constitutes a non-pass, regardless of committee size.

NOTE: In preparation for the comprehensive examination, candidates may freely examine the file of questions prepared for such examinations, which may be secured from the departmental secretary. Of course, these questions are merely examples. New questions are prepared for every examination.

6. After successful completion of the comprehensive examination, you should present to your committee a "research proposal" for the dissertation. This proposal will be evaluated, possibly edited, and then accepted, modified, or rejected following a two-hour oral examination of the proposal conducted by the committee. Upon receiving approval of one's proposal, work on the dissertation should, of course, proceed with all deliberate speed.
7. The defense draft of your dissertation must be circulated to all members of the advisory committee and prior to its being typed in final form a minimum of two weeks in advance of the oral defense. The defense will be devoted chiefly to the dissertation but may cover any subject on which you are presumed to be competent. When the dissertation is approved by the committee, it should be put into final form. Follow the instructions in the Graduate School Thesis Guide, which is available online at: <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/enroll/thesisguide.html>.

When your dissertation has received official approval, you must deliver the original copy to the Graduate School, a bound copy to the departmental office for the departmental library, and—as a professional courtesy—a bound copy to your adviser.

8. The defense normally commences with queries by committee members concerning the dissertation. However, it may take any form the committee feels is most appropriate to enable it to reach a sound judgment concerning a candidate's qualifications for conferral of the Ph.D. degree.

Policy for Completion of Thesis/Dissertation Revisions following Defense Meeting

Students are expected to complete revisions to a successfully defended thesis or dissertation and have them submitted to the advisor within 60 calendar days following the defense meeting. Failure to complete

revisions in this timeframe may adversely affect the student's teaching opportunities, which may include, but are not limited to, continuing education, world campus, and resident instruction.

Outside Coursework

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences has adopted an expanded and flexible requirement intended to combine work in traditional areas within the discipline with work in a cognate discipline or disciplines. Ph.D. students are required to take a minimum of 15 credits outside the department, although the actual number of credits and the types of courses included are determined by the student's committee in light of his or her specific program and prior training.

This requirement is broadly interpreted by the department to include both courses intended to enhance the student's research competencies (such as foreign languages, statistics, or research methodologies) and substantive work in such fields as history or psychology. Only course work taken outside the department may count toward satisfying this requirement. With committee approval, doctoral students may count courses taken outside communication in partial fulfillment of the M.A. toward meeting this requirement. Further, courses applied toward this requirement need not all be taken in the same outside department.

Academic Progress

1. Graduate students must have their permanent advisers chosen by the second week of the second semester in residence or prior to the completion of 12 credit hours, whichever comes first. Advisers are responsible for monitoring student progress according to the criteria established for continuation of support (see numbers 2–4 under “Financial Support”). Reports of student performance are solicited annually by the Graduate Officer. The Graduate Officer summarizes these reports for transmittal to the department Head.
2. Advisers (committee chairs) are responsible for conducting the following meetings in accordance with regulations and guidelines established by the Graduate School and by the department:
 - a. Program review for M.A. students to be completed before the end of full-time students' second semester
 - b. Thesis proposal meeting prior to undertaking the thesis
 - c. Final examination for M.A. candidates
 - d. Candidacy examination for Ph.D. students to be completed before the end of full-time students' second semester
 - e. Written and oral comprehensive examination for Ph.D. candidates
 - f. Dissertation proposal meeting prior to undertaking the dissertation
 - g. Final examination for the Ph.D. dissertation
3. Advisers (committee chairpersons) are responsible for returning completed reports of each doctoral level examination to the Graduate School promptly. Completed reports of M.A. examinations and Ph.D. candidacy examinations should be returned to the departmental office immediately following them.
4. In cases in which the candidate has partly or provisionally passed the Ph.D. comprehensive or final oral examination on a thesis or dissertation, advisers (committee chairpersons) are responsible for promptly and explicitly reporting in writing the requirements for successful completion of the examination to the Graduate School and to the candidate. For example, a candidate may have to rewrite a portion of the comprehensive examination. In such cases, the

student and the Graduate School should be notified in writing regarding precisely what is expected.

Committee Meetings

Overview of Scheduling Exams

To permit faculty adequate time to evaluate a candidate's work carefully, as noted above, copies of M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations must be in the committee's possession a minimum of *two weeks* prior to the scheduled defense. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be provided to committee members at least one week in advance of the scheduled proposal review. Due to the added faculty responsibilities at the beginning and near the end of semesters, ***no graduate student examinations may be scheduled during the first or last week of classes or during final exam week.*** Exams may be scheduled during the summer session with the approval of the committee chairperson and the members of the student's committee.

It is the student's responsibility to schedule all meetings with his or her committee and inform the graduate staff assistant of the time for the meetings. The graduate staff assistant will then schedule a room for the meeting, provide formal notice to the committee, and notify the Graduate School of the meeting, if necessary.

Specifics for Scheduling M.A. Exams

1. **Program Review**
 - See [Program of study proposal and review: an overview](#)
 - Secure day and time from committee members
 - Notify graduate staff assistant (must have at least one week notice)
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room and notify committee members
 - Proposal must be provided to committee one week prior
 - Graduate staff assistant will prepare exam paperwork
2. **Thesis Proposal Review**
 - Secure day and time from committee members
 - Notify graduate staff assistant (must have at least one week notice)
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room and notify committee members
 - Proposal must be provided to committee one week prior
 - Graduate staff assistant will prepare exam paperwork
3. **Thesis Defense**
 - Secure day and time from committee members
 - Notify graduate staff assistant (must have at least one week notice)
 - [thesis/dissertation defense readiness form](#)
 - Thesis document must be submitted to the department head with signature page
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room and notify committee members
 - Thesis must be provided to committee two weeks prior
 - Graduate staff assistant will prepare exam paperwork

Specifics for Scheduling Ph.D. Exams

- **Candidacy Exam**
 - See [Program of study proposal and review: an overview](#)
 - Secure day and time from committee members
 - Notify graduate staff assistant (must have at least one week notice)

- Graduate staff assistant will schedule room and notify committee members
- Proposal must be provided to committee one week prior
- Graduate staff assistant will prepare exam paperwork
- **Comprehensive Exam**
 - Consists of written and oral portions
 - Must be registered during the semester the exams are taking place (even if occurring during summer session)
 - Written portion should be scheduled with graduate staff assistant three weeks prior
 - Graduate staff assistant will collect questions from committee members
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room and computer for written portion (if needed)
 - Student will pick up questions as scheduled from the graduate staff assistant and return upon completion with response
 - Graduate staff assistant will distribute all responses to all committee members
 - Student will secure day and time from committee members for oral portion
 - Student will notify graduate staff assistant of oral time (must have at least two weeks notice)
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room, notify committee members and Graduate School
 - Graduate School will prepare exam paperwork and forward to department
- **Dissertation Proposal Review**
 - Secure day and time from committee members
 - Notify graduate staff assistant (must have at least one week notice)
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room and notify committee members
 - Proposal must be provided to committee one week prior
 - Graduate staff assistant will prepare exam paperwork
- **Dissertation Defense**
 - Dissertation document must be submitted to the department head with signature page
 - Secure day and time from committee members
 - Notify graduate staff assistant (must have at least two weeks notice)
 - [thesis/dissertation defense readiness form](#)
 - Graduate staff assistant will schedule room, notify committee members and Graduate School
 - Dissertation must be provided to committee two weeks prior
 - Graduate School will prepare exam paperwork and forward to department

Program of Study Proposal and Review: An Overview

The purpose of constructing a proposed program of study and having it approved is to establish early a set of courses and a possible thesis/dissertation topic that enable one to meet degree-related scholarly and professional goals.

The proposed program of study:

1. articulates the student's objectives;
2. establishes the courses that the student should take to meet his or her objectives;
3. provides a means for assessing the student's capability to complete the proposed program of study;
4. is a gateway to candidacy for the degree sought; and, accordingly,
5. represents an important rite of passage in one's progress toward the degree objective.

The responsibility for constructing the program of study and arranging for its review are with the student. I suggest the following steps:

1. find a permanent advisor who can help you identify and achieve your goals;
2. discuss with your advisor potential committee members and courses;
3. prepare your proposed program of study proposal and revise it according to your advisor's recommendations;
4. submit the proposal to your committee at least two weeks in advance of the meeting (which you will need to arrange with the members and notify Wendy Clark);
5. meet with your committee at the time set and answer all questions concerning the proposed program, as well as related matters as directly as possible; and,
6. following the meeting, revise your program of study to reflect any changes required by the committee.

The proposed program of study can be a relatively short document, usually no more than 5-10 pages in length. The content of programs of study varies among students and advisors; however, at minimum, it should include:

1. a clear statement regarding your scholarly and professional goals (often including a brief history);
2. completed and planned courses (number, title, and semester taken or to be taken) that help you meet your goals;
3. a discussion of the relationship of the courses to your scholarly and professional goals; and
4. a possible thesis/dissertation topic.

Your program of study remains a proposal until you have had a meeting with your advisory committee. If the committee approves the proposed program of study (with or without modification), you will become a candidate in the department for the degree you specified in your application. Please realize that your program of study represents a plan—it can be changed with the approval of your committee. Each of us has preferences regarding what the program of study involves. So, be sure to discuss the content of your program proposal with your advisor before setting a meeting with all committee members. Finally, be sure that the proposal, as developed, satisfies all Departmental and Graduate School requirements relating to the particular degree objective of interest.

Thesis/Dissertation Defense Readiness Form

Thesis/Dissertation Defense Meeting:

I [We] judge the thesis/dissertation of _____ [thesis/doctoral student's name] to be ready for the thesis/dissertation committee members to review and appropriate for setting a defense date.

This does not preclude committee members' rights to ask for a postponement of the defense date should they judge the document to be in need of revision prior to a defense.

_____ [Advisor's Signature] _____ [Date]

_____ [Co-Advisor's Signature] _____ [Date]

[Graduate Student: Please present this signed form to Wendy Harter when scheduling your meeting for defense of the thesis or dissertation.]

Graduate Assistants

Privileges and Responsibilities

As a graduate assistant, your tuition charges are remitted for the semesters covered by your appointment. Furthermore, following two successive semesters of service, tuition is remitted for summer session up to 9 credits. If you are appointed as a graduate lecturer, tuition is remitted for up to 5 credits. However, you must apply for this additional tuition assistance.

In accepting appointment, you join in the department's teaching mission and will have specified educational functions to perform. The proper performance of these responsibilities is the principal charge for all of us. Unacceptable performance of assigned responsibilities will lead to termination of an appointment.

Unless you have unusual qualifications, you will be required to register for 2 credits of CAS 602, Supervised Experience in College Teaching, in each of your first two semesters. You also may wish to take advantage of the teaching mentor program conducted by the Graduate Forum, in which new graduate students receive guidance from experienced teaching assistants during their first year.

You also will be required to register for one credit of CAS 590, Colloquium, in each of your first two semesters in the program. You need not register for Colloquium after your first year, but you are strongly encouraged to attend Colloquium throughout your graduate career at Penn State. Colloquium helps sustain the intellectual community of the department by providing opportunities for scholarly dialogue and professional development.

Graduate assistants generally teach independent sections of CAS 100 or assist in lecture-lab sections of other courses. Depending on the needs of the department, you may be assigned other, equivalent duties at the discretion of the department Head. You may intern undergraduate courses other than CAS 100A by contacting the instructor in charge, securing his or her approval, and registering for 1 credit of CAS 602, Supervised Teaching in Communication Arts and Sciences. Generally, you will not be assigned to teach a course unless you have experience teaching or interning that course. Interning a course, however, does not guarantee the right to teach it and should be viewed as part of your professional development.

Financial Support

1. The principal criterion for awarding financial support is the applicant's promise for scholarly and professional growth, productivity, and contributions to knowledge.
2. To continue receiving financial support, a student must have achieved a GPA of at least 3.0 at the conclusion of each semester. Students who do not meet this requirement will be notified that financial support will end at termination of the contract.
3. Students receiving financial support who earn two grades of C will be notified that their financial support will be terminated at the end of their current contract.
4. The number of years of financial support available to graduate assistants in good standing typically is two years for the completion of an M.A. degree and three years beyond the M.A. degree for completion of a Ph.D. degree program. In cases in which the student begins a degree program without support, only the remainder of the maximum number of years of support will be available. For example, a student working toward an M.A. degree who had completed 18 credits beyond the B.A. degree would be eligible for one year at half-time, and a student working toward a Ph.D., who had completed 18 credits beyond the M.A., would be eligible for two years at half-time. These guidelines shall apply to students who receive credit for graduate work completed elsewhere.
5. Ph.D. applicants who received support as M.A. students in this program may not presume automatic continuation of support. Eligibility for continued financial support depends on the

applicant's promise for scholarly and professional growth, productivity, and contributions to knowledge as compared with other Ph.D. applicants.

6. Relinquishing appointment as a graduate teaching assistant carries no assurance of reappointment. If the individual relinquishing an assistantship wishes to be reappointed, he or she must so indicate to the Graduate Officer. The request will be considered along with all other applications for financial support.

Professional Progress

1. Faculty supervisors of activities to which graduate student assistants are assigned are responsible for assessing the students' competence in the performance of their assigned tasks.
2. When a graduate student assistant's performance of responsibilities does not satisfy the basic requirements of an assignment or does not meet the supervisor's expectations of competence, he or she should be referred by the supervisor to the Graduate Officer and the department Head. In response to such referrals, necessary consultation, review, and adjustment in assignments should be undertaken by the department Head, supervisor, and graduate assistant promptly.
3. Graduate student assistants tentatively assigned to CAS 100 are responsible for establishing evidence of their preparation for that assignment through participation in the teaching assistant training program. Before making final assignments, the CAS 100 Coordinator determines the adequacy of each student's preparation. In cases in which the student is judged to be inadequately prepared for that assignment, the student either receives an alternative assignment or is notified that his or her appointment is not being renewed.

Semester Release Policy

As a result of the course reduction implementation (3 courses per year) and the growing number of semester releases, the department has devised the following policy:

For a half-time teaching or research assistantship (currently, a typical 2/1 teaching load), students are expected to work 20 hours per week on teaching and/or research assistant activities. That expectation holds for both semesters. Students in their one-course-instruction semester are expected to translate any hourly gain in instructional workload to the areas of research or scholarship. With that clarification as background, students who receive an award that provides for a one-semester release from teaching (or other duties) will be released from their teaching duties during the semester in which they would have otherwise been assigned one course (or equivalent assignment for other duties). This policy applies to semester-release awards regardless of funding source (e.g., RGSO dissertation award, Sparks Fellowship award) and is consistent with RA assignments as outlined below.

NOTE: The rationale behind the enlightened policy of 1-course release each year is simple: It provides you with additional time to conduct research, build your CV, think deeply, and graduate on time. The same rationale underlies the research release that you receive from the department (and sometimes the college) for your dissertation. Please be advised that during any released semester the expectation is that you will devote your time to research, not to additional teaching. In fact, departmental policy is that you may not teach an overload from Continuing Ed, World Campus, or the department during a released semester. We attempt to monitor all of this from the front office, but our system is not foolproof. So, if you receive an offer to teach from CE or WC (or even the CAS dept!) or to engage in any other kind of overload during a released semester, it would be appropriate for you to decline that offer and to focus, instead, on your research.

Overload Policy

- Rationale
 - The Pennsylvania State University provides a guideline for faculty relating to time spent on consulting practices. A parallel guideline has been deemed appropriate for students

funded with TA and/or RA monies during their graduate education, both to be consistent with university policy and for the benefit of our students. As per the Pennsylvania State University's graduate handbook: "A graduate assistant may accept concurrent employment outside the University only with permission from the assistantship department head and the assistant's graduate academic program chair." The below policy applies both to employment outside the University and overload requests within the university.

- Definition
 - An overload shall be defined as any paid duties beyond the contracted TA or RA duties (e.g., other teaching assignment, work outside the university, work inside the university). These duties include overload instruction within the department, World Campus or Continuing Education instruction, and part- or full-time jobs within or outside the university, among other examples.
- Criteria for determining whether an overload is possible
 - The graduate student must be making satisfactory progress toward the degree, although exceptional progress is the preferred minimum for allowing overloads. Overloads of any sort are strongly discouraged unless the benefit to the student is unambiguous.

Satisfactory progress includes, but need not be limited to:

- a GPA of 3.0 in the dept and of 3.0 overall
- the complete absence of any Incompletes
- satisfactory progress in coursework, in completing other degree requirements and on all teaching, research and/or course-related expectations. For ABD students, this includes concrete progress on the dissertation in the six months prior to the request.

Beyond meeting the requirement for satisfactory progress, requests will be evaluated for the extent to which the overload would contribute in an important way to the student's educational and professional development. In addition, each request will be examined within a wholistic analysis of the student's status in the program, any previous overload requests, her/his course load, and other teaching and research expectations.

- Process for requesting an overload

It is the responsibility of the graduate student to inform the graduate director in writing of his/her request for an overload. The request must clearly identify the particular overload being sought and justify its appropriateness using the stated criteria for considering such requests. The graduate director, in consultation with the student's advisor, will then (a) assess whether the graduate student is making satisfactory progress and (b) judge whether the overload is likely to impede subsequent progress towards completion of the degree. The Graduate Director, following such consultation, will make the recommendation as to the permissibility of the overload, with the Department Head having final decisional authority. A decision will be rendered within 3-4 weeks after the request was submitted. Multiple overload requests (e.g., requests to teach two CE course in the same semester, requests to teach CE course across two different semesters) require separate request submissions. Overloads that continue across semesters require new requests for approval each semester.

- Penalties for violating the policy

Violations of the policy will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Violating the policy may result in a range of actions, from initiating probationary status to termination of funding.

RA Assignment Policy

RA Assignments will be made as follows:

- RAs assigned as 1/4 time for one semester teach 3 courses (1 in the semester assigned RA duties and 2 in the semester not assigned RA duties)
- RAs assigned 1/4 time for one year teach 2 courses (1 each semester)
- RAs assigned 1/2 time for one semester teach 2 courses (2 in the semester not assigned RA duties)
- RAs assigned 1/2 time for the year teach 0 courses

Instructor Absences from Class

Teaching your scheduled classes, whether at the beginning of the semester, the end of the semester, before holidays, or during the rest of the semester, is a minimum requirement for all instructors, no matter what your rank or status. If you know in advance that you must be absent from a class for reasons such as attending a conference, you are expected to notify your department head ahead of time and, within the options approved by each department head, inform the head how the class will be handled in your absence. It is the head's role to approve or not approve the absence. It is not acceptable to reschedule classes, with the exception of independent studies or small graduate courses if this is done in a way that does not shorten the semester or lengthen vacations.

If you are teaching online, or partly online ("blended learning"), it is your responsibility to keep up to date with the course schedule and to promptly respond to student messages and grade their assignments. If you will not be able to do so, you must inform your department head how the class will be handled in your absence; as with residence-education courses, it is the head's role to approve or not approve the absence.

Of course, unanticipated absences for reasons such as sudden illness or injury or serious family emergency are exceptions to this requirement. Obviously, it is not possible in those situations to make arrangements in advance, but you should provide notification to the head as soon as possible.