



Department of Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Handbook

Revised Summer 2026



PennState
College of the Liberal Arts

Table of Contents

<i>Mission and Values.....</i>	<i>1</i>
Mission Statement.....	1
Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.....	1
Penn State Acknowledgement of Land	2
Graduate Program Mission and Goals	2
Research.....	2
Teaching.....	3
Service.....	3
Penn State Graduate Council’s Scholarly and Professional Goals for all Graduate Students	4
Graduate Learning Objectives for the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences ..	4
General Degree Expectations and Requirements in CAS	6
Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) (formerly SARI)	7
Statement on Publication as a Graduate Student	7
Components of the Rhetorical Studies and Communication Sciences Areas of the Graduate Program.....	8
Assistantships and Funding Available to Support Graduate Students	8
Other Funding Opportunities.....	9
Dual-Title Ph.D. Degrees in Communication Arts and Sciences	9
Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and Bioethics.....	10
Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and African American and Diaspora Studies.....	10
Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.....	11
<i>Requirements for the M.A. program in CAS.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Credit requirements	11
Course Requirements (including outside credits and methods credits).....	12
Other Requirements:	12
<i>Requirements for the Ph.D. program in CAS.....</i>	<i>13</i>
Credit requirements	13
Course Requirements (including outside credits and methods credits).....	13
Other Requirements:	13
<i>Earning Your Degree.....</i>	<i>13</i>
Advising Graduate Students in Communication Arts and Sciences	13
First-Year Faculty Adviser:	14
Permanent Faculty Adviser:.....	14
Master’s or Doctoral Committee:	14
M.A. Milestone Meetings.....	15

Program of Study Proposal Meeting.....	15
Thesis Proposal Meeting	15
Thesis Defense Meeting.....	15
Ph.D. Milestone Meetings.....	16
Qualifying Exam.....	16
Comprehensive Exams.....	17
Dissertation Prospectus Defense	17
Dissertation Defense	18
Developing a Program of Study Proposal or Qualifying Exam	18
Taking Comprehensive Exams	19
Questions to Help Prepare for Comprehensive Exams.....	20
Preparing a Thesis Proposal or a Dissertation Prospectus	20
Questions to help prepare for a dissertation prospectus	21
Writing and Defending a Thesis or a Dissertation	22
Finalizing and Formatting a Thesis or a Dissertation.....	22
Scheduling committee meetings and exams for degree milestones	23
Format of Milestone Exams.....	23
What if I fail a milestone meeting?	24
Milestone Accommodations through Student Disability Resources (SDR)	24
Annual Review Process	25
Satisfactory academic progress.....	26
<i>Graduate Assistantships.....</i>	<i>26</i>
Expectations	26
Financial support conveyed by a Graduate Assistantship.....	27
Monitoring and assessing professional progress in Graduate Assistantships	27
Semester release policy (2/1 Teaching Load Policy).....	28
Overload policy	28
Research Assistant Assignments.....	30
Summer Research Assistantships	30
Requirements concerning an instructor's absence from class.....	31
Resources for Research and Funding Opportunities	31
CAS 100A Participant Pool	32
Research Retainers.....	32
Conference Travel.....	32
Graduate Research Awards	33
Specialized Training Awards.....	34
Dissertation Awards.....	35
Other Sources of Funding.....	35
Other Resources across Penn State for Graduate Students	35

Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship	36
<i>Program Roadmap and Timeline for Students Seeking a Master's Degree¹</i>	38
Prelude: Before Year 1	38
Year 1: Fall Semester/Semester 1	38
Year 1: Spring Semester/Semester 2.....	39
Year 2: Fall Semester / Semester 3	41
Year 2: Spring Semester / Semester 4.....	41
Summary of the Requirements for a Master's Degree.....	42
Other Requirements:	42
Portfolio option for an M.A. degree in Communication Arts and Sciences	43
Three-Part Process.....	43
<i>Program Roadmap and Timeline for Students Seeking a Doctoral Degree²</i>	44
Prelude: Before Year 1	45
Year 1: Fall Semester/Semester 1	45
Year 1: Spring Semester/Semester 2.....	46
Year 2: Fall Semester / Semester 3	48
Year 2: Spring Semester / Semester 4.....	48
Year 3:.....	49
Special Note on Comprehensive Exams.....	49
Year 3: Fall Semester, Semester 5	50
Year 3: Spring Semester, Semester 6.....	51
Year 4: Fall and Spring Semester	51
Summary of the Requirements for a Doctoral Degree.....	52
Credit Requirements:.....	52
Additional Considerations:	52
Other Requirements:	52
<i>An Annotated Version of Graduate School Policies</i>	53
<i>Graduate Courses in CAS</i>	62
Course Taken by All Students	62
Communication Sciences Courses.....	62
Rhetoric Courses.....	63
<i>Graduate Forum</i>	64
<i>Master's Program Checklist</i>	66
<i>Doctoral Program Checklist</i>	69

Mission and Values

Mission Statement

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences is committed to the study, teaching, and practice of human communication for the betterment of Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world. Using methods and theories that span the humanities and social sciences, we create knowledge about the role of communication in diverse interpersonal, communal, national, international, and cultural settings. Our research is integral to our educational mission: to promote greater understanding of—and facility with—oral, written, and nonverbal communication.

Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Pennsylvania State University adheres to the following Values Statement:

INTEGRITY: We act with integrity and honesty in accordance with the highest academic, professional, and ethical standards.

RESPECT: We respect and honor the dignity of each person, embrace civil discourse, and foster a diverse and inclusive community.

RESPONSIBILITY: We act responsibly, and we are accountable for our decisions, actions, and their consequences.

DISCOVERY: We seek and create new knowledge and understanding, and foster creativity and innovation, for the benefit of our communities, society, and the environment.

EXCELLENCE: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors as individuals, an institution, and a leader in higher education.

COMMUNITY: We work together for the betterment of our University, the communities we serve, and the world.

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences builds on those values and embraces the Penn State Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: "The Pennsylvania State University is committed to and accountable for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its forms. We embrace individual uniqueness, foster a culture of inclusion that supports both broad and specific diversity initiatives, leverage the educational and institutional benefits of diversity, and engage all individuals to help them thrive. We value inclusion as a core strength and an essential element of our public service mission."

At Penn State:

- We will foster and maintain a safe environment of respect and inclusion for faculty, staff, students, and members of the communities we serve.
- We will educate our faculty, staff, and students to be social justice advocates, creatively providing curricula, programs, and environments that reflect the diversity of our communities, and elevate cultural awareness.
- We will ensure fair and inclusive access to our facilities, programs, resources, and services, and ensure that all of our policies and practices are inclusive and equitable.
- We will advance and build our workforce by assessing hiring practices and performance review procedures to attract, retain, and develop talented faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds.
- We will address intergroup disparities in areas such as representation, retention, learning outcomes, and graduation rates.

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at Penn State strives for the same goals and ideals.

Penn State Acknowledgement of Land

The Penn State University campuses are located on the original homelands of the Erie, Haudenosaunee (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora), Lenape (Delaware Nation, Delaware Tribe, Stockbridge-Munsee), Shawnee (Absentee, Eastern, and Oklahoma), Susquehannock, and Wahzhazhe (Osage) Nations. As a land grant institution, we acknowledge and honor the traditional caretakers of these lands and strive to understand and model their responsible stewardship. We also acknowledge the longer history of these lands and our place in that history.

Graduate Program Mission and Goals

The mission of the graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences (CAS) is to provide exceptional graduate education in communication sciences and rhetorical studies. The overarching goal of the program is to train the next generation of scholars who will define the future of the communication discipline, both inside and outside the academy. This training focuses on cultivating excellence in research, teaching, and service.

Research

The graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences places a high priority on the creation and evaluation of research. Building on the Penn State values articulated above, and by valuing theoretical sophistication, methodological rigor, and critical thinking, the graduate program endeavors to produce scholars who will be informed producers and critics of research both within and outside academia. Expertise in research is gained by accomplishing three interrelated goals.

First, graduates of the graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences will demonstrate mastery of one or more substantive topic areas. These substantive topics areas can include, but are not limited to, interpersonal communication, persuasion, health communication, computer-mediated communication, political deliberation, public address, rhetorical criticism and theory, and critical theory. When possible, students are encouraged to become familiar with substantive topics in other fields and conduct interdisciplinary research.

A second goal is to develop a mastery of appropriate scholarly tools and methods. These methods can include practices of criticism, statistics, archival methods, survey research, historical methods, and experimental designs. When appropriate, students are encouraged to build or develop theory to address their research interests, including testing the boundary conditions and pushing the claims of existing theories and models. Students in the graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences are expected to choose the methodological tools that are best suited and most appropriate to the types of questions they seek to answer.

A third goal is to gain practice in the craft of conducting research, including the generation of ideas, the conduct of studies, the process of reviewing, and the dissemination of results. The graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences seeks to train scholars to conduct their own research to advance their careers and, as part of our mission, to generate new knowledge for the benefit of all. Through the practice and internalization of ethical and rigorous research practices, the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences trains future generations of scholars, teachers, practitioners, and critical consumers of research.

Teaching

The graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences values high-quality teaching and provides opportunities to improve the teaching experiences of its students. Teaching, especially in courses that match a student's area of research, provides an additional level of mastery of a topic area beyond researching and writing about it. We see teaching and research as mutually beneficial, such that engaging conversations in the classroom lead to novel research ideas, and the opportunity to transmit new findings to students makes for a more informed citizenry. This is not just a research department; rather, students in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences are expected to be strong teachers who convey knowledge to their students, while appreciating the diverse experiences students bring to the classroom.

Service

The graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences believes its students should be prepared to contribute to the success of their future departments, institutions, and communities, as well as to the communication discipline. The academy, institutions or organizations, and the world are often better places when a multiplicity of people volunteer and serve on behalf of others. The education students receive in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences could lead them to be more informed

and better engaged citizens, wherever life takes them. We expect our students to be supportive and respectful of others, develop an appreciation for diverse interests and methodological perspectives, and show a willingness to contribute to the department through avenues such as the Graduate Forum. The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences encourages graduate students to be involved in all major departmental committees, including job search committees. Student roles on these committees are formalized through leadership positions that are defined by by-laws of the Graduate Forum. Although the program values service to ensure a healthy community and as a form of professional development, the faculty understand that graduate students have several competing, and potentially more important, responsibilities. Consequently, students can decide what service they want to perform at their discretion, and service is not something that students can perform at an unsatisfactory level on assessments like an annual review.

Penn State Graduate Council's Scholarly and Professional Goals for all Graduate Students

The goals for all graduate degree students enrolled in the Graduate School at Penn State are to:

- Demonstrate appropriate breadth and depth of disciplinary knowledge, and comprehension of the major issues of their discipline;
- Use disciplinary methods and techniques to apply knowledge, and—if appropriate to the degree—create new knowledge or achieve advanced creative accomplishment;
- Communicate the major issues of their discipline effectively;
- Demonstrate analytical and critical thinking within their discipline, and, where appropriate, across disciplines; and
- Know and conduct themselves in accordance with the highest ethical standards, values, and, where these are defined, the best practices of their discipline.

Graduate Learning Objectives for the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences

The Program Learning Objectives identified by the graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences are listed below and map onto the Graduate Council's Scholarly and Professional Goals for All Graduate Students (GCAC-201) as indicated in the parentheses. These Learning Objectives were updated in the spring of 2024.

Degree	Objective
Ph.D.	Graduates will demonstrate an advanced knowledge and expertise of the history of and current developments in rhetoric or communication science theory along with other matters of importance to the discipline

Ph.D.	Graduates will demonstrate an advanced capacity to organize, synthesize, and critique both the traditional and current theoretical and methodological literature relevant to their area of disciplinary specialization, and, where appropriate, across disciplines
Ph.D.	Graduates will formulate and execute a sophisticated independent research project that significantly furthers knowledge and theory in rhetoric or communication science, and, where appropriate, across disciplines
Ph.D.	Graduates will demonstrate comprehensive experience and expertise in scholarly writing, presentation, or publication in which they articulate ideas, arguments, and evidence with clarity, creativity, and compatibility with the conventions of the discipline
Ph.D.	Graduates will demonstrate a thorough repertoire of professional practices through conference participation, and disciplinary engagement
Ph.D.	Graduates will display advanced capacity to deliver effective undergraduate and graduate instruction, including course design and delivery
Ph.D.	Graduates will demonstrate an advanced ability and expertise to connect theory to research in ways that advance compelling arguments for scholarly and practical endeavors
Ph.D.	Graduates will display an advanced proficiency in the methods and analyses that are required for rhetoric or communication science.
M.A.	Graduates will demonstrate a foundational knowledge and familiarity of the history of and current developments in rhetoric or communication science theory along with other matters of importance to the discipline
M.A.	Graduates will demonstrate an intermediate capacity to organize, synthesize, and critique both the traditional and current theoretical and methodological literature relevant to their area of disciplinary specialization, and, where appropriate, across disciplines
MA	Graduates will formulate and execute an independent research project that contributes to knowledge and theory in rhetoric or communication science, and, where appropriate, across disciplines
M.A.	Graduates will develop experience and familiarity in scholarly writing, presentation, or publication in which they articulate ideas, arguments, and evidence with clarity, creativity, and compatibility with the conventions of the discipline
M.A.	Graduates will begin developing professional practices through conference participation, and disciplinary engagement
M.A.	Graduates will begin developing the capacity to deliver effective undergraduate and graduate instruction, including course design and delivery

Degree	Objective
M.A.	Graduates will develop an ability and familiarity to connect theory to research in ways that advance compelling arguments for scholarly and practical endeavors
M.A.	Graduates will develop a proficiency in the methods and analyses that are required for rhetoric or communication science.

General Degree Expectations and Requirements in CAS

Graduate study in Communication Arts and Sciences assumes an interest in pursuing doctoral-level work for the Ph.D. Students who have not previously earned a master's degree complete an M.A. thesis, receive their M.A. degree, and submit an abbreviated application requesting advancement to the Ph.D. program. This procedure offers both the student and the faculty a natural point to determine whether continuing in the program is in the best interest of the student. Students advancing to the Ph.D. program are automatically eligible for continued financial support.

Receiving a graduate degree in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences is tailored to a student's specific needs, goals, and interests. Programs of study are developed by individual students in consultation with their graduate faculty committees. Beyond a few specific requirements, graduate students work with their graduate committees to determine the program of study that will best prepare them for their scholarly and professional careers. Each student selects the members of their dissertation committee and develops their own curriculum.

Individual programs of study represent one of the special features of graduate study in communication at Penn State. 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.

Although there are few formal requirements for a graduate degree in Communication Arts and Sciences, the rhetoric faculty expect that graduate students in rhetoric will take CAS 503 Rhetorical Criticism, CAS 507 Issues in Rhetorical Theory, and 505 Historical Development of Rhetorical Theory. M.A. students are expected to take all three of these courses. Ph.D. students are expected to take at least two of these courses; they can opt out of one if they have appropriate background and with committee approval.

These three courses will be taught at least every third semester to ensure that all students will be able to take them. Of course, other more specialized courses will be taught regularly depending on faculty availability and student interest.

The communication sciences faculty expect that graduate students will have coursework in research methods, theory, and substantive content areas that supports their research interests.

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) (formerly SARI)

All graduate students at Penn State are required to complete the University's Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) requirements related to scholarship, research integrity, and ethical research practices. The RECR program consists of two components: online training and discussion-based educational activities.

In the fall semester following matriculation, M.A. and Ph.D. students are required to complete two non-credit online courses offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program): one addressing Human Subjects Research (IRB) and the other addressing the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). Students receive information regarding enrollment, course content, and completion deadlines before the beginning of the fall semester. A typical completion deadline for these courses is November 1.

In addition to the online training, both M.A. and Ph.D. students must complete a minimum of five hours of discussion-based education related to the responsible conduct of research and research integrity. The Office for Research Protections (ORP) provides a variety of opportunities to satisfy this requirement, including RECR Orientation Sessions, Introduction to IRB Workshops, and other RECR-approved workshops and educational activities offered throughout the academic year. Students are encouraged to attend both an RECR Orientation Session and an Introduction to IRB Workshop during their first year, as these programs provide foundational knowledge of the ethical, regulatory, and practical responsibilities associated with conducting research. Attendance at ORP-sponsored activities is tracked by ORP and recorded in LionPATH.

In addition to the workshops offered by ORP, the CAS graduate faculty offer disciplinary-specific discussion-based sessions during the regularly scheduled departmental colloquium. First-year students are required to participate in these sessions as part of enrollment in colloquium. All students are encouraged to fulfill their RECR hours with these CAS offerings to the extent that schedules allow.

Students must complete all RECR requirements prior to graduation. M.A. students who advance to the Ph.D. program will have already satisfied the RECR requirement through their master's degree and therefore will not be required to repeat either the discussion-based educational components as doctoral students.

Statement on Publication as a Graduate Student

Intellectual property (IP) rights rest with the creator of any work of art. If, however, graduate students are doing any research in a Penn State facility, all IP belongs to the University and an IP assignment agreement is required.

Authors of scholarly reports, papers, and publications should abide by the following principles regarding co-authorship (Taken from Penn State Intellectual Property Policy: IP-02):

- Co-authorship should be offered to anyone who has clearly made a material contribution to the work.
- Moreover, each coauthor should be furnished with a copy of the manuscript before it is submitted and allowed an opportunity to review it prior to submission. An author submitting a paper, report, or publication should never include the name of a coauthor without the person's consent. Exceptional circumstances, such as death or inability to locate a coauthor, should be handled on a case-by-case basis. In cases where the contribution may have been marginal, an acknowledgment of the contribution in the publication might be more appropriate than co-authorship.
- In cases of theses for advanced degrees, if any publication derived from the thesis is not published with the degree recipient as sole author, then that person should be listed as coauthor. In no instance should publications derived from a thesis be published under the sole authorship of the thesis adviser.
- Anyone accepting co-authorship of a paper must realize that this action implies a responsibility as well as a privilege. If a potential coauthor has doubts concerning the correctness of the content or conclusions of a publication, and if these doubts cannot be dispelled by consultation with the other coauthors, the individual should decline co-authorship.

Components of the Rhetorical Studies and Communication Sciences Areas of the Graduate Program

Rhetorical Studies encompasses rhetorical criticism, classical and contemporary rhetorical theory, history of public address, political rhetoric, campaigns and social movements, rhetoric of culture and media, public memory, rhetoric of reform, rhetoric of war and peace, rhetoric of literature, citizenship rhetorics, rhetoric of technology, and the rhetoric of democratic deliberation.

Communication Sciences encompasses interpersonal communication, communication in relationships and families, interpersonal influence, computer-mediated communication, health communication, health campaigns, social influence and persuasion, and small group communication.

Assistantships and Funding Available to Support Graduate Students

The department offers funding to every graduate student that we admit to the program and have deliberately chosen not to admit students whom we cannot fully fund. In

addition to a tuition waiver and health care benefits, our department provides a stipend for a half-time, nine-month appointment. Summer funding and academic year awards are also available, which can add substantially to the amount of money that students receive each year. Students either teach in the department as TAs (3 courses over the ten-month academic term – a 1/2 or 2/1 load), or they act as research assistants on funded projects.

The most common type of funding is a half-time teaching assistantship. A half-time teaching assistant is responsible for three sections of courses over two semesters. Students typically start out by teaching our public-speaking course.

We also have a small number of research assistantships supported by external grants in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences; the specific number of these assistantships varies according to the status of faculty projects. Students funded as research assistants either receive a reduction in teaching load or are released from all teaching responsibilities during the time of their funding as a research assistant.

Of course, many students work informally with faculty, either as part of research teams or independently. We have a strong culture of collaboration, both among our graduate students and between our students and faculty.

Other Funding Opportunities

We realize that the continued strength of our department is tied, in part, to the ability of our students to excel as scholars. Consequently, we offer a variety of research support, including funding awards for specific projects, dissertation-related releases from teaching, travel grants, and access to computer and research equipment. Graduate research awards of up to \$1500 and dissertation research awards of up to \$3000 are two specific awards we confer to support student research. Although students can apply for smaller amounts of money at multiple times, the total amount of money available from the dissertation research award is fixed; a comparable award is available for students working on an M.A. thesis. The graduate research award can be applied for in the M.A. program and then again in the Ph.D. program. A specialized training award is also available in the amount of \$2000 to enable travel or registration to learn a new technique. This award can be applied for annually.

We provide our students with travel funding for attending two international, national, or regional conferences each year (See section on Conference Travel for more information). Our expectation is that students will present their research at one of these conferences (though exceptions will be made for students new to the program). In addition, the College of the Liberal Arts makes travel awards available on a competitive basis. Requests for money to attend more than two conferences can be made to the Director of Graduate Studies. See also later in the Handbook for more information about funding.

Dual-Title Ph.D. Degrees in Communication Arts and Sciences

Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and Bioethics

Issues of ethical concern arise frequently regarding communication about scientific, technological, and medical pursuits. The Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and Bioethics—the only one of its kind in the United States—provides Communication Arts and Sciences graduate students with the theoretical and applied knowledge necessary to address ethical issues within the field of health communication as well as to conduct original bioethics research and to produce bioethics-related scholarship.

Students earning the dual degree would have access to growing employment opportunities that require expertise in bioethics, in addition to the same job markets available to other Communication Arts and Sciences graduates.

Admission Requirements

Students who have been admitted to the Ph.D. program in Communication Arts and Sciences prepare a statement of purpose for explaining why they wish to pursue the Dual-Title degree as part of their program planning process. The student's doctoral committee will then consult with the student regarding the plan.

Doctoral Committee Composition

Students in the program are required to have an adviser from the Bioethics faculty. If the primary adviser in Communication Arts and Sciences is not a member of the Bioethics faculty, a second adviser from the Bioethics faculty will be required.

Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and African American and Diaspora Studies

The goal of the dual title partnership between the Departments of Communication Arts and Sciences and African American and Diaspora Studies is to create a new pathway for graduate students to develop scholarly and professional expertise in the study of the communicative aspects of African American life and the African diaspora. This dual-title will be important for graduate students who investigate how communication influences attitudes and behavior, relationship development and family dynamics, public life and public memory, democratic decision-making, social transformation and political/economic justice as these various areas intersect not only with communities of color but also the broader array of institutions, organizations, and policies that comprise distinct systems of human identity, racism, and the struggle for racial justice.

Students earning the dual degree would have access to growing employment opportunities that require expertise in African American studies, in addition to the same job markets available to other Communication Arts and Sciences graduates.

Admission Requirements

Students who have been admitted to the Ph.D. program in Communication Arts and Sciences prepare a statement of purpose for explaining why they wish to pursue the Dual-Title degree as part of their program planning process. The student's doctoral committee will then consult with the student regarding the plan.

Doctoral Committee Composition

Students in the program are required to have an adviser from the African American and Diaspora Studies faculty. If the primary adviser in Communication Arts and Sciences is not a member of the faculty from African American Studies, a second adviser from that faculty will be required.

Dual-Title Ph.D. in Communication Arts and Sciences and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

The dual-title Ph.D. in the Departments of Communication Arts and Sciences and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies will address all aspects of communication pertaining to gender, sexuality, and identity. Emphasizing the rich history of such communication, placing that history within appropriate theoretical frames, and focusing on its contemporary manifestations in politics and culture, this program will add to ongoing conversations about citizenship, inclusion, and national identity.

Students earning the dual degree would have access to growing employment opportunities that require expertise in women's, gender, and sexuality studies, in addition to the same job markets available to other communication arts and sciences graduates.

Admission Requirements

Students who have been admitted to the Ph.D. program in Communication Arts and Sciences prepare a statement of purpose for explaining why they wish to pursue the Dual-Title degree as part of their program planning process. The student's doctoral committee will then consult with the student regarding the plan.

Doctoral Committee Composition

Students in the program are required to have an adviser from the women's, gender, and sexuality studies faculty. If the primary adviser in communication arts and sciences is not a member of the faculty in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, a second adviser from that faculty will be required.

Requirements for the M.A. program in CAS

Credit requirements

- A minimum of 30 credits beyond the B.A./B.S.

- 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. This requires a conversation with the student's doctoral committee.

Course Requirements (including outside credits and methods credits)

- At least 3 credits of coursework in communication focusing on a research methodology relevant to the student's research area
- At least 6 credits of coursework outside the department
- At least 12 credits of coursework in the CAS department
- A total of 6 hours of CAS 600 (Thesis Research)
- At least 18 credits at the 500 or 600 level
- At least 20 credits of coursework at University Park
- As of the summer of 2023, M.A. students are permitted to take up to 9 credits at the 400 level with approval from their temporary adviser, adviser, and/or committee. The breakdown of credits for the M.A. degree would then be at least 18 credits at the 500+ level and at least 6 thesis credits. Depending on the student's needs as determined by an adviser and committee, the remaining credits required for an M.A. degree may be filled by either 500-level credits or 400 level credits. Any credits taken at the 400 level must be approved by the adviser and committee. If a student desires to take a 400-level class in CAS, approval is required by the course instructor along with the adviser and/or committee. As always, any credits taken beyond the 30-credit requirement may transfer to the student's doctoral program if approved by the adviser and Director of Graduate Studies. Credits earned at the 400-level, however, would not transfer to doctoral coursework.

Breakdown of MA credits

400-level credits	Up to 9
500-level credits	Minimum 18
Thesis credits	3-6*
Total credits	30 total credits

**Note.* Students writing an MA thesis must register for 6 thesis credits.

Other Requirements:

- Pass M.A. Program of Study Proposal by the end of the second semester.
- Pass M.A. Thesis Proposal by the end of the third semester.
- Defend M.A. Thesis by the end of summer after the fourth semester.

Requirements for the Ph.D. program in CAS

Credit requirements

- A minimum of 36 credits beyond the M.A./M.S.

Course Requirements (including outside credits and methods credits)

- At least 21 credits of coursework in communication within the department
- At least 3 credits of coursework in communication focusing on a research methodology relevant to the student's research area
- At least 9 credits of coursework outside the department
- Complete CAS 602 (Supervised Experience in College Teaching)
- A total of 6 hours of CAS 601 (Dissertation Research) within the minimum of 36 credits.

Other Requirements:

- Pass Ph.D. Qualifying Examination by the end of the second semester.
- Pass written and oral Comprehensive Exams by the end of the fifth or sixth semester.
 - Must have a 3.0 GRADE-POINT AVERAGE to defend comprehensive exams
- Pass dissertation proposal by the end of the fifth or sixth semester.
- Defend dissertation by the end of the eighth semester.
 - Must have a 3.0 GRADE-POINT AVERAGE to defend dissertation
- All requirements for degree must be completed within eight years of completing the qualifying exam.
- There must be at least three months in between the defense of the comprehensive exams and the dissertation defense.
- Must maintain continuous enrollment between comprehensive exams and dissertation defense. Otherwise, tuition expenses will be incurred.

Earning Your Degree

The information below is designed as an accessible and permanent resource to help graduate students understand the core academic requirements and departmental policies required to earn their respective degrees. Please consult with your adviser or the Director of Graduate Studies if the information below does not answer your immediate questions.

Advising Graduate Students in Communication Arts and Sciences

Communication Arts and Sciences faculty are committed to their roles as advisers and mentors. Our faculty acknowledge that such roles should include consistent commitments to promoting appropriate forms of diversity, inclusion, and equity through practices of graduate student advising and mentoring. Graduate students can help

themselves to succeed by working to understand degree milestones, schedules, and policies from the beginning of their time in our program.

First-Year Faculty Adviser:

The Director of Graduate Studies will help you select a member of the faculty to serve as your first-year adviser when you first enter our program. Your first-year adviser will assist you in selecting courses for your first semester and provide appropriate mentoring support during your *first semester of coursework*.

Be proactive during your first semester in learning about faculty members' research specialties and typical advising practices so that you can make a well-informed decision about your choice of permanent faculty adviser. It is equally common for a first-year adviser to continue as a student's permanent adviser and for a student to select a new permanent adviser. Either option is fine as long as the adviser-advisee relationship is a good fit.

Permanent Faculty Adviser:

Notify the Director of Graduate Studies *early in your second semester* in our program about whether you would like to select a different permanent faculty adviser or make your first year one permanent.

Approach potential permanent faculty advisers with a rationale for why you would like to earn your degree under their guidance. Ideally, the adviser-advisee relationship should begin with a discussion about the fit and feasibility of that relationship itself. Establishing clear academic or professional expectations and preferred decision-making norms between advisers and advisees should help to create optimal conditions for your success as a graduate student. A permanent adviser should be identified prior to the completion of the qualifying exam.

Master's or Doctoral Committee:

Work with your adviser to create a master's or doctoral committee by the end of your *second semester of study*. Generate a rationale for why you think the expertise of particular faculty members will help contribute to your academic and professional success during your remaining time in our program.

Master's and doctoral committees formally evaluate degree candidates' performance on major milestones toward their degrees. Requirements for committee makeup are as follows:

- M.A. committees must have a minimum of three members. Any member of the graduate faculty may serve on an M.A. committee, may chair an M.A. committee, and may advise an M.A. thesis.

- Doctoral committees must be composed of a minimum of four members of the graduate faculty. At least three must be from Communication Arts and Sciences, and at least one must be from outside the department. Dual-title degrees have different requirements for committee composition (see bulletin).

Consult with the Graduate Program Coordinator if you have questions about these requirements, or the Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions about choosing an adviser or committee members.

[See more detailed information about Penn State Ph.D. Committee Procedures](#). See also the Policies section of the Graduate Handbook.

M.A. Milestone Meetings

Program of Study Proposal Meeting

The candidate describes their general research interests and goals and proposes a course of academic work toward their degree to their newly established advisory committee. This meeting often occurs towards the end of a student's second semester in the program.

- Secure day and time from committee members
- Notify Graduate Program Coordinator (must have at least one week notice)
- Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule room and notify committee members
- Proposal must be provided to committee two weeks prior to the meeting
 - Please see Developing a Proposal below
- Graduate Program Coordinator will prepare all required paperwork

Thesis Proposal Meeting

The candidate proposes a plan of thesis research to be approved by their advisory committee. This meeting often occurs during the summer, if committee members are available, or towards the beginning of a student's third semester in the program.

- Secure day and time from committee members
- Notify Graduate Program Coordinator (must have at least one week notice)
- Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule room and notify committee members
- Proposal must be provided to committee two weeks prior to the meeting
- Graduate Program Coordinator will prepare all required paperwork

Thesis Defense Meeting

The candidate participates in oral evaluation of their thesis by the advisory committee. Successful defense of the thesis is the final step in its approval by the committee. This meeting often occurs during a student's fourth semester in the program or the following summer.

- Secure day and time from committee members

- Notify Graduate Program Coordinator (must have at least one week notice)
- The Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule a room and notify committee members
- Thesis must be provided to committee two weeks prior to the meeting
- Graduate Program Coordinator will prepare all required paperwork

Ph.D. Milestone Meetings

Qualifying Exam

The candidate describes their research interests and goals and proposes a course of academic work toward their degree to their newly established advisory committee. Although the word "Exam" is in the title of this milestone, it is much more of a conversation than an exam.

The process for the qualifying exam involves the following:

- Graduate student arranges day and time with committee members.
- Graduate student notifies the Graduate Program Coordinator of the plan (with a minimum of at least one week's notice).
- Graduate Program Coordinator schedules room and notifies committee members.
- Qualifying Exam must be provided to committee two weeks prior to the exam.
- Graduate Program Coordinator prepares all required paperwork.

The qualifying exam process involves another step for any student who, in consultation with their adviser(s), determines in advance¹ that they will need five years to complete the program due to taking 9 credits or more of extra coursework. This need to complete extra coursework may be for a formal dual-title program; it can also be for other research-related reasons (e.g. additional methods or language courses). At least two weeks in advance of their qualifying exam meeting, students submit a fifth-year pre-approval request to the Graduate Program Coordinator and Director of Graduate Studies. The written request should include:

- A rationale for why you need to take additional coursework.
- A list of courses taken and courses planned (recognizing that some future course offerings may not be guaranteed).

If the request is provisionally approved, the qualifying exam meeting then serves as an opportunity for the student and adviser(s) to work with the committee to plan the additional coursework that requires an extra year of funding. Within two weeks of the meeting, the student updates the pre-approval request in light of all feedback, confirms adviser approval, and submits to the Graduate Program Coordinator and Director of Graduate Studies a final written plan for what additional courses will be taken. Once the

¹ Alternatively, note that any student, with the support of their advisor, may request a fifth year of funding by checking the relevant box during the annual review process of their fourth year. This fifth-year funding, although not guaranteed, is commonly possible for students making progress towards degree milestones.

plan is approved, the Director of Graduate Studies will provide in writing an updated five-year timeline to degree that includes the new coursework plan.

Comprehensive Exams

The candidate drafts and submits written answers to questions from each committee member based on their intended areas of academic expertise and subsequently participates in oral evaluation of those written answers with the committee as a whole. (Each candidate works with their permanent adviser and the department's Graduate Program Coordinator to schedule their examinations and oral defense ahead of time.)

- The format of comprehensive exams varies across areas of the department and across advisory committees. Questions can range from timed in-house exams to a paper on a topic written over the course of days, weeks, or months.
- Consists of written and oral portions
- Must be registered for credits during the semester the exams are taking place (even during summer session)
- Written portion should be scheduled with Graduate Program Coordinator three weeks prior to the oral examination
- Graduate Program Coordinator will collect questions from committee members
- Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule room and computer for written portion (if needed)
- Student will pick up questions as scheduled from the Graduate Program Coordinator and return upon completion with response
- The Graduate Program Coordinator, in consultation with the student or advisory committee, will complete the comprehensive exam cover page for each question.
- Graduate Program Coordinator will distribute all responses to all committee members
- Student will secure day and time from committee members for oral defense
- Student will notify Graduate Program Coordinator of oral defense time (must have at least two weeks' notice)
- Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule room, notify committee members and Graduate School
- Graduate School will prepare all required paperwork and forward to department

Dissertation Prospectus Defense

The candidate proposes dissertation research to be approved by their advisory committee.

- Secure day and time from committee members
- Notify Graduate Program Coordinator (must have at least one week notice)
- Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule room and notify committee members

- Proposal must be provided to committee two weeks prior to the defense
- Graduate Program Coordinator will prepare all required paperwork

Dissertation Defense

The candidate participates in oral evaluation of their dissertation by the advisory committee. Successful defense of the dissertation is the final step in its approval by the committee.

- Secure day and time from committee members
- Notify Graduate Program Coordinator (must have at least two weeks' notice)
- Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule room, notify committee members and Graduate School
- Dissertation must be provided to committee two weeks prior to the defense
- Graduate School will circulate signature forms on LionPATH to all committee members in the morning of the day of the defense.

Developing a Program of Study Proposal or Qualifying Exam

Both M.A. and Ph.D. candidates are required to submit a Program of Study Proposal for committee approval (by the end of their second or third semester of study toward either degree). The Program of Study or the Qualifying Exam is the first milestone meeting in both the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, respectively, and it is designed to ensure that the student has the potential to develop the knowledge and skills to be a successful researcher in the discipline. This milestone is designed to prepare students to 1) develop a way of talking about their program of research; 2) identify key research interests in anticipation of potential thesis/dissertation work; and 3) establish a fitting plan for coursework throughout the time in the graduate program. Note that this first meeting has different names for the M.A. and the Ph.D. programs. It is called the program of study meeting for M.A. students and the qualifying exam for Ph.D. students. The content of the document required for the meeting will be similar, although the ideas are expected to be more advanced and developed for doctoral students. In an ideal timeline, M.A. candidates will submit a Program of Study Proposal for committee approval by the end of their second semester. Ph.D. candidates will complete a Qualifying Exam by the end of their second or third semester in the Ph.D. program.

To be eligible to propose a Program of Study or take the Qualifying Exam, students must have at least 18 credits towards their degree in progress (some of which may be transferred from another university), maintain a GRADE-POINT AVERAGE of 3.0 or greater, and have no deferred or missing grades.

If a student is enrolled in a Dual-Title Degree Program, it is ideal to take a single Qualifying Exam that includes content from both the major program and the dual-title program. In some cases, dual-title programs might allow the Qualifying Exam from the major program (i.e., CAS) to count.

Formulating these plans early in your course of study is intended to establish strong foundations for future scholarly and professional success. For this reason, you should discuss expectations for the Program of Study Proposal or Qualifying Exam with your faculty adviser prior to drafting it. Sample Program of Study Proposals and Qualifying Exams are available within the department. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies or another graduate student for examples. In CAS, the Program of Study Proposal and Qualifying Exam are written documents that are then discussed with all members of a student's committee.

In general, a Program of Study Proposal/Qualifying Exam should:

- Explain your reasons, motivations, or objectives for pursuing your desired degree along with your educational history that has led you to this point.
- Explain how the proposed program of study is designed to support your eventual career/professional goals. In so doing, some students might locate themselves within the larger field.
- Describe your general program of research and some more specific ideas to support it.
- Identify graduate seminars intended to develop your academic/scholarly specialties in fitting and substantive ways.

Taking Comprehensive Exams

Doctoral students are required to take comprehensive examinations after they complete all of their required coursework. The goals of the comprehensive exams are to evaluate students' mastery of their chosen field and to determine whether they are prepared to succeed in their dissertation research. Comprehensive exams are to be scheduled within a year after the completion of coursework but no later than five years after the passing of the Qualifying Exam. All comprehensive exams are administered, overseen, and evaluated by a student's Ph.D. committee. Each member of the committee writes a question that assesses a student's knowledge of a content domain, broadly defined. Whereas some questions might ask students to look backwards and summarize aspects of course content they encountered, other questions might ask students to look forward and propose extensions to existing research and novel research ideas.

The format of the exam should be discussed with each committee member and can take one of several forms. Comprehensive exam questions can range from a timed, in-house exam that can be closed book, open book, open note, and so on. They can also be presented in the form of a paper on a topic written over the course of days, weeks, or months. For any paper written over a given time period, the scope and expectations for the finished product vary based on the timeline. If a student is enrolled in a dual-title degree program, the requirements of that program must be incorporated into the Comprehensive Exams, and the dual-title faculty representative must be a part of the examination process.

To be eligible to take the comprehensive exams, students must have completed coursework, be in good academic standing (see Satisfactory Academic Progress below) and be a registered student during the semester in which the comprehensive exams are taken.

Students must also have a minimum grade-point average of 3.0 and not have any deferred or missing grades. A favorable vote from at least two-thirds of the Ph.D. committee is required to pass the comprehensive exams. If a period of more than six years elapses between the passing of the comprehensive exams and the completion of the program, the student is required to pass a second set of comprehensive exams before the final oral defense can be scheduled.

Questions to Help Prepare for Comprehensive Exams

The following prompts are questions that graduate students can consider asking their adviser and committee members to help them prepare for their comprehensive exams.

- Should I have a reading list?
 - Is it required? Can it be expanded?
 - Do I need a list before meeting with each committee member?
- What's the content area for each question? What is the content area for each committee member?
 - How much will I know before sitting for each question?
- What's the format of each question?
 - In-house vs. take home?
 - Timeframe?
 - Open materials?
- What are the expectations for completeness of citations and citation style?
- Is the question forwards or backwards looking?
 - Do I summarize literature and/or extend it?
- To what extent is the question designed to assess my breadth or depth of knowledge?
- Are there expectations for the page length of my answer?
- Should I expect to give a brief presentation?
- Note that the final structure of each exam in terms of its content and scope will be derived by an adviser with input from the student and committee. Be sure to discuss any preferences with your adviser and learn about their goals for your comprehensive exams.

Preparing a Thesis Proposal or a Dissertation Prospectus

The culminating experience for the M.A. or doctoral degree is the completion of a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, respectively. These documents are the primary means of expressing the findings from students' independent research. A thesis or dissertation should be a significant contribution to the discipline, show that a student can conduct independent scholarly research, and showcase experience using appropriate research techniques, methods, and writing. A student who is enrolled in dual-title degrees must write a dissertation that exhibits knowledge from both of their degrees. A thesis proposal or dissertation prospectus serves as an agreement between the student and the committee. It describes what the student intends to research and how they will do it, and it typically includes some of the preliminary research necessary to understand a student's logic and theoretical foundations. Requirements for proposals

and prospectuses vary within the department, so be sure to check your adviser's expectations. The format of thesis proposals and dissertation prospectuses vary across both areas of the department and from one committee to another. Consequently, it is important for a student to meet with their adviser to gain a clear understanding of the requirements and expectations for a proposal or prospectus. In general, a master's thesis proposal contains a literature review and prospective methods section. The committee should have a clear idea of what a student wants to study, its contributions to the discipline, and how the student will complete the research. A dissertation prospectus will typically include drafts of the first chapters of a student's dissertation. In some cases, when a dissertation will consist of multiple, independent studies, the prospectus might involve completing one or more of those studies along with a larger literature review chapter.

If any member of a thesis or dissertation committee has serious reservations about the document they were given, it is their responsibility to notify the chair of the committee at least a week before the scheduled defense date. The chair, in consultation with the committee, notifies the student and decides whether the student can implement the requested changes prior to the defense. If changes cannot be made before the defense, the defense should be rescheduled.

Passing the thesis proposal or dissertation prospectus meeting indicates that the committee believes the student can successfully complete the project described in the proposal or prospectus. In this way, the proposal and prospectus act as a contract of sorts between the student, their adviser, and the committee.

Questions to help prepare for a dissertation prospectus

The following prompts are questions that graduate students can consider asking their adviser and committee members to help them prepare for their dissertation prospectus. Note, however, that answers to these questions might exhibit marked variability both across and potentially within areas of the department.

- What is the preferred format/organization of the dissertation?
- How many studies are involved?
- How many chapters will it require?
 - What's the content and organization of each chapter?
- Are any data required for the prospectus? (Likely just for communication scientists)
- How complete should each chapter be?
 - Versus a summary document?
- Are there expectations for page length?
- What is a reasonable timeline for completing this writing?
- What is the role of an adviser versus a committee member in this process?
- Should I expect to give a brief presentation?

Writing and Defending a Thesis or a Dissertation

A master's degree requires a thesis or the completion of the portfolio option. A research doctorate degree requires a dissertation. Although a thesis is often a complete, independent research study, a dissertation, in particular, is designed to make a significant contribution to knowledge in a student's chosen area of study. The dissertation should also demonstrate students' ability to conduct independent research and present the results of that research in an academic setting. If a student is enrolled in a dual-title program, the dissertation must involve a topic that reflects their education and original research in both their major program and the dual-title program.

The final oral defense is the culminating assessment of the master's or doctoral degree and, along with the thesis or dissertation, determines whether the student should be awarded their respective degree. The final defense should demonstrate that students possess an in-depth understanding of both their research and their field of study. Students are expected to describe their project and its findings to disciplinary experts and demonstrate that they are capable of both critical thinking and independent scholarly work. Passing the final oral examination is necessary but not sufficient to complete an M.A. or doctoral degree. To pass the dissertation, both the document and the oral defense must be accepted by two-thirds of the dissertation committee. The dissertation must then be accepted by the head of the graduate program and the J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School. The Graduate School mainly cares that the thesis or dissertation is in the appropriate format for storage. The final oral defense is a private discussion between the student and their committee, though some parts of the dissertation defense are technically open to the public. In particular, whereas any presentation of the dissertation is open to the public, the questions and discussion between the student and the committee is a private conversation. The questions in the oral defense will largely relate to the dissertation, but they may cover the student's entire program of study.

To be eligible to defend a thesis or dissertation, a student must be in good academic standing (See Satisfactory Academic Progress below), maintain a grade-point average of 3.0 or greater, and have no deferred or missing grades. The final oral defense must be scheduled at least three months after the comprehensive exams are passed.

Finalizing and Formatting a Thesis or a Dissertation

[The Fox Graduate School provides detailed guidance for how to prepare your master's thesis or doctoral dissertation.](#)

Remember to consult as needed with your faculty adviser or with the Director of Graduate Studies on these policies and procedures.

Revisions Policy:

Students are expected to complete revisions to a successfully defended thesis or dissertation and submit them to the adviser within 60 calendar days following the defense meeting.

Scheduling committee meetings and exams for degree milestones

Graduate students are responsible for scheduling all required meetings with their advisory committees. Doing so can be a useful part of the professionalization process, helping you to build organizational skills while learning more about both departmental and university norms.

The Graduate Program Coordinator in Communication Arts and Sciences should be consulted as part of this process—specifically, to reserve a room for the meeting and formally notify committee members as well as the Graduate School (if necessary).

No graduate student examinations may be scheduled during the first or last week of classes or during final exam week (due to added faculty and graduate student responsibilities during those weeks of each semester). Exams may be scheduled during the summer session with the approval of your faculty adviser and committee members.

Format of Milestone Exams

All Modes Allowed

All examinations for degree milestones for the M.A. (program of study, thesis proposal, thesis defense) and Ph.D. (qualifying exam, comprehensive exams, dissertation prospectus, dissertation defense) programs may be held fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely. The preference of the CAS department is to have as many people present in-person as possible, though no approval is needed if anyone needs to switch to remote participation.

Before scheduling a milestone meeting, the student and adviser should agree on the preferred or primary mode for the meeting. Upon scheduling the meeting, committee members are asked to provide the dates and times they are available, given the preferred mode of the meeting. If a committee member has more availability in a hybrid format, they should communicate that availability to the student and adviser. If a committee member needs to change to remote or hybrid participation in between the scheduling of the meeting and the actual meeting, they are able to do so; just let the adviser know. Changes in participation can be made up until the day before the meeting.

If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode of the meeting, the Director of Graduate Studies will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Director of Graduate Studies to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

What if I fail a milestone meeting?

If a student fails a milestone meeting or examination, it is possible for them to retake the exam either in full or a portion of it. Students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and their adviser or committee to determine whether a retake is in their best interest. Students should wait some time before retaking a milestone assignment but also attempt to retake the assignment within the subsequent semester, unless extenuating circumstances are present. After a failure, students should schedule a meeting with each committee member within a month of the exam.

The goal for these meetings should be to establish a plan for the retake. If a student fails only a portion of an exam (e.g., a specific comprehensive exam question), they are permitted to re-write their answer for only that question, though the format of the retake should be discussed by the committee.

For each milestone, students are permitted one retake. In other words, there is a maximum of two attempts to pass each milestone. Students should work with their adviser, committee, or Director of Graduate Studies to clarify what needs to be improved to maximize their chances of passing on the second attempt. If a doctoral student fails a milestone meeting twice and they do not have a master's degree from Penn State, they can be admitted into the master's program. If a doctoral student who already has an M.A. from Penn State fails a milestone meeting twice, they will be dismissed from the program. Likewise, if a master's student fails a milestone twice, they will be dismissed from the graduate program.

Milestone Accommodations through Student Disability Resources (SDR)

Penn State is committed to providing access to students with disabilities to the university's graduate programs. The Office for Student Disability Resources (SDR) offers support specifically tailored to the needs of graduate students. The office considers the need for accommodations in the following areas: 1) graduate assistantship accommodations; 2) coursework accommodations; 3) lab, fieldwork, and clinical work accommodations; 4) qualifying / comprehensive exams accommodations; 5) thesis / dissertation accommodations. [See an overview of disability resources specific to graduate students.](#)

To be considered for reasonable accommodations, students are required to contact the SDR office, participate in an intake interview, provide documentation, and complete the registration process. Students should be aware that it may take time to go through the intake process, and that they may not know in advance whether accommodations will be needed either for their coursework or for their milestone exams. We thus recommend that students register with SDR for any eligible disabilities in advance, ensuring that all documentation is in place should accommodations be needed at any point during their graduate program. Students can register with SDR and choose not to request accommodations once registered.

Once registered, students can approach course instructors (for course accommodations) and/or the DGS or PIC (for accommodations to other program requirements, including benchmark examinations) to request accommodations. For milestone examinations, this process is required for each milestone examination for which you request accommodations. Specific accommodations are determined through an interactive process and tailored to each student's needs with the goals of upholding rigor and disciplinary expectations in each of the distinct components of graduate education.

Students who would like accommodations for academic events (such as non-course-based department colloquia or seminars) that are not covered under the official SDR categories are encouraged to express these needs to the program leadership (e.g. DGS, PIC, or program head) and/or SDR.

Annual Review Process

The judgments of an adviser and committee on a student's academic progress may be considered at any moment during the course of a student's program. That said, the department performs a thorough annual review process that begins in March each year.

In late February, the Director of Graduate Studies or the Graduate Program Coordinator will send each graduate student a set of forms and an invitation to begin the annual review process. Students are required to fill out the forms, which detail the progress that they have made over the course of the last year. Students are then required to schedule a meeting with their adviser to discuss the information in the documents and any additional issues that the student or adviser believes to be relevant to the review process. In particular, the annual review forms gather information about students' progress through the program, including the composition of their committee, progress towards milestones, and a degree audit; accomplishments, including honors and awards, conference presentations, publications, and service; and teaching history and preferences. The annual review also assesses students' interest in teaching opportunities and non-teaching opportunities for the next year. Working with their adviser, students also develop goals related to teaching, research, service, and progress through the program/milestones for the next year. In some ways, progress on these goals provides the criteria for satisfactory performance during the following year's annual review.

Students and advisers are encouraged to discuss issues related to coursework, professional development, methodology training, and, especially, the milestones of each degree program. Advisers rate each student's performance as "unsatisfactory," "satisfactory," "superior" or "not applicable" in the areas of Academic Progress, Research Productivity, Academic Training and Professional Development, Teaching and Instruction, and Service. In addition, advisers may establish goals and/or provide written feedback to students in anticipation of the coming year.

Once advisers have provided their written feedback, students review these statements, sign the necessary paperwork, and provide all documentation to the Graduate Program Coordinator. In April of each year, the rhetoric and social science areas of the

department meet to discuss each graduate student. The information discussed in these meetings provides context to the annual review, especially for the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies will collate this information and write a formal letter to the student that summarizes their status. A copy of this letter and the accompanying materials is placed into the student's official file.

Satisfactory academic progress

Satisfactory academic progress is determined by three separate criteria: the considered judgments of a student's adviser and committee; regular and consistent progress toward meeting the milestones of one's degree program; and meeting the degree requirements of both the Department and Fox Graduate School. Expectations for timely progress toward degree are detailed in the M.A. and Ph.D. calendars.

Satisfactory academic progress is a condition of financial support as a graduate assistant, and two years of unsatisfactory progress may lead to dismissal from the program. At the beginning of the fall semester, the Director of Graduate Studies will contact every student who received an element of unsatisfactory on their annual review to discuss a plan for improving performance in that area. Doing so minimizes the possibility that a student will be terminated from the department after the next annual review.

Graduate Assistantships

Expectations

Graduate students are students, but they are also appointed by the University as graduate assistants to play a vital role in helping the Department to realize its goals for undergraduate education and research. 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, equivalent duties may be assigned at the discretion of the Department Head. Through an appointment as a classroom instructor or on a research project, graduate students also learn skills that are central to their achievements beyond graduate school.

For graduate assistants, tuition charges are remitted for the semesters covered by the appointment. Following two successive semesters of service, tuition is remitted for summer session up to 9 credits. For graduate lecturers, tuition is remitted for up to 5 credits. An application is required for this additional tuition assistance.

Unacceptable performance of assigned responsibilities will lead to termination of an appointment.

Graduate students register for 3 credits of CAS 602 Supervised Experience in College Teaching during their first semester. Additionally, throughout their program, graduate students may receive guidance from experienced teaching faculty through the CAS 100 Teaching Mentorship program, coordinated by the Director of CAS 100.

Graduate students are required to register for one credit of CAS 590 Colloquium, in each of the first two semesters in the program. Colloquium requirements do not continue after the first year, but students are strongly encouraged to attend Colloquium throughout their graduate career at Penn State. Colloquium helps sustain the intellectual community of the department by providing opportunities for scholarly dialogue and professional development.

Financial support conveyed by a Graduate Assistantship

The principal criterion for awarding financial support is the applicant's promise for scholarly and professional growth, productivity, and contributions to knowledge.

To continue receiving financial support, a student must achieve a grade-point average 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.

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.

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 four years beyond the M.A. degree for completion of a Ph.D. degree program.

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 Director of Graduate Studies. The request will be considered along with all other applications for financial support.

Monitoring and assessing professional progress in Graduate Assistantships

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.

When a graduate 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 will be referred by the supervisor to the Director of Graduate Studies 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.

Graduate assistants tentatively assigned to CAS I00 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 I00 Director determines the adequacy of each student's preparation. These assessments are based on participation in CAS 602, teaching observations, and information about classroom success. 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 for a subsequent year.

Semester release policy (2/1 Teaching Load Policy)

As a result of the implementation of a course reduction for graduate students (3 courses per year) and the growing number of semester releases, the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences devised the following policy:

For a half-time teaching or research assistantship (currently, a typical 2/1 teaching load), students are expected to work twenty hours per week on teaching and/or research assistant activities. Students in their one-course-instruction semester are expected to translate any hourly gain in instructional workload to the areas of research or scholarship.

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 the policy for research assistantship assignments.

During any released semester, the expectation is that time will be devoted to research, not to additional teaching. Teaching an overload from Continuing Ed, World Campus, Outreach and Commonwealth Campuses, or the department during a released semester is prohibited. If a student receives an offer to teach from Continuing Education or World Campus (or even CAS) or to engage in any other kind of overload during a released semester, it would be appropriate to decline that offer and to focus, instead, on research.

Overload policy

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 Penn State 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." This policy applies both to employment outside the University and overload requests within the University.

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 benchmark for allowing overloads. Overloads of any sort are strongly discouraged unless the benefit to the student is unambiguous.

Satisfactory progress includes, but is not limited to:

- a grade-point average of 3.0 in the dept and overall
- the 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 holistic 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 Director of Graduate Studies 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 adviser, 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 Director of Graduate Studies, following such consultation, will make a recommendation as to the permissibility of the overload, with the Department Head having final authority on the decision. A decision will be rendered within three–four 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 requests. 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.

Research Assistant Assignments

Graduate assistantships are defined knowing that graduate students are both students and employees. These appointments are often described in fractions, which take into account both the coursework and employment responsibilities of being a graduate student. Most students in communication arts and sciences are assigned to half-time appointments. Half of that appointment is spent taking classes and doing research, and the other half is spent on an assistantship. A half appointment assumes twenty hours of work towards the assigned assistantship each week, and one class is often assumed to account for ten hours of work a week. With that as background, RA assignments influence teaching responsibilities as follows:

- RAs assigned as fourth 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 fourth time for one year teach 2 courses (1 each semester)
- RAs assigned half time for one semester teach 2 courses (2 in the semester not assigned RA duties)
- RAs assigned half time for the year teach 0 courses

Summer Research Assistantships

When CAS has sufficient resources in the annual budget for faculty to receive summer RA assistance, the head informs the faculty of that opportunity (usually in early February). The faculty then reply to the head whether or not they have research that would benefit from a department-funded RA. About half of our faculty say yes, and the rest decline. In addition to saying that they have a research need, the faculty recommends two or three graduate students with whom they wish to work. Those who choose to use a summer RA tend to identify their advisees for that task. This makes sense because, most often, those advisees are already knowledgeable about the work their adviser is doing that summer.

At the same time, the associate head provides the Head with a list of graduate students who have indicated an interest in RA positions during the academic year. When faculty do not identify a specific student who matches their research needs or when the student they

want to employ is unavailable, the Head can go to that list and make suggestions from it to the faculty. Occasionally, then, a faculty member may work with an RA that wasn't their initial choice through a process whereby the Head brings the "interested" graduate students to the faculty's attention.

Typically, not every student who wants a summer RA position is able to get one. There are not sufficient RA positions to grant one to every student. Further, because the work performed as an RA is specific and often crucial to the promotion of faculty or the completion of a large project that will impact their career, the faculty have a more direct say in who will serve as their RA.

Requirements concerning an instructor's absence from class

Teaching scheduled classes, whether at the beginning of the semester, the end of the semester (including Finals Week), before holidays, or during the rest of the semester, is a minimum requirement for all instructors, regardless of rank or status.

If you know in advance that you must be absent from a class for appropriate reasons, such as attending a conference, you are expected to notify your supervisor or the department Head ahead of time. 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.

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 supervisor or the 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. It is Penn State policy that up to 24 percent of a class can also be taught online, and instructors can implement that policy at their discretion.

Resources for Research and Funding Opportunities

The department supports student research in a variety of ways – through maintaining a participant pool, awards to offset the costs of attending professional conferences, financial awards to cover research expenses, access to exceptional learning experiences, and dissertation grants. Current students can also apply for funding from the College of the Liberal Arts.

CAS 100A Participant Pool

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences teaches over 100 sections of Effective Speech each semester. As a requirement for that course, students are asked to enroll in the Department's participant pool. Researchers in the Department are able to access participants through the participant pool to complete surveys, experiments, or interviews. Participants can also be screened on the basis of any pre-screening questions that are included in a survey at the beginning of each semester. Data from the participant pool are often useful for pilot tests, manipulation checks, general surveys, and preliminary results. The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences employs one student each year to oversee the participant pool. That person sends an email at the beginning of each semester and the summer to ask who wants access to the participant pool. They are also available throughout the semester to serve as a resource or to answer questions about managing SONA systems, which we use to keep track of participants and grant them credit for participating.

Research Retainers

In addition to the participant pool, the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences also maintains a retainer through a participant management platform. That retainer is currently through Prolific, but it might change depending on the quality of data we receive and people's needs. The retainer allows people to access community-based samples and to target samples that contain certain characteristics that are unlikely to be found in the general student population.

Data from the research retainer are often useful for studies that need a targeted sample, projects that require generalization beyond a college student sample, or some dissertations. The price per participant can vary widely, depending on the difficulty of reaching them. All requests for use of the research retainer should be directed to the Chair of the Research Committee. Note that in some cases, when people use the research retainer for their dissertation, the cost of obtaining their sample will count against a balance of a dissertation research award.

Conference Travel

Every student is allotted funding for two research trips/conferences each year, provided that work is presented at one of them. Exceptions to the requirement for presenting work may be made for students who are new to the program. Third conferences will be considered by the Director of Graduate Studies and Head on the basis of a proposal provided by the student. Funding for a third conference will be determined by a) the actual and/or anticipated expenditures for graduate student travel in a given academic year, b) the scholarly benefit that the third conference will provide to the student's research or career, and c) the amount that the student has already spent on the first two conferences. There is no guarantee of funding for a third conference.

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences will pay upfront or reimburse to the student the cost of any hotel room for conference travel provided that the cost is equal to or less than the hotel cost negotiated by the professional association hosting the conference. If the hotel rate per night is more than the conference rate, then the parties who stay in that room may be required to pay for the difference.

First, [complete the travel request form](#). This action will generate an email to the Graduate Program Coordinator that will furnish the information needed for budget reporting purposes. Although the department is happy to cover these travel expenses, students are asked to be conscious of their spending whenever possible.

Graduate Research Awards

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences offers Graduate Research Awards, which are intended to support work preliminary to a thesis or dissertation. As seed money to graduate students for pilot research, applications for funding, archival work and travel, or other research-related costs, these awards do not cover equipment or substitute for resources normally available to students (such as software on computers in student labs). Individual awards may vary but are not likely to exceed \$1500.

Applicants may request funding to support travel to archives or research sites, to purchase software or research materials that are not available to students, to pay participants, to pay undergraduate assistants, or to cover other expenses related to a proposed research project. Requests for funding to cover release time or provide compensation for the applicant are not appropriate and will not be approved.

Procedures for Applying

Applications may be submitted any time during the academic year to the Graduate Program Coordinator's office in 234 Sparks Building, or by email. If everything is in order, the Graduate Program Coordinator will submit the materials to the Director of Graduate Studies for review, who may consult with the Graduate Committee. Decisions are usually made within two weeks.

1. A narrative not to exceed two single-spaced pages explaining the purposes, design, and expected contributions of the research
2. A detailed timeline for the initiation and completion of the research
3. A budget itemizing all anticipated expenses in conducting the research
4. A current curriculum vitae
5. A letter of support from the applicant's adviser

If funds must be deposited directly into a student (bursar) account, it may impact student loans or other financial aid. If there is an outstanding balance against Penn State, the funds will automatically go toward the satisfaction of that debt. These are University procedures that are out of the control of the Department.

Specialized Training Awards

A Specialized Training Award of up to \$2000 is typically limited to one award in an academic year, but if funds are available the department may be able to support additional requests.

Procedures for Applying

Specialized training awards are used to support students' ability to learn new techniques for use in their research. Examples of specialized training in Rhetoric potentially fundable through this award include instruction in a foreign or programming language; taking part in symposia or institutes focusing on advanced research methods; visits to study informally with scholars at other institutions whose work offers significant models of theoretical or critical innovation; and visits to archives for training in archival methods. Examples of Specialized Training relating to Communication Sciences potentially fundable through this award include instruction in the collection of bio-specimens, attendance at a methods-training workshop; participation in a campus intensive training program in research methods, presence at a seminar focused on advanced statistical analyses, and visits to other institutions to meet with scholars whose work offers useful models of research methods.

Applications may be submitted any time during the academic year to the Graduate Program Coordinator's office in 234 Sparks Building, or by email. If everything is in order, the Graduate Program Coordinator will submit the materials to the Director of Graduate Studies for review, who may consult with the Graduate Committee. Decisions are usually made within two weeks.

To apply for this award, students should complete the following:

1. Provide a one- or two-page description of the activity for which you are requesting funding—include exactly what is offered by the activity and when, and how you expect it to contribute to your program of studies and your graduate research. Include web site addresses if applicable.
2. Provide a total itemized budget ([see guru.psu.edu/travelrates/](http://see.guru.psu.edu/travelrates/)) indicating the amount you are requesting from the department, the amount provided by other sources, and amount of personal funds.
3. Include a letter of support from your academic adviser (the adviser may send the letter separately to preserve confidentiality).
4. Applications may be submitted any time during the academic year to the Graduate Program Coordinator's office in 234 Sparks Building, or by email. If everything is in order, the Graduate Program Coordinator will submit the materials to the Director of Graduate Studies for review. Decisions are usually made within two weeks.

If funds must be deposited directly into a student (bursar) account, it may impact student loans or other financial aid. If there is an outstanding balance against Penn

State, the funds will automatically go toward the satisfaction of that debt. These are University procedures that are out of the control of the Department.

Dissertation Awards

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences offers internal grants to support dissertation research, up to \$3000, if the dissertation proposal meeting has been successfully completed. The funds may be used for travel for dissertation research (but not for presentation of the project), for copying archival materials, for payment of research subjects (at University-approved rates), for payment for statistical consulting (at approved vendors), or other dissertation-related research expenses. Student may apply for this award multiple times throughout the process of their dissertation.

Procedures for Applying

Applications may be submitted any time during the academic year to the Graduate Program Coordinator's office in 234 Sparks Building, or by email. If everything is in order, the Graduate Program Coordinator will submit the materials to the Director of Graduate Studies for review, who may consult with the Graduate Committee. Decisions are usually made within two weeks.

To apply for this award, students should make arrangements to prepare the following:

1. Submit a one or two description of the research project to the Graduate Program Coordinator.
2. Submit a total itemized budget indicating the amount requested from the department, the amount provided by other sources, and amount of personal funds. [See guru.psu.edu/travelrates/](http://guru.psu.edu/travelrates/).
3. The Graduate Program Coordinator will verify that you have an approved dissertation proposal.
4. Include a letter of support from your academic adviser (the adviser may send the letter separately to preserve confidentiality).
5. Provide documentation of how the funds were spent (include all receipts, such as airline receipts, payment receipts to subjects).

If funds must be deposited directly into a student (bursar) account, it may impact student loans or other financial aid. If there is an outstanding balance against PSU, the funds will automatically go toward the satisfaction of that debt. These are University procedures that are out of the control of the Department.

Other Sources of Funding

- [College Funding and Awards for Graduate Students](#)
- [Humanities Institute Opportunities for Scholars](#)

Other Resources across Penn State for Graduate Students

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences is housed by the College of the Liberal Arts, graduate programs in the university are administered by the Fox Graduate School, and all students are part of the Penn State University community. Together, the College, the Graduate School, and the University provide a wealth of resources and information for graduate students. Explore the links below to learn more about policies, resources, and opportunities that pertain to graduate students.

- [The Fox Graduate School](#)
- [The Graduate and Professional Student Association](#)
- [Liberal Arts Graduate Education](#)
- [International Students](#)
- [Graduate Degree Bulletin](#)
- [Graduate Student Resource Guide](#)
- [Graduate School Thesis Office](#)
- [Fox Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#)

Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship

Although we hope that every graduating student is immediately employed in a high-quality position, the job market is not always accommodating.

The Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow (PDTF) appointment was created in the College of the Liberal Arts in response to the academic job market conditions that emerged following the 2008 financial crisis in the United States. The intention of the PDTF appointment is to allow recent a Ph.D. to build their record of scholarship so that they can compete effectively for high caliber academic positions. Importantly, the PDTF appointment is designed as a full-time position, in order to provide the corresponding benefits of full-time employment at Penn State. The teaching load for the PDTF, however, is not full-time (i.e., at least three courses per semester); it is a reduced teaching load (i.e., 2 courses per semester) because the appointment presumes that the Fellow is devoting time to the research activities that will promote success on the academic job market.

The PDTF program is designed to provide one year of support following completion of the Ph.D. for those graduates whose record of accomplishment shows potential for future success in the academy. A second year may be granted, contingent on satisfactory research progress and active efforts toward securing a strong academic position.

How do I become a fellow?

During the annual evaluation in March, students anticipating graduation during the summer should discuss the PDTF appointment with their adviser. The adviser should include the student's interest in the position, its relevance for the student's career, and the anticipated date of graduation to the Director of Graduate Studies in the student's annual review. Appointments are made by the Head, who consults with the Associate Head and Director of Graduate Studies.

Is there an alternative form of employment in Communication Arts and Sciences after graduation if I am not interested in becoming a PDTF?

Of course, you may apply for full-time lecturer positions that may emerge in our Department for the next year. Please note, however, that we often have many applicants for only a few full-time positions.

For more information about the PDTF appointment, contact the Associate Head.

Program Roadmap and Timeline for Students Seeking a Master's Degree¹

Prelude: Before Year 1

- Read your offer letter carefully. This letter explains the department's responsibilities to you, and it explains the basic duties and responsibilities that you have to the department. Keep this letter safe!
- Get familiar with the department's graduate program website: <https://cas.la.psu.edu/graduate/>
- Review the department's statement about what it means to be graduate student and assistant. (<https://cas.la.psu.edu/graduate/earning-your-degree/being-a-graduate-assistant/>)
- **[Review the Fox Graduate School's Policy and Procedures](#)**
- Register for fall classes by working with your first year adviser and the Graduate Program Coordinator, who is able to register you in your first semester. You will register yourself in every semester thereafter.

Year 1: Fall Semester/Semester 1

- Attend and participate in the department's New Student Orientation.
- During the first or second week of class, meet with your temporary adviser. It is often helpful to discuss the following topics:
 - Why you chose to pursue graduate work in Communication.
 - Whether or not you hope to pursue a Ph.D. after the M.A.
 - Which conferences you should attend either in your first or second year.
 - The types of jobs that exist in the academy and the type of training and professionalization that is necessary for these jobs.
 - How best to succeed in this program as a master's student.
 - What makes a graduate course/seminar different from an undergraduate course.
- The first week of *September* you should discuss with your temporary adviser the courses that you should take in the spring.
- ***Mid-October***: Register for 9 course credits for the coming spring semester.
- **[Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research \(RECR\)](#)** Responsibilities, Online Courses.

The RECR program consists of two components: online training and discussion-based educational activities.

- By **November 1**, students who are new to the CAS program should complete the following two online courses offered through the

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) by creating an account at citi.psu.edu:

* This checklist presents an ideal timeline. Individual circumstances and needs vary; consequently, the schedule you follow also may vary provided you have the support of your adviser and make adequate progress.

1. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) course
2. Social and Behavioral Human Subjects Research (IRB) course

Upon successful completion of each course, save your completion certificate and email a copy to the Graduate Program Coordinator for departmental recordkeeping.

Students should also begin fulfilling the discussion-based portion of the RECR requirement during their first year. The [Office for Research Protections \(ORP\)](#) offers [RECR Orientation Sessions and Introduction to IRB Workshops](#) that provide foundational knowledge of the ethical, regulatory, and practical responsibilities associated with conducting research. [RECR Orientation Sessions](#) are offered multiple times during the first two weeks of each semester, while [Introduction to IRB Workshops](#) are typically offered during Weeks 3–5 and focus specifically on human subjects research requirements and the IRB review process.

Students are strongly encouraged to attend both an RECR Orientation Session and an Introduction to IRB Workshop during their first semester. Attendance at these sessions is tracked by the Office for Research Protections and may be applied toward the discussion-based RECR requirement. Additional information regarding schedules, workshop offerings, and RECR requirements can be found through the Office for Research Protections website.

- *October/November*: Take the time to become familiar with [university policies](#) and [departmental policies](#) that apply to you. For example:
- [Research policies](#)
- [Award applications process for conference travel, specialized training and research](#)
- [Mentoring and advising policy, which stipulates the principles that guide your relationships to your adviser and mentors within the department](#)

Year 1: Spring Semester/Semester 2

- By early or mid-**March**, you should have chosen a permanent adviser. After your permanent adviser has agreed to serve, please inform your temporary adviser, and thank them for their service.

- When prompted by the Graduate Program Coordinator, assemble the necessary material for your annual progress review. This request typically arrives in your email box in early **February**. Your data is usually due to the Graduate Program Coordinator in early **March**, but you will be given a specific deadline.
- In consultation with your adviser, identify the potential members of your Master's committee and invite them to join the committee. Prepare an M.A. Program of Study Proposal for your committee. Your permanent adviser can provide you with guidance as to what should be in this proposal. Generally, your Program of Study document should explain:
 - Why you are seeking a master's degree.
 - The details of your course and professional background that will facilitate the degree process.
 - Your proposed program of further study, including a list of relevant courses you intend to take.
 - The general area of research you hope to pursue in your master's Thesis.
 - General guidelines for this document can be found above in Developing a Program of Study Proposal or Qualifying Exam, but students should follow the expectations and recommendations of their adviser; see <https://cas.la.psu.edu/graduate/earning-your-degree/>
 - Your Program of Study document should be circulated to your committee at least fourteen days prior to the associated meeting.
- Your Program of Study committee should include at least three individuals from your research field/specialization within the department, including your adviser. You do not need an outside of the department member, though your adviser may suggest one.
- Please inform the CAS Graduate Program Coordinator who will serve on your committee.
- **March:** Discuss with your adviser whether you will be taking a course this summer. If you will, you need to inform the Graduate Program Coordinator and [go through the process of applying for the Summer Tuition Assistance Program](#). STAP applications open in **February** and must be completed by **April**.
- Schedule the M.A. Program of Study Meeting before **mid-April**. Please distribute any written materials that your adviser has requested as part of this meeting. This may include your current CV, a Program Proposal Statement, a Professional Identity Statement and/or your B.A. and first semester transcripts.
- **April:** Schedule a meeting with your adviser. At this meeting, be sure to discuss:
 - Your progress over the course of your first year. Share your grades and any accomplishments, awards, or publications that you achieved.

- Your academic goals for the next year, especially those goals that are related to methodological or theory training, narrowing your thesis project.
- Your professional goals for the summer and fall, especially those goals that relate to conference submissions, publishing, teaching certification, grant writing workshops, etc.
- Select your courses (9 credit hours) for the fall semester.

Year 2: Fall Semester / Semester 3

- In **September** meet with your adviser to confirm that the course plan you developed last spring will work given the offerings both in and out of the department.
- Discuss your progress on the goals you created in April.
- Discuss whether there are any unique opportunities that you should pursue this year, e.g., Specialized Training, Teaching Certificate, Teaching internships in the dept., etc.
 - In **October** register for 3 course credits and 6 credits of CAS 600 with the Graduate Program Coordinator for the coming spring semester. (Note that you may need 9 course credits depending on what your adviser and committee recommend and on the number of credits already completed).
 - Between **October** and **January**, you need to create and defend a Thesis Proposal (prospectus).
 - A thesis proposal may be shorter than a dissertation prospectus, but it is still useful to review the department's guidelines for the dissertation proposal.
 - Discuss with your adviser their expectations for the proposal.
 - Write and then distribute the proposal to your committee at least two weeks prior to your desired defense date.
 - Inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of the date/time you intend to defend your prospectus.
- **December.** Before you leave for the holidays, the Director of Graduate Studies will send you an email that invites you to decide whether you will "reapply" to the Ph.D. Be sure to discuss this decision with your adviser before you leave town. If you choose the continue, the Graduate Program Coordinator will specify a date in early **January** by which you must submit:
 - A formal letter of application, which explains your history with the department and what you hope to accomplish in continuing with a Ph.D.
 - A letter of recommendation from your adviser.

Year 2: Spring Semester / Semester 4

- Over the holidays, [review the Fox Graduate School's website that describes the process of submitting your thesis](#). Read especially the appropriate **DEADLINES** for completion in that academic year.
- Complete the Thesis
 - At the start of the semester in which you plan to finish your thesis activate the "intent to graduate" in LionPATH. *Be aware of the deadlines that apply to this activation process.*
 - Distribute the thesis to the Committee once your adviser approves it for release.
 - Upload a copy of the dissertation for "format review" to etda.libraries.psu.edu by the appropriate deadline.
 - Schedule a defense date with your committee to occur no sooner than two weeks *after* the committee received the completed thesis. Inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of your defense date and time.
 - Make any revisions to the thesis requested by your committee.
 - Submit the final approved formatted thesis and the Master's Signatory Page. Double check the appropriate deadlines.
 - Graduate Program Coordinator is available to make sure you turn in the appropriate forms with the correct signatures.
 - Consider asking your adviser whether they would like a bound copy of your thesis. Congratulations: You are done! Consider walking at commencement.

When prompted by the Graduate Program Coordinator and/or Director of Graduate Studies, assemble the necessary material for your annual progress review. This should arrive in your email box in early *February*. The deadline to submit your data likely will be set for early *March*. Once you have been officially approved to re-enter the program as a doctoral student, you are free to select courses for the fall semester.

Summary of the Requirements for a Master's Degree

Credit Requirements: (minimum of 24 "course credits" and 6 "thesis credits" CAS 600).

- At least 3 credits of coursework focusing on research methodology.

Other Requirements:

- Pass your Master's Program of Study Proposal by the end of the second semester.
- Pass the required online RECR courses.
- Pass your M.A. thesis proposal (prospectus), optimally by the end of the third semester.
- Pass the oral defense of your Master's Thesis (optimally in the fourth semester).

Portfolio option for an M.A. degree in Communication Arts and Sciences

The portfolio option involves creating a professional credential that illustrates students' abilities for a non-academic track position that still requires some academic achievements. This assignment is intended to serve as a bridge to the next phase of your education and work.

Students who wish to be admitted into the Ph.D. program in Communication Arts and Sciences should likely not select this option.

Three-Part Process

The goals of the portfolio are to summarize and establish a student's time in the MA program as a coherent package. This will be completed in the following three sections:

Part 1: Narrative (3–5 pages):

The first part of the portfolio is intended to describe a student's goals for pursuing an MA and their experience in the M.A. program, including the classes taken and skills learned. This first part of the portfolio should frame the experiences in the M.A. program as an integrated whole. Ideally, students will establish a through-line between where they've been, where they are, and where they're going.

Part 2: Scholarly contribution:

There are two options for this portion of the portfolio. Some specific example options are included at the end of this document.

Option 1: Submit revised versions of papers that were written for seminars. For each paper, include a 1–2 pages. description of the instructor's feedback and how it was addressed. If a student chooses not to address something, that decision needs to be justified. Committees have the authority to approve what materials are acceptable and determine the integrity of the academic work. Regardless of what is submitted, students must be able to connect it to what they have done in the M.A. program.

Option 2: A student can submit research or creative work (campaign materials, instructional curriculum, non-profit materials) that align with their future career goals. Committees have the authority to approve what materials are acceptable and determine the integrity of the academic work. Regardless of what is submitted, students must be able to connect it to what they have done in the M.A. program.

Part 3: Self-assessment (3–5 pages):

The portfolio should conclude with a discussion of why the student thinks their work and performance in the program is deserving of an M.A. degree, including whether they met the goals they identified at the start of the M.A. program. This self-assessment should also discuss strengths and areas for improvement. It can include topics the student did not have a chance to learn along with a description of what they intend to do with what they did learn. Students should articulate how their experiences in the M.A. program fit into a specific path after completion of the program. Students can think of this self-assessment as connecting what they did in the M.A. program to what they hope to accomplish in the future.

Submission:

Submit everything in one document. Students are expected to consult with and get feedback from their advisers as appropriate. A student's master's Committee gets at least 2 weeks to review the document prior to a defense.

Capstone Meeting:

Students should plan on having a summative defense meeting to address any questions or concerns from their committee. If a student's written document or oral defense do not rise to the criteria for a satisfactory pass, the procedures for moving on are consistent with guidelines in the graduate handbook. If a re-write is required, students are permitted to re-write just one section of the document. Committees are encouraged to provide specific feedback to enable a successful defense the second time. Any attempts at re-defending the portfolio option are required to be completed within a year of the first attempt.

Example topics for scholarly contributions:

- A collection of seminar papers substantively revised based on feedback from instructors in the original seminar and/or the student's adviser.
- A collection of professional documents that apply concepts learned throughout a program to a specific career context. Potential items could include executive summaries, internal memoranda, public-facing reports, risk assessments, data analyses, or audio/video briefings on topics relevant to the field.
- A digital humanities web site project in which students identify, catalog, and craft contextualizing essays for discovered archival items pertaining to a historical figure, event, or topic.
- A curricular project in which students develop materials for a curricular unit or course. These materials could include lesson plans, audio/visual aids, handouts, assignment descriptions, rubrics, exemplars, syllabi, and other work.

Program Roadmap and Timeline for Students Seeking a Doctoral Degree²

Prelude: Before Year 1

- Read your offer letter carefully. This letter explains the department's responsibilities to you, and it explains the basic duties and responsibilities that you have to the department. Keep this letter safe!
- Get familiar with the department's graduate program website and this Graduate Handbook:
<https://cas.la.psu.edu/graduate/current-students>
- Review the department's statement about what it means to be graduate student and assistant.
(<https://cas.la.psu.edu/graduate/current-students/being-a-graduate-assistant>)
- Review the Fox Graduate School's Policy and Procedures webpage:
<https://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/>
- Register for fall classes by working with your temporary adviser; the Graduate Program Coordinator is able to register you in the first semester, and you will register yourself in every semester thereafter.

Year 1: Fall Semester/Semester 1

- Attend and participate in the department's New Student Orientation and the colloquia of this semester.
 - You should be registered for colloquium credit
- During the first or second week of class, meet with your temporary adviser. It is often helpful to discuss the following topics:
 - Your M.A. education. Make sure that your temporary adviser is familiar with the classes and research you've accomplished.
 - Your personal goals for coursework, research, and publishing during your doctoral program. These goals will change, but it is important to discuss the classes, questions, and research that interest you now.
 - What you think your "dream" job might be after graduate school.
 - Which conferences you should attend in the coming year.

* This checklist presents an ideal timeline. Individual circumstances and needs vary; consequently, the schedule you follow also may vary provided you have the support of your adviser and make adequate progress.

- Sometime in *September* you should discuss with your temporary adviser the courses that you should take in the spring and begin to fill out the Ph.D. Outline form.
- **Mid-October.** Register for 9 course credits for the coming spring semester.
- **Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR)** Responsibilities, Online Courses.

The RECR program consists of two components: online training and discussion-based educational activities.

- By **November 1**, students who are new to the CAS program should complete the following two online courses offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) by creating an account at citi.psu.edu:
 1. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) course
 2. Social and Behavioral Human Subjects Research (IRB) course

Upon successful completion of each course, save your completion certificate and email a copy to the Graduate Program Coordinator for departmental recordkeeping.

Students should also begin fulfilling the discussion-based portion of the RECR requirement during their first year. The [Office for Research Protections \(ORP\)](#) offers [RECR Orientation Sessions and Introduction to IRB Workshops](#) that provide foundational knowledge of the ethical, regulatory, and practical responsibilities associated with conducting research. [RECR Orientation Sessions](#) are offered multiple times during the first two weeks of each semester, while [Introduction to IRB Workshops](#) are typically offered during Weeks 3–5 and focus specifically on human subjects research requirements and the IRB review process.

Students are strongly encouraged to attend both an RECR Orientation Session and an Introduction to IRB Workshop during their first semester. Attendance at these sessions is tracked by the Office for Research Protections and may be applied toward the discussion-based RECR requirement. Additional information regarding schedules, workshop offerings, and RECR requirements can be found through the Office for Research Protections website.

- **October.** Take the time to become familiar with [university policies](#) and [departmental policies](#) that apply to you. For example:
 - [Research policies](#)
 - [Award applications process for conference travel, specialized training and research](#)
 - [Mentoring and advising policy, which stipulates the principles that guide your relationships to your adviser and mentors within the department](#)

Year 1: Spring Semester/Semester 2

- RECR (formerly SARI) Responsibilities, Discussion Sessions.

All Ph.D. students are required to complete **five hours** of discussion-based instruction concerning responsible research and research ethics. Students are required to attend sessions offered by the department, which may begin in the Fall. You can satisfy 3-4 hours of the RECR discussion requirement through the department. You should complete 1-2 hours of training in a **RECR qualifying** workshop offered by the Penn State Graduate School or Office of Research Protections. Please choose a workshop that is closely related to your possible dissertation research.

By early or mid-**March**, you should have chosen a permanent adviser.

When prompted by the Graduate Program Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies, assemble the necessary material for your annual review. This request typically arrives in your email in early **February** and the meetings listed below will help you fill out the form for this review. Your data is usually due in early **March**, but the Graduate Program Coordinator will provide a specific deadline.

During the month of **March**, you should create a written Qualifying Exam Proposal, in consultation with your permanent adviser, which addresses:

- Why you seek a doctoral degree.
- The details of your course and professional background that will facilitate the degree process.
- Your proposed program of further study, including a list of relevant courses you intend to take.
- This exam determines whether you are prepared to proceed as a doctoral candidate.
- This exam is designed to determine what additional coursework or competency you must obtain to complete the doctoral degree.
- This exam should secure the agreement of your committee on the coursework and independent studies that you will pursue.
- The general area of research you hope to pursue in your dissertation. General guidelines for this document can be found here:
<https://cas.la.psu.edu/graduate/earning-your-degree/>, but you should follow the expectations and recommendations of your adviser.

In consultation with your adviser, identify the potential members of your doctoral committee and invite them to join the committee.

- This committee should include at least three individuals from your research field/specialization within the department and one individual who holds a graduate faculty appointment in another department. Note that some faculty members in other departments can count as being either internal to or external to CAS.
- Please distribute any written materials that your adviser has requested as part of this qualifying exam. This may include your current CV, a

Program Proposal Statement, a Professional Identity Statement, and/or your M.A. and first semester transcripts.

Discuss with your adviser whether you will be taking a course this summer. If you will, you need to inform the Graduate Program Coordinator and [go through the process of applying for the Summer Tuition Assistance Program](#). The College also provides information about STAP applications open in February and must be completed by April.

Schedule your "Ph.D. Qualifying Examination" before mid-*April*. Please inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of your exam date/time at least **7 days** before the date. The Graduate Program Coordinator will provide the necessary forms for this exam in your mailbox or the mailbox of your adviser.

After the qualifying exam, submit the signed forms to the Graduate Program Staff Assistant to affirm your candidacy and the constitution of your doctoral committee.

March: Select your courses (9 credit hours) for the fall semester.

April: Schedule a meeting with your adviser. At this meeting, be sure to discuss:

- Your progress over the course of your first year. Share your grades and any accomplishments, awards, or publications that you achieved.
- Your academic goals for the next year, especially those goals that relate to methodological or theory training, narrowing your dissertation project, and pre-study or data gathering that may inform your dissertation.

Your professional goals for the summer and fall, especially those goals that relate to conference submissions, publishing, teaching certification, grant writing workshops, etc.

Year 2: Fall Semester / Semester 3

In ***September*** meet with your adviser to:

- Confirm that the course plan you developed last spring will work given the offerings both in and out of the department.
- Discuss your progress on the goals you created in April of this year.
- Discuss whether there are any unique opportunities that you should pursue this year, e.g., Specialized Training, Teaching Certificate, Teaching internships in the dept., etc.

September: Register for 9 credit hours for the coming spring semester.

Year 2: Spring Semester / Semester 4

When prompted by the Graduate Program Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies, assemble the necessary material for your annual review. This request should arrive in your email box in early ***February***, and the meeting described below will help you fill out the forms for this review. The deadline to submit your data likely will be set for early ***March***.

In **February**, become familiar with the various support options that are available for graduate students in their third and fourth year. A list of these opportunities is located at <http://www.la.psu.edu/current-students/graduate-students/student-resources/funding-opportunities/graduate-student-funding-and-awards>. Pay special attention to:

- **Graduate and External Awards**

In late **February** or early **March**, meet with your adviser to discuss when you should take your written and oral comprehensive exams. In this discussion consider if and when you plan to apply for course releases (third or fourth year) and/or other forms of support.

- If you decide to take your exams in the fall, plan to meet with your examiners *this* semester to develop a strategy for your summer studies.
- If you decide to take your exams next spring, discuss your course options for the fall and how you can take your comprehensive exams *and* pass a prospectus before May of next year.
- Fill out the checklist and forms for your annual review.
- Decide whether you will be taking a course in the coming summer. If yes, please begin the STAP process.

March: If you intend to take comprehensive exams in the fall, register for 9 credits of CAS 600. If you are not taking comprehensive exams in the fall, register for the appropriate number of credit hours to maintain full-time status.

April: Schedule a meeting with your adviser. At this meeting, be sure to discuss:

- Your professional development thus far, and how it can be enhanced over the next two years.
- Your aspirations for your first job.
- Your goals for the summer and coming year.

Year 3:

Special Note on Comprehensive Exams

Students typically take their comprehensive exams in September, October, January, or April of their third year. Although individual exceptions are possible, students are cautioned that completion of **comprehensive exams and the prospectus** in the third year is important for their future success. In preparation, students should review those sections of the Graduate Student Handbook that pertain to comprehensive exams.

- Students are encouraged to discuss their exams with committee members / examiners at least three months prior to taking written exams.

- Students must work with the Graduate Program Coordinator to set up a schedule for their written exams. You must approach the Graduate Program Coordinator at least three weeks before the proposed dates. In addition, students should tell the Graduate Program Coordinator (a) which faculty will provide questions, (b) how many hours each question will take, and (c) whether/how many any of the exams are “take home.”
- The comprehensive exam cover page provides more information about options that are available for comprehensive exam questions.
- Based on your meetings with your committee members, the Graduate Program Coordinator will provide you with instructions concerning how and where to take exams.
- After you have completed the written exam (congratulations), you are responsible for coordinating your committee to schedule a date/time for the two-hour oral examination. It should take place a minimum of two weeks after you conclude your written exams.
- Please inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of your oral exam date/time no less than two weeks before the event.
- Pass the oral exam.

Year 3: Fall Semester, Semester 5

If you completed your comprehensive exams, focus on your dissertation prospectus.

- Discuss with your adviser her or his expectations for the dissertation proposal.
- Write and then distribute the proposal at least two weeks prior to your desired defense date.
- Inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of the date/time you intend to defend your prospectus. This requires **at least seven days notice**.

If you are not taking comprehensive exams this semester, proceed with your coursework and talk to your examiners about their questions and your preparation.

Review the college and university support resources for dissertation research (<https://la.psu.edu/current-students/graduate-students/student-resources/funding-opportunities>).

- Please note that several fellowship and course release opportunities require a successful prospectus defense for consideration by **mid-October (or mid-March)**.
- Some deadlines are only once a year, whereas others have one fall and one spring deadline.

September:

Students who have passed their comprehensive exam should register for CAS 601 for the spring semester. Students who have not passed their comprehensive exam should

register for CAS 600 for the spring semester. Both courses must be registered through the Graduate Program Coordinator.

The fall deadline for passing your dissertation prospectus and informing the Graduate Program Coordinator that you want to take your ABD course release in the spring is **October 15**.

Year 3: Spring Semester, Semester 6

If you have completed your prospectus, focus on your dissertation. If it isn't done, you should try to complete comprehensive exams and the prospectus this semester.

When prompted by the Graduate Program Coordinator assemble the necessary material for your annual review. This request should arrive in your email box in early **February**. The Graduate Program Coordinator will provide you with deadline information (early **March**).

March: Register for CAS 601 for the fall semester.

April: Schedule a lengthy meeting with your adviser to discuss progress on your dissertation *and* your strategy for the job market. During this discussion, be sure to talk about the type of institution you want to work in, whether you should consider post-doctoral opportunities, and whom to ask to write letters of recommendation.

April 15 is the deadline for completing your prospectus defense and informing the Graduate Program Coordinator that you want to take an ABD course release in the fall. Please confirm this date with the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Year 4: Fall and Spring Semester

In **August**, ask your letter writers how they would like to proceed during the search.

In **September**, [review the Fox Graduate School's web page that describes the process of submitting your thesis](#) AND the webpage that identifies the appropriate **DEADLINES** for completion in that academic year.

Complete the Dissertation

- In the semester that you plan to finish your dissertation, activate the "intent to graduate" on LionPATH. *Be aware of the deadlines that apply to this activation process.*
- Distribute the dissertation to the Committee once your adviser approves it for release.
- Upload a copy of the dissertation for "format review" to <https://etda.libraries.psu.edu> *by the appropriate deadline.*
- Schedule a defense date with your committee to occur no sooner than two weeks *after* the committee received the completed dissertation. (Three weeks is often appreciated). Inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of your defense date and time. *Please note the appropriate deadlines.*
- Make any revisions to the dissertation requested by your committee.

- Submit the final approved dissertation and the Doctoral Signatory Page and the ProQuest UMI Agreement forms to the Graduate School. *Pay attention to the appropriate deadlines.* The Graduate Program Coordinator is available to make sure you turn in the appropriate forms with the correct signatures.

Congratulations: You are done! Consider walking at commencement.

Summary of the Requirements for a Doctoral Degree

Credit Requirements:

- Minimum of 36 new "course credits." Typically graduating students leave the program with 42 to 48 credits total, which includes CAS 600 and 601 as necessary to keep you an active student.
- At least 21 credit hours in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences.
- 3 credits focusing on research methodology.
- At least 9 credit hours accumulated in departments outside of Communication Arts and Sciences.

Additional Considerations:

- Coursework completed in an M.A. program may be counted toward credits for a doctoral degree; however, these credits must be above and beyond those required for an M.A. degree. For example, if the M.A. requires 21 course credits and a student completed 30 course credits while an M.A. student, the additional 9 credits can be counted toward the Ph.D. "Extra" credits earned as part of the M.A. degree may be transferred to doctoral credits after a conversation among the student's doctoral committee.
- 6 credit hours of independent research credits in CAS 596 may be counted toward the 21-credit "in house" course minimum.

Other Requirements:

- Pass the online courses in research ethics (RECR).
- Complete five hours of discussion training in research ethics (RECR).
- Pass your Ph.D. candidate examination by the second semester.
- Pass your written and oral comprehensive exams (optimally in your fifth or sixth semester).
- Pass your dissertation proposal or prospectus (optimally in your sixth semester).
- Pass your final oral examination/dissertation defense (optimally in your eighth semester).

An Annotated Version of Graduate School Policies

This document is a summary of pertinent policies, often copied directly from the Grad School policy, but complete information can be obtained from the policy page of the graduate school web site: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>

In what follows, we summarize some of the general and more specific policies that are likely most relevant to graduate students in CAS. Always double-check for changes on the graduate school website or contact the Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions or concerns.

GCAC-100 Graduate Faculty Policies

This section refers to the membership and evaluation of the Graduate Faculty who participate broadly in the training of graduate students. The policies, exceptions, and procedures for approval of faculty who are not on the Graduate Faculty or would be Special Members of thesis or dissertation committees can be consulted by students who seek atypical committee members.

GCAC-200 Programs and Curriculum Policies

This section refers to overall goals and procedures for Graduate courses and degree programs. Policies regarding potential graduate credit for 400- to 499-level undergraduate courses may be of interest to students who seek an atypical minor. This policy contains information about which classes count toward graduate credit. The policies, regulations, exceptions, formation, and procedures for Concurrent, Dual-Title Degree, Joint Degree, and Integrated Undergraduate-Graduate Degrees are included here. Students pursuing any of these types of degrees should be familiar with these policies.

GCAC-215 Common Course Numbers

Intended to advise faculty during the development of new course proposals, this section provides insight into the numbering of courses that are offered in every department (Colloquium, Research Topics, Thesis Research, etc.).

GCAC-300 Admissions Policies

Presumably, graduate students have already negotiated the necessary Admissions policies, but if there is a change in student status, Admissions policies should be consulted. See also: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/current-students/> for information and applications to: Resume Study [after absence of one or more semesters]; Change of Major/Degree [any change of degree, major, status, or certification; special circumstances for international students]; and Add a Certificate [fee required]. See GCAC-309 for Transfer credit information.

GCAC-400 – 403: Policies Pertaining to Assessment, Grading, and Grades

GCAC-401 Grading Scale

Grades and grade-point equivalents are defined here; please note that a D is a failing grade and does not meet degree requirements or count toward credits earned. Policies and procedures for Deferred (DF), No Grade (NG), Research (R), and Pass/Fail grades are included.

GCAC-403 Corrected Grades

Policies and time restrictions for correcting errors or changing DF and R grades are found here.

GCAC-404 Satisfactory Scholarship

This section specifies the minimum 3.00 grade-point average and describes termination processes if a student fails to maintain satisfactory scholarship (e.g., failing a class, grade-point average under 3.00).

GCAC-405 Credit by Examination

Policies for eliminating undergraduate deficiencies are here. Examinations to establish credit for work done in absentia or without formal class work may not be used to earn credits toward a graduate degree. Credit by examination is not offered by CAS. The Graduate School says that the process for eliminating undergraduate deficiencies by examination is through arrangement with the Director of Graduate Studies.

GCAC-500 Registration and Graduation Policies

GCAC-501 Credit Load

The Department determines what is normal progress. Generally, at least 9 credits/semester are considered as full-time, and the maximum load/semester is 15 credits (exceptions can be requested through the process described in this section). In CAS, the maximum course load for a graduate assistant is 12 credits because graduate assistants in Communication Arts and Sciences are considered half-time students and half-time assistants. Audited course credits do not count toward the minimum credit load but do count towards the maximum number of credits; foreign language/ESL undergraduate course credits do count.

GCAC-504 Visiting or Auditing a Course

Instructor permission is required. This section distinguishes Visitor and Auditor attendance in a course. Visitor: attendance without privileges of participation, practicum, or examination (registration not required); Auditor: attendance, registration, and fee required, with privileges, but without credit. Audited course

credits do not count toward the minimum credit load but do count towards the maximum number of credits.

GCAC-508 Change of Degree or Program

Change, in this section, is defined as admission or after completing a master's degree; therefore, this is the process students use to shift from M.A. to Ph.D. or to a different program at Penn State. Moving from the M.A. to the Ph.D. program requires a re-application process. In addition, Resume Study, Change of Major/Degree, or Add a Certificate requires an application. The proposed new graduate program Head must be consulted, and remedial work may be required. For Resume Study, Change of Major/Degree, or Add a Certificate applications, see <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/current-students/>.

GCAC-510 University Employee Credit Status

Although this section pertains mostly to employees who are then admitted to a graduate program, students who become full-time employees after Comprehensive Exams should consult the policies here, especially with respect to registering for CAS 611 (part-time) thesis/dissertation credits. This policy applies only to Penn State employees or students who become employees. In Communication Arts and Sciences, this situation is rare and would be an exception to the rule. Please discuss any arrangements with the Director of Graduate Studies.

GCAC-513 Registration

This section clarifies and defines "in residence" and identifies the requirements and responsibilities of students regarding advising, enrollment, late registration, auditing, and research credits (see also GCAC-515). Any work toward a degree constitutes "in residence," even if the student lives elsewhere; an adviser is required; registration is required (in Summer, too, if facilities or faculty resources are used) with the exception of Summer Graduate Assistants. Consult this section for further requirements, but the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences does not typically admit students beginning in Summer. Essentially, if a student is pursuing graduate credits or working toward a degree in our program, they need to be officially registered for classes.

GCAC-514 Continuity of Registration and Resume Study

Normal continuity is defined as registering each fall and spring without interruption. Any interruption of the normal sequence, even one semester (not counting Summer), requires an application as a Returning Graduate Student. See the Resume Study application at: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/current-students/>.

GCAC-515 Registration Requirements after Coursework has been Completed

This section contains policies for thesis and dissertation work after courses and comprehensive exams are completed. Continuous registration after comprehensive examinations for two-semester and until a successful dissertation defense and acceptance is required, regardless of whether work is being done on the thesis or dissertation during this interval. Registration is maintained by registering for non-credit 601 (full-time) or 611 (part-time) thesis credits, or 1 credit of 610 (part-time dissertation work for non-residents). See GCAC-215 for more information on Common Course Numbers. Registering for 601 is the procedure of choice for international students who need to maintain status as full-time students for visa purposes. Students enrolled in 601 can audit up to three additional credits by paying only the dissertation credits fee. Students can take up to 3 additional credits of coursework for credit by paying the dissertation fee and an additional flat fee; three additional credits is the normal maximum, but registration for further additional credits will incur an additional charge at the appropriate tuition per-credit rate (in state or out of state). Students registering for more than three additional credits cannot register for 601 (as it is "full-time"); register for 611 instead.

If a Ph.D. student will not be in residence for an extended period for compelling reasons, the director of Graduate Enrollment Services will consider a petition for a waiver of the continuous registration requirement. The petition must come from the doctoral committee chair and carry the endorsement of the department or program chair.

Proper registration is expected of all graduate students. Master's students who have completed coursework are not required to register for a final semester unless required by their department, or they are working as Graduate Assistants. Graduate Assistants must carry the prescribed credit loads (see GSAD-501). Returning Students who only need to submit their intent to graduate should not complete an application to resume study; contact the graduate program to have their records activated in order to submit their intent to graduate.

GCAC-516 Registration for Work Done Away from Campus

Under certain conditions, credit may be earned for work done away from the campus. The student should consult with the Adviser, then inquire at the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services about the procedures and conditions. Students are responsible for registration.

GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies – Doctoral (Ph.D.) GCAC-

601 Residence Requirements – Research Doctorate

This policy ensures that, for a period of time during their studies, all Ph.D. students are immersed in the scholarly life of their disciplinary community. Over a twelve-month period, the Ph.D. student must spend at least two consecutive semesters, exclusive of summer sessions, as a registered full-time student engaged in academic

work. CAS 601 and CAS 611 cannot be used to meet this requirement. Summer registration does NOT count toward meeting the residency requirement. Essentially, the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences expects a twelve-month period of in-residence immersion in all facets of the department.

Additional requirements for full-time University employees are found in this section, which may include ABDs; in some programs, research and employment are indistinguishable.

GCAC-602 Ph.D. Committee Formation, Composition, and Review – Research

Doctorate Each Ph.D. student shall have an appointed Ph.D. Committee to guide their research training.

Timing, membership (minimum of four), approvals, additions, and Graduate Faculty qualifications are found in this section. Member roles (chair, outside field member, outside unit member, minor field member, and adviser – adviser and chair may be the same) and qualifications / responsibilities are defined. For dual-title degrees, the chair or co-chair must be a Graduate Faculty member of the dual-title program. The Dissertation Adviser (or co-Advisers) is also a member of the committee and guides day-to-day academic progress. For students pursuing minors, the committee must include at least one minor program member. Special Members can be included. The Head is responsible for ensuring that committee members remain qualified, including retired or emeritus members and members who leave the University – who can remain on the committee for up to one year, with approval from the Head and the Dean of the Graduate School – and for making necessary changes (and informing the Graduate School of any changes). A committee appointment/signature form is available in this section.

GCAC-603 Ph.D. Committee Responsibilities – Research Doctorate

To guide the broad scholarly development of the Ph.D. student, including guidance and assessment of the student's dissertation research and academic progress toward the Ph.D. degree, committee responsibilities are defined here. The committee conducts a program proposal review including goals, objectives, and methods; approves the educational program for each individual student beyond the program requirements, assesses the student's progress on an annual basis, and assesses the student's professional development. The committee provides any recommendations as appropriate and that reflect, to the extent possible, the student's career goals; administers the student's Comprehensive Examination (see GCAC-604) and assesses the student's performance on the examination; assesses the student's dissertation and recommends (or not) its approval to the Graduate School; conducts the student's Final Oral Examination and assesses the student's performance on the examination. Procedures for calling committee meetings; for assessment contents; and for annual assessment (and special circumstances) are included in this section, along with an example of the annual assessment. Procedures for Distance Participation are included.

GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination – Research Doctorate

The primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination discussed in this section is to provide an early assessment of whether the student has the potential to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes the program has defined in its formal Learning Objectives, including evidence of critical thinking skills necessary for a successful doctoral-level researcher in the disciplinary field.

All students must take the Qualifying Examination within three semesters (not counting the summer semester) of entry into the doctoral program; exceptions are made for Master's-along-the-way and Dual-Title degrees.

Eligibility requirements include at least 18 graduate credits completed and a grade-point-average of at least 3.00, with no incomplete or deferred grades. The graduate student must be in good academic standing and must be registered as a full-time or part-time graduate degree student for the semester (excluding summer session) in which the qualifying examination is taken. Dual-title examination requirements are included in this section. For guidelines in CAS, refer to the section in the Graduate Handbook about program milestones. Responsibilities of the Department for fair and effective exams are included, as are report forms.

GCAC-605 English Competence – Research Doctorate

All graduate assistants in Communication Arts and Sciences must pass an English Competency test to become teaching assistants. This often happens as part of making an offer of employment.

GCAC-606 Comprehensive Examination – Research Doctorate [revised as of Fall 2020]

Policies regarding coursework, standing, registration, grade-point average, format, time-limits, approvals, location, physical and remote presence, exceptions, and program-specific requirements are included in this section.

Highlights include:

Each Ph.D. student is required to pass a Comprehensive Examination to become a Ph.D. candidate. The graduate student must be in good academic standing, with a minimum grade-point average of 3.00 for work completed at the University as a graduate student and no missing or deferred grades and must be registered as a full-time or part-time graduate degree student for the semester in which the Exam is taken.

The responsibility for scheduling the Exam rests with the student and their Ph.D. committee chair. The Exam is administered, overseen, and evaluated by the entire Ph.D. Committee (see GCAC-602 and GCAC-603), who evaluate the competency of the student to conduct their research in light of the program's defined Learning Objectives, particularly with respect to the student's mastery of the major, and if

appropriate, dual-title and minor fields of study; and whether the student is prepared to succeed in their dissertation research.

The format of the Exam may be entirely oral, or it may have both a written and an oral component. The student may discuss with the Ph.D. committee members the types of questions that might be asked on this exam.

Dual-Title requirements are included in this section. A favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the Ph.D. committee is required for passing the Exam.

The Exam may not occur before the completion of all coursework required by the program and the Ph.D. Committee, or before the student has fulfilled English or foreign language competency requirements. The Exam should be scheduled within a year of completion of all required coursework to provide students with timely assessment of their ability to complete their dissertation, but it must be scheduled no later than five years following the passing of the Qualifying Examination. A second exam is required if more than six years pass between the first exam and completion of the program.

The Exam must take place at University Park (the campus location of the graduate center offering the program) to ensure the technological reliability, confidentiality, and safety of all participants. The Ph.D. student must be physically present at the Exam. The dissertation adviser, as well as the chair of the Ph.D. Committee (if not the same individual as the dissertation adviser), along with additional members of the Ph.D. Committee for a minimum total of four, must be physically present at the final oral exam. Requests for participation via distance must be made according to the requirements found in this section of the policy.

After the graduate student and adviser reach out to schedule the oral exam, the Graduate Program Coordinator submits an exam request in LionPATH. Once that request is approved, Graduate Enrollment Services (GES) sends an official exam memo on the morning of the exam. Committee members will receive this memo via email with a link and instructions for submitting their evaluation of the exam in LionPATH. Evaluations should be entered immediately following the examination.

GCAC-607 Dissertation – Research Doctorate [revised as of Fall 2020]

This section describes an acceptable dissertation. Each Ph.D. candidate is required to write a dissertation that is the culminating product of their independent research; Dual-Title candidates must integrate concepts from both graduate programs. The Ph.D. Committee, considering the dissertation and the final oral exam, will evaluate the accomplishments of the student relative to the program's defined Learning Objectives, with respect to the student's mastery of the major, and if appropriate, dual-title and minor fields of study.

As partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree, the dissertation must be approved by at least two-thirds of the Ph.D. committee, the Head, and the Graduate School (specifically, with regard to editorial standards; exceptions to the accepted format must be made in writing to the Graduate School and approved by the

Dean or designee). The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences may also ask Special Signatories (qualified individuals, even if not affiliated with Penn State) to read and approve the dissertation.

This section also includes procedural requirements for the dissertation. In brief, the committee chair should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator, who will schedule the final oral examination with the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services. The Graduate Program Coordinator should be contacted at least two weeks prior to the examination. The chair and the student are responsible for providing a final, correct, polished, and complete copy of the draft of the dissertation to the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the final oral exam. Committee members who find deficiencies in the draft should notify the chair at least one week in advance of the final oral exam. The chair will manage revisions, if possible. If the draft is not correct and polished, the chair determines whether revisions can be made prior to the scheduled exam. If changes cannot be made, postponement is an option. Essentially, the Head gets involved if committee members disagree about revisions and postponement of the defense.

The Ph.D. committee may require revisions to the dissertation after the Final Oral Examination. If they approve the dissertation, Ph.D. committee members indicate that approval only after all final revisions have been made.

The signatures of at least two-thirds of the Ph.D. committee, as well as the Head, must appear on the doctoral signatory page, and the dissertation must be accepted as meeting the editorial standards of the Graduate School, so that it constitutes a suitable archival document for inclusion in the University Libraries.

GCAC-608 Final Oral Examination – Research Doctorate [revised as of Fall 2020]

The section describes the requirements for a successful final oral exam (previously known as a Dissertation Defense). Topics include scheduling, academic and registration requirements, notifications, open to the public, committee quorum, substitutions and special signatories, physical and remote presence, concurrence, major & minor revisions, copy presentations, signatures.

Each Ph.D. candidate is required to pass a final oral exam, administered, overseen, and evaluated by the entire Ph.D. Committee (see GCAC-602 and GCAC-603) prior to being awarded the degree.

The Ph.D. Committee, considering the dissertation and the final oral exam, will evaluate the accomplishments of the student relative to the program's defined Learning Objectives, with respect to the student's mastery of the major, and if appropriate, dual-title and minor fields of study.

The final oral exam is a public oral presentation of the dissertation followed by a closed discussion between the student and the student's Ph.D. Committee. Questions from the oral examination will relate in large part to the dissertation but may cover the candidate's entire program of study. The specific approach is left to the committee

members' discretion. A Dual-Title dissertation must reflect original research and education in Communication Arts and Sciences and the dual-title program.

Similar to the Comprehensive Exam, the responsibility for scheduling the Final Oral Examination rests with the student in consultation with their Ph.D. committee chair. The graduate student must be in good academic standing, with a minimum grade-point average of 3.00 for work completed at the University as a graduate student and no missing or deferred grades. For both the Comprehensive Exam and the Dissertation Defense, the Chair and student work with the Graduate Program Coordinator to schedule the date/time of the meeting. The Graduate Program Coordinator then submits the required paperwork to GES to schedule the official exam.

The Exam may not be scheduled less than three months after the Comprehensive Examination has been passed. The Exam must take place at University Park (the campus location of the graduate center offering the program) to ensure the technological reliability, confidentiality, and safety of all participants. The Ph.D. student must be physically present at the Exam. The dissertation adviser, as well as the chair of the Ph.D. Committee (if not the same individual as the dissertation adviser), along with additional members of the Ph.D. Committee for a minimum total of four, must be physically present at the final oral exam. Requests for participation via distance must be made according to the requirements found in this section of the policy.

After the graduate student and adviser reach out to schedule the oral exam, the Graduate Program Coordinator submits an exam request in LionPATH. Once that request is approved, Graduate Enrollment Services (GES) sends an official exam memo on the morning of the exam. Committee members will receive this memo via email with a link and instructions for submitting their evaluation of the exam in LionPATH. Evaluations should be entered immediately following the examination.

GCAC-610 Time Limitation – Research Doctorate

A Ph.D. student is required to complete the program, including acceptance of the doctoral dissertation, within eight years after the date of successful completion of the qualifying examination. Individual graduate programs may set shorter time limits. Extensions may be granted by the director of Graduate Enrollment Services in appropriate circumstances.

GCAC-611 Minor – Research Doctorate

A doctoral minor requires at least 15 credits in a field related to, but different from, that of the student's graduate major program. A preponderance of courses should be at the 500-level; at a minimum, 6 credits must be at the 500-level. A minor may be taken in one of the approved graduate degree programs offered at Penn State, or in one of the stand-alone graduate minors approved by Graduate Council. The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences and the Graduate Council do not require a minor field of study. However, a graduate program may require a candidate to add a minor field, or a student may elect a minor with the permission of the Ph.D.

committee. A student seeking a minor must have the approval of the student's major program of study, the minor program, and the Graduate School. No more than three minors may be pursued at one time (and they must be distinctive from each other, with no courses applying to more than one minor's requirements). 15 credits above a student's master's degree are required if the minor is in the same field (but excess credits can be applied). At least one faculty member from the minor field must be on the candidate's Ph.D. committee (see GCAC-602).

GSAD-500. Complete Degree

Thesis and Dissertation information, including submission requirements, templates and guides, due dates, format review, fees, and supporting materials, is provided here: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/completing-your-degree/thesis-and-dissertation-information/>.

Graduate Courses in CAS

This section contains a list of graduate courses that have been offered on a regular basis in CAS. More thorough, current, and regularly updated descriptions are available on the CAS webpage: cas.la.psu.edu/courses/ (Note that successive iterations of courses may differ depending on the emphases of the instructor(s) who teach them.)

Course Taken by All Students

602 Supervised Experience in College Teaching

Communication Sciences Courses

- 509 Democratic Deliberation
- 550 Social Influence
- 551 Persuasive Communication
- 555 Interpersonal Communication
- 557 Health Communication
- 560 Theory Construction
- 561 Quantitative Research Methods
- 563 Pairs and Pairings: Quantitative Methods for Interdependent Data
- 564 Measurement in Communication Science
- 565 Interpersonal Communication and Well-Being
- 567 Health Campaigns: Design and Evaluation
- 597 Special Topics

Courses listed under CAS 597 address specialized research topics. Consult with the CAS website or course instructor for more information. Recent Special Topics courses

in Communication science include:

- Risk Communication
- Communication and Social Support
- Affect, Persuasion, and Health
- Advice
- Computer-mediated Communication
- Agent-based Modeling
- Structural Equation Modeling

Rhetoric Courses

- 503 Rhetorical Criticism
- 505 Historical Development of Rhetorical Theory
- 506 Contemporary Rhetorical Theory
- 507 Rhetorical Theory
- 515 Rhetoric and Media
- 530 Political Communication and Media
- 597 Special Topics

Courses listed under CAS 597 address specialized research topics. Consult with the CAS website or course instructor for more information. Recent Special Topics courses in Rhetoric have included:

- Foucault and Rhetoric
- Digital Rhetorics
- Political Leadership, Presidents, and Contemporary Social Issues
- Rhetoric, Race, and Culture
- Archives of Gender and Sexuality
- Race, Culture, and the Rhetoric of Modern Identities
- Media and Memory
- Feminist and Queer Rhetorics
- Rhetoric and Public Policy
- More-Than-Human Rhetorics
- Rhetoric, Revolution, and Revolt
- Sound Characters: Rhetorics, Voice, Sound, Listening at a Distance
- Visual Rhetoric
- Independent Study and Research Credits

Once coursework is complete, students must still register for course credit to be a full-time student. There are several options at the graduate level to earn credit for devoting time to research activities, including work on the master's thesis or the doctoral dissertation.

CAS 594 Research Topics

CAS 594 allows students to earn credit for supervised activities on research projects conducted either individually or as part of a research team under the direction of a member of the faculty. 594 credits generally do not count toward fulfilling degree requirements but may be taken in addition to required credits to maintain appropriate enrollment status.

CAS 596 Individual Studies

CAS 596 involves creative projects, including non-thesis research, which are supervised on an individual basis, and which fall outside the scope of formal courses. For 596 credits to count toward degree requirements, it must be taken as the equivalent of a regular course, including using a syllabus and reading list provided by the instructor.

CAS 600 Thesis Research

CAS 600 allows students to earn credit for time and effort devoted to their thesis research. Students register for CAS 600 while working on their comprehensive exams. Students should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator to help them register for these credits.

CAS 601 Ph.D. Dissertation Full-Time

CAS 601 allows students to earn credit for time and effort devoted to their dissertation research. Enrolling in CAS 601 also allows students to meet The Fox Graduate School's requirement that students be continuously enrolled through the completion of their degree. Students should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator to help them register for these credits.

Graduate Forum

Graduate Forum Officers

Graduate students in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences are committed to the well-being of the graduate program and the students who are enrolled in it. Our Graduate Forum has a long history in the department and works to help to socialize new students, contribute to a vibrant and supportive community, provide resources for professional development, and serve as voices on department committees that affect graduate student life.

Listed below, you will find a description of the Graduate Forum Officers and more detailed explanations of how they support the well-being of our graduate student community.

President:

The Graduate Forum President has three primary duties. First, the president manages the graduate student office space and its upkeep (i.e., cubicle assignments, office supplies, collecting membership dues, etc.) and Graduate Forum operations (i.e., officer elections, scheduling meetings, etc.). Second, the president is a point of contact for new students, whether through recruitment with the Graduate Relations Representative(s) or correspondence with new students prior to their arrival. Finally, the president is a liaison between graduate students, the Department Head, the Director of Graduate Studies, and outside organizations, which might include voicing graduate student concerns, fundraising, and participating in other departmental activities as needed.

Graduate Relations Representative(s):

The Graduate Relations Representative(s) attend primarily to recruitment and interacting with new students. The Representative(s) work closely with the Director of Graduate Studies to coordinate recruitment efforts, particularly during the National Communication Association Conference and Welcome Weekend. This position also serves as a contact point for new students during the summer (i.e., responding to emails, coordinating move-in assistance, etc.). Finally, the Representative(s) also gather information from students and attend Graduate Committee meetings, which allows the Representative(s) to share student perspectives on items of discussion.

Service and Social Chair:

The Service and Social Chair coordinates annual service projects (i.e., blood drives, yard sales, bell ringing/adopt-a-family annual service, foods and goods drives, and any additional service projects that arise). The Service and Social Chair also organizes weekly social activities in conjunction with colloquium and other social events as needed, including crafting and sending invitations. This person organizes "Peer Mentor" assignments and helps coordinate events for new graduate students in the fall. The Chair also serves on the Welcome Weekend Committee to assist in coordination of events.

Professional Development Chair:

This individual assists in scheduling colloquia, mock interviews, practice job talks, and other activities that pertain to professional development. The Chair also posts notices of upcoming conferences and submission deadlines, prepares and distributes conference guides to graduate students, and prepares and distributes a list of NCA presenters within the department prior to the November conference. Finally, the Professional Development Chair will coordinate the Career Preparedness Program (CPP), a duty that includes scheduling faculty to attend CPP events and attend to curriculum changes as the students and faculty see fit.

Community Relations Chair:

The Community Relations Chairs assists the faculty member who is in charge of planning colloquium events by sending out weekly reminders, preparing the technology for the presentation (if necessary), and serving as a liaison between graduate students and faculty regarding Colloquium. This individual also keeps track of lectures and talks across the university and posts a weekly/monthly list for other graduate students to access.

Advisory Committee Representative:

The Advisory Committee Representative attends faculty and advisory committee meetings, reports minutes of those meetings to Grad Forum as appropriate, assists the advisory committee in information-gathering, and provides that committee with graduate student perspectives on items of discussion.

Master's Program Checklist

Course Requirements:

1. 3 credits of CAS 602 "Supervised Experience in College Teaching" completed within the first 2 years

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. 2 credits of CAS 590 "Colloquium" completed within the first year^(a)

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Research methods course(s) (3 credit minimum):

4. 500-level courses (24 credit minimum)^(B):

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

5. CAS 600 Thesis credits (6 credit minimum):

6. Total credits (30 credit minimum) ^(c):

Credits earned beyond the 30 credits required for the M.A. degree can be counted towards the Ph.D.

7. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) (formerly SARI) Courses:

Online Component: (Two online courses, completed before November 1, first semester, unless completed as part of M.A. conferred at Penn State)

a. ☐ Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR).

b. ☐ Social and Behavioral Human Subjects Research (IRB).

Discussion Component: (5 Hours; completed during the first year; identify the appropriate dates on each line).

a. 30 min RECR Orientation Session: _____

b. 1-Hour Introduction to IRB Workshop: _____

c. 90-minute Departmental Workshop: _____

d. 90-minute Departmental Workshop: _____

e. 1-Hour Office for Research Protection Event: _____

Title: _____

Committee Functions:

Committee members:^(d)

Adviser: _____

Members: _____

Required Meetings (please indicated the appropriate date for each):

a. Program of Study Review: _____
(usually occurs end of semester 2 or beginning of semester 3)

b. Thesis Proposal: _____
(usually occurs beginning of semester 3)

c. Thesis Defense: _____
(during or immediately following semester 4)

NOTES:

- (a) Typically, 1 credit each of the first 2 semesters. Exceptions can be requested in the event of scheduling conflicts.
- (b) Research Methods may count toward the 24 credits. Courses for the 24 credits can come from CAS and external departments. A maximum of 6 credits of CAS 596 (Individual Studies) can count towards the 24 credits. CAS 596 must be the equivalent of a full course, including having a syllabus and reading list provided.
- (c) The 30-credit minimum must include at least 6 credits of 600. However, 602, 590, and 594 do not count toward the total 30 credits for the M.A. A

maximum of 6 credits of CAS 596 (Individual Studies) can count towards the 30 credits. Students may take CAS 594 (Research Topics) in addition to the 30 credits required for the degree. MA students are permitted to take up to 9 credits at the 400 level with the approval of their committee.

- (d) M.A. committees must have a minimum of three members. Any member of the graduate faculty may serve on an M.A. committee, may chair an M.A. committee, and may advise an M.A. thesis.

Doctoral Program Checklist

Course Requirements:

1. 3 credits of CAS 602 "Supervised Experience in College Teaching" completed within the first 2 years
 - a. Yes ☐ No

2. 2 credits of CAS 590 "Colloquium" completed within the first year^(a)
 - a. Yes ☐ No

3. Research methods course(s) (3 credit minimum):

4. Coursework outside of CAS (9 credit minimum)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

5. Coursework within CAS (21 credits beyond the M.A. degree)^(b)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

6. Total Ph.D. credits (36 credit minimum)^(c)

If credits were earned beyond the 30 credits required for the M.A. degree, they can be counted towards the Ph.D.

7. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) (formerly SARI) Courses:

Online Component: (Two online courses, completed before November 1, first semester, unless completed as part of M.A. conferred at Penn State)

- a. ☐ Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR).
- b. ☐ Social and Behavioral Human Subjects Research (IRB).

Discussion Component: (5 Hours; completed during the first year; identify the appropriate dates on each line).

- a. 30 min RECR Orientation Session: _____
- b. 1-Hour Introduction to IRB Workshop: _____
- c. 90-minute Departmental Workshop: _____
- d. 90-minute Departmental Workshop: _____
- e. 1-Hour Office for Research Protection Event: _____

Title: _____

Committee Functions:

Committee Members:^(d)

Chairperson:^(e) _____

Members: _____

Outside Member: _____

Required Meetings (please indicate the appropriate date for each) ^(f)

- a. Qualifying Examination: _____
 (usually occurs end of semester 2 beginning of semester 3)
- b. Comprehensive Oral Examination: _____
 (once coursework is completed, usually during semester 4-5)
- c. Dissertation Prospectus: _____
 (usually occurs semester 5 or 6)
- d. Dissertation Defense: _____

(during or immediately following semester 8)

NOTES:

- (a) Typically, 1 credit each of the first 2 semesters. Exceptions can be requested in the event of scheduling conflicts.
- (b) Research methods may count toward the 21 required CAS credits. However, credits from 602, 590, 594, and 600 do not count toward the 21 required CAS credits. A maximum of 6 credits of CAS 596 (Individual Studies) can count towards the 21 credits. CAS 596 must be the equivalent of a full course, including having a syllabus and reading list provided.
- (c) A maximum of 6 credits of CAS 596 (Individual Studies) can count towards the 36 credits for the Ph.D. 602, 590, 594, and 600 credits do not count toward the total 36 credits for the Ph.D. Students may take CAS 594 (Research Topics) in addition to the 36 credits required for the degree.
- (d) Doctoral committees must be composed of a minimum of four members of the graduate faculty. At least three must be from Communication Arts and Sciences, and at least one must be from outside the department. Dual-title degrees have different requirements for committee composition (see bulletin).
- (e) Any member of the graduate faculty may serve on a Ph.D. committee and may advise a Ph.D. dissertation.
- (f) See Graduate School Policies for milestones and committee attendance requirements.

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. Our events and programs are open to all students regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, or any other protected class. The College of the Liberal Arts is committed to building a community of belonging for all. UBR CLA 26-509