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# Guidelines for the Doctoral Program

School of Journalism  
and Mass Communications

University of South Carolina

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(Note: The material in this document is intended for the guidance of doctoral students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of South Carolina. As far as we are aware, the material is fully consistent with USC policy. If, however, there is a conflict between this document and the *USC Graduate Bulletin*, the *Bulletin* governs.

## **Ph.D. PROGRAM**

### **I. Program Purposes and Philosophy**

The doctoral program in mass communication is interdisciplinary and is tailored to meet the needs of each student. Each student's course of study will be determined by the student in consultation with the student's faculty adviser and will vary with the background, professional interests and aspirations of each doctoral candidate.

The doctorate will be awarded only to students who demonstrate (1) a wide variety of research methodologies applicable to the study of mass communication, (2) an understanding of a substantive area in mass communication, (3) an understanding of a substantive area in another discipline, and (4) an ability to develop and conduct independent research.

In most doctoral programs, much of the learning of the subject matter and the norms and expectations of the academy is accomplished outside the classroom. Doctoral students are expected to work closely with their faculty advisers and fellow students while in the program. A small, flexible, highly individualized doctoral program such as this one lends itself to this kind of mentoring. One important objective of such mentoring is for the faculty adviser to explain to the student just what it takes to succeed in the profession. Research collaboration with faculty and with other doctoral students is also encouraged.

### **II. Admissions**

Applicants normally must hold a master's degree or other advanced degree from an accredited college or university. Students whose academic degrees are in fields other than journalism/mass communication may be required to complete additional courses/seminars in mass communication to strengthen their background in this field. Occasionally a student may be admitted to the program without having completed the master's degree or other advanced degree. If so, the student must complete the master's degree before admission to candidacy for doctoral work.

### **III. Course of Study**

#### **1. The Admission to Candidacy Examination, also (and more commonly) referred to as the Qualifying Examination**

Acceptance to a Ph.D. program allows a student to work towards "admission to candidacy" for the degree. Admission to candidacy is attained only after satisfactory completion of an oral Admission to Candidacy Examination that is administered one week prior to the beginning of the fall semester in which the student begins his or her course work.

The School regards the Admission to Candidacy Examination as *essentially diagnostic in nature*. Doctoral students who cannot demonstrate that they have met the requirements through previous coursework in a given area (research methods, for example) may be required to enroll in additional coursework at the master's (700) level before enrolling in doctoral-level coursework in that area.

#### **2. Course Work**

The granting of a doctoral degree by the School of Journalism and Mass Communications presupposes a completion of the master's degree or other equivalent degree, a minimum of 48 graduate credit hours of doctoral course work and a minimum of 12 dissertation credits hours.

a. Basic Doctoral Core (30 credit hours):

JOUR 801 -- Communications Research Design  
JOUR 803 -- Seminar in Mass Communication Theory and Theory Construction  
JOUR 804 -- Historical Research Methods  
JOUR 805 -- Seminar in Teaching Media Studies  
JOUR 806 -- Legal Research Methods  
JOUR 807 -- Advanced Communication Research  
JOUR 808 -- Communication Research: Critical, Cultural, and Naturalistic Approaches  
JOUR 810 -- Independent Research Project (six credit hours)  
An advanced Statistics course taken in a department outside of the School

b. Mass Communication Major Area (nine credit hours):

At least three courses of Mass Communications electives from JOUR courses at 700/800 level.

c. Outside Area of Concentration (nine credit hours):

At least three courses in another field of study, such as economics, business, political science, history, education, library science, or English. Normally the three courses would be in the same academic discipline. However, a student interested, for example, in modern Africa might, with approval of the faculty, take one pertinent course in history, one in political science, and a third in sociology.

d. Research Methods:

**Note** that at least six credit hours (two courses) of the total minimum 18 hours in **b.** and **c.** above must be courses in research methods.

The maximum course load for full-time doctoral students is nine credit hours per semester. For full-time doctoral students on assistantship, a minimum of six credit hours per semester is required.

### 3. The Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

The Doctoral Comprehensive Examination is in two parts:

a. The written examination is designed to demonstrate students' overall mastery of the fields they have identified as areas of concentration and are the most rigorous examinations administered by the School. The examination will consist of one or more questions from each of four areas: mass communication research methods, theory, a third area of emphasis in mass communication and the student's individual outside area of study. The questions are based on the general course work completed by candidates during their doctoral programs. Students will have three hours to answer questions from each of the four areas over five consecutive working days.

b. The oral comprehensive examination is held after the written examination has been evaluated. A student's Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Committee (discussed below) will meet with the candidate for the oral examination. During this examination, the four members of the committee will ask questions about the areas covered in the written examination or any other appropriate questions members wish to pose.

### 4. The Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation presents the doctoral student with the opportunity (and the obligation) to demonstrate an ability to plan a substantial research project. It also identifies the doctoral student with a topic or area of

specialization in a way that may remain as an area of interest and expertise for several years after graduation. The dissertation should also serve as a source of conference papers and articles and as the foundation for additional research for those who pursue academic careers.

The Dissertation Committee chair and committee members (see below) work closely with the student from conceptualization of the project, through the writing of the dissertation proposal, to the writing of the final document. The doctoral student will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the scholarly conventions of writing in the field, and be able to set and meet deadlines for producing chapters. Working with his/her dissertation adviser, the student will be expected to prepare a dissertation proposal. This document serves as the blueprint for the dissertation project. The proposal must satisfy the expectations of the dissertation chair and then must be approved at an oral defense by the other members of the dissertation committee. Students may enroll in up to three hours of dissertation credit while working on the dissertation proposal. Students will not be permitted to enroll for additional credits until they have satisfactorily passed the oral defense of the dissertation proposal.

#### 5. The Final Oral Defense

Once the doctoral dissertation is written, the Oral Examination Dissertation Committee (see below) will meet to conduct an oral defense of the work. Before the dissertation defense can be scheduled, the dissertation chair must have seen and approved all chapters and revisions and other members must have seen (and had time to review), at a minimum, the final draft.

### **IV. Plan of Implementation for Measurement Procedures**

The School's Office of Graduate Studies and Research is charged with maintaining all student records including grades and all course work taken, qualifying, comprehensive, and oral dissertation defense examination results, and all formal paperwork related to a graduate student's residency and successful completion of all degree requirements. The School's Graduate Council is responsible for curriculum matters involving the graduate programs and serves as the petitions committee for graduate students requesting special consideration of their programs of study or other matters.

USC's Graduate School regulations define *two* committees which serve specific roles in the supervision and examination of a doctoral candidate. Membership of these committees requires approval by the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research and the Dean of the Graduate School and must include a qualified faculty member from outside the student's major department.

#### A. Committees

(Committee forms are available on the Graduate School's website, [www.gradschool.sc.edu](http://www.gradschool.sc.edu) under "Forms.")

1. The Comprehensive Examination Committee administers the written and oral portions of the comprehensive examination. It consists of a minimum of four members (including one outside member). Each member of the Comprehensive Examination Committee submits a comprehensive examination question, grades the examination and reports the results to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.
2. The Dissertation Committee consists of a minimum of four faculty members (including one outside member) and directs the students in the preparation of the dissertation. This committee will evaluate the written portion of a student's dissertation and forward the results to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research. The dissertation must be accepted by this Committee before it can be defended at the Dissertation Oral Examination defense.

## B. Annual Review

In addition to the implementation procedures followed by the committees directing all phases of a doctoral student's program of study, each student must submit an updated progress report and a written plan for continued development to the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research by April 1 of each year. Each document is a brief narrative statement that will be reviewed by members of the Graduate Council and will be important in retention and assistantship decisions.

Each statement should include at least some discussion of each of the following points:

1. Purpose and Goals – Where the student is headed, both in the near term and long term, in his/her academic and professional career;
2. Course Work – A summarization of doctoral program courses taken thus far and how they fit together and what the student wishes to do in the semesters ahead to satisfy the methodology, mass communications, and outside area requirements of the program;
3. Dissertation Topic – An explanation of current thinking as to the topic the student has in mind – the work ahead and, in particular, any major problems foreseen in completing the research.

Each spring, the Graduate Council will meet to evaluate the progress of all Ph.D. students. The Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research will let each doctoral student know the results of that evaluation.

## **V. Residency Requirements**

The doctoral residency requirement may be satisfied only after admission to the doctoral program and must be fulfilled by enrollment in a minimum of a total of 18 graduate credit hours within a span of three consecutive semesters (excluding summers). Enrollment in a summer term is not required to maintain continuity, but credits earned during summer terms will count toward residency. For example, a student could take six hours of course work in the fall term, six hours of course work in the spring term, three hours of course work in the summer and a minimum three hours of course work the following fall which would satisfy the residency requirement.

The intent of the residency requirement is to make sure that doctoral students benefit from—and contribute to—the complete spectrum of educational and professional opportunities provided on the campus of a comprehensive university. During the residency, doctoral students should avail themselves of the conferences, lectures, library and laboratory facilities and other resources available for graduate education.

## **VI. Foreign Language Requirements**

Each doctoral student must demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language, as documented by successful completion of a university-administered proficiency test. With specific approval of the School's Graduate Council and the Dean of the Graduate School, English may be accepted as a foreign language for students for whom English is not a native language.

Courses taken to satisfy the foreign language requirement may not be counted as part of the **48** hours of doctoral course work.

The reading proficiency examinations are administered by the foreign language departments involved, and the procedure may be different from one department to the next (e.g., the Spanish department's examination times will likely be different from those of the French department). Accelerated courses are

offered for doctoral students preparing for the reading proficiency examination, although completion of such a course is not required. International students from non-English speaking countries who wish to use English to meet the language requirement may use an official TOEFL score of at least 580 (paper-based) or 85 (internet-based) as proof of proficiency. Each doctoral student must make his or her own arrangements with the foreign language department involved and make sure that the results of the examination are reported to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research and The Graduate School.

## **VII. Adviser Information**

Students entering the program will be assigned a temporary course-work adviser, normally the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research, whose initial role will be to get the student started on a program of study. This person may or may not serve as the permanent adviser; that is a decision for the student. The choice of a permanent course-work adviser should be based on the student's academic and professional interests, on the professional and academic interests of the adviser and on compatibility.

Doctoral students should select a permanent course-work adviser early, preferably during the first semester of their doctoral studies. The selection must be approved by the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research. In special circumstances, as they progress through the program, some students may wish to change advisers. This can only be done with approval of the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research. In general, a change in advisers is based on a change in research focus and compatibility.

## **VIII. Doctoral Degree Program Form**

(Form is available on the Graduate School's website, [www.gradschool.sc.edu](http://www.gradschool.sc.edu) under "Forms Library.")

The Doctoral Degree Program form must be completed and filed with the Office of Graduate Studies and Research no later than the completion of 12 semester hours. It is a contract listing which courses a student intends to take, and when, in order to complete the doctoral degree. Once approved, it is then submitted to the Graduate School for approval. The program proposal can be amended later, with approval of the student's course-work adviser and the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research.



By end of semester prior to Dissertation Oral Defense:

Foreign Language Requirement Completed Date\_\_\_\_\_

Beginning of last semester:

Application for degree filed Date\_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Oral Defense Date Taken\_\_\_\_\_

(Must be held no later than 30 days Date Passed\_\_\_\_\_

prior to graduation date)

Dissertation Submitted to Graduate School Date\_\_\_\_\_

no later than 20 days prior to graduation date

(Must make appointment at Graduate School for submission of dissertation)

Hooding Ceremony Date\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**PH.D. STUDENT WORKSHEET**  
(effective Fall 2009)

Course	Semester Taken	Grade	Credit
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**I. Basic Core** (30 credit hours)

JOUR 801	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 803	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 804	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 805	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 806	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 807	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 808	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 810 (6 hours)	_____	_____	_____

**II. Mass Communications Major Area** (9 credit hours; three courses from JOUR at 700/800 level)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**III. Outside Area of Concentration** (9 credit hours; must be outside the School, approved by advisory committee)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**IV. Research Methods** (6 hours) (At least six hours of the total minimum 18 hours in #2 and #3 above must be courses in research methods)

\_\_\_\_\_

**V. Dissertation credits** (JOUR 899; must total 12 hours)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**VI. Foreign Language Requirement**

Language in which qualified \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

**VII. Residency Requirement** (List consecutive semesters being utilized to satisfy this requirement.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**

**Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations Request and Report  
School of Journalism and Mass Communications**

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This form will be used to request written and oral comprehensive examinations for doctoral students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. The request for comprehensive examinations must be approved at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the examination.

**I. Request for written comprehensive examinations**

This is a request to administer doctoral comprehensive examinations to \_\_\_\_\_.

The examinations will be administered (four days of questions, three hours per day) over the period:

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ at (approximate times) \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ each day. Arrangements have been made for the examinations to be administered in \_\_\_\_\_(room location).

\_\_\_\_\_, Examination Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_, Associate Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**II. Report of examining committee**

This is to affirm that \_\_\_\_\_ has successfully completed the written portion of his/her doctoral comprehensive examinations.

Committee signatures:

Research \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Theory \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Ethics \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Outside Area \_\_\_\_\_ Date

The examination – both questions and student’s responses – has been placed in the student’s file.

Received and approved:

\_\_\_\_\_, Associate Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**III. Request for oral defense of comprehensive examination**

(Must be approved at least one week before the examination.)

The oral defense for \_\_\_\_\_(Name) is being scheduled for  
\_\_\_\_\_ (time/date) in \_\_\_\_\_(room location).

\_\_\_\_\_, Examination Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_, Associate Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**IV. Results of oral comprehensive examination defense**

Committee signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass Fail \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass Fail \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass Fail \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass Fail \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_, Associate Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**Appendix D**

**DISSERTATION PROPOSAL COVER SHEET**  
**School of Journalism and Mass Communication**  
**University of South Carolina**  
**(Full proposal should be attached.)**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Brief (50 to 75 words) Definition of Problem:

Remarks:

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures of Committee Members: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: This form represents only approval of documents that have been submitted in writing.