

Guidelines for the Doctoral Program

School of Journalism
and
Mass Communications

University of South Carolina
(effective Fall 2017)

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Contents

Ph.D. PROGRAM	3
I. Program Purposes and Philosophy	3
II. Admissions	3
III. Course of Study	3
1. Admission to Candidacy Examination	3
2. Course Work	3
3. Doctoral Comprehensive Examination	4
4. Doctoral Dissertation	4
5. Final Oral Defense	5
IV. Implementation Plan	5
A. Committees	5
1. The Comprehensive Examination Committee	5
2. The Dissertation Committee	5
B. Annual Review	6
V. Residency Requirements	6
VI. Advisor Information	6
VII. Doctoral Degree Program Form	6
APPENDICES	
A. Doctoral Student Checklist	7
B. Doctoral Student Worksheet	9
C. Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations Request and Report	10
D. Dissertation Proposal Form	12
E. Dissertation Defense Form	13

(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 journalism and mass communications is interdisciplinary and is tailored to meet the needs of each student. Each student's course of study will be determined in consultation with the student's faculty advisor and will vary with the background, professional interests and aspirations of each doctoral student.

The Ph.D. will be awarded to students who demonstrate: (1) an understanding of a wide variety of research methodologies applicable to the study of mass communications, (2) an understanding of a substantive area in mass communications, (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 of the norms and expectations of the academy is accomplished outside the classroom. Doctoral students are expected to work closely with their faculty advisors and fellow students while in the program. A small, flexible, highly individualized doctoral program such as this one lends itself to this kind of collaboration.

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 communications may be required to complete additional courses/seminars in mass communications to strengthen their backgrounds 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 requirements for the master's degree or other advanced degree before admission to candidacy for doctoral work.

III. Course of Study

1. Admission to Candidacy Examination (often referred to as the Qualifying Examination)

To be officially admitted to candidacy, the Graduate School requires all doctoral students to complete the requirements for the Qualifying Examination. In the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, the qualifying examination is satisfied by evidence that a doctoral student has submitted a paper to a major research conference or for publication, and this submission is endorsed by a faculty member. This requirement normally should be met by the end of the first year of doctoral studies.

Actual admission to candidacy takes place once the doctoral student has met the Admission to Candidacy Examination requirement, is fully admitted to the doctoral program (has met all conditions, if required) and submitted an approved Doctoral Program of Study (discussed later in these *Guidelines*).

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 45 graduate credit hours of doctoral course work and a minimum of 12 dissertation credits hours.

A. Basic Doctoral Core (24 credit hours)

JOUR 801 -- Communications Research Design
JOUR 803 -- Seminar in Mass Communication Theory and Theory Construction
JOUR 805 -- Seminar in Teaching Media Studies
JOUR 808 -- Communication Research: Critical, Cultural, and Naturalistic Approaches
JOUR 810 -- Independent Research Project
An advanced course in statistics taken in a department outside of the School

AND

Two of the following three courses:

JOUR 804 -- Historical Research Methods
JOUR 806 -- Legal Research Methods
JOUR 807 -- Advanced Communication Research

B. Mass Communication Major Area (minimum 12 credit hours)*

At least 12 hours of Mass Communications electives from JOUR courses at 700/800 level

C. Outside Area of Concentration (minimum 9 credit hours)

At least 9 hours 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, for example, a student interested in modern Africa might take one course in history, one in political science, and a third in sociology with approval from the faculty.

***Note** that at least six credit hours (two courses) of the total minimum 21 hours in **B.** and **C.** above must be courses in research methods (e.g., Experimental Research in Psychology).

The recommended 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. 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. The examination will consist of one or more questions from each of four areas: mass communication research methods, mass communication theory, a third area of emphasis in mass communication chosen by the student 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. The questions are submitted by the four members of the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Committee (discussed below). Students will have four hours to answer questions from each of the four areas within five consecutive working days.

b. The oral comprehensive examination is conducted after the written examination has been evaluated and approved. 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.

* Note: If a student plans to take the comprehensive exam, he or she is required to inform the SJMC Graduate Office of the plan at least two weeks prior to the planned first exam day. The student is also responsible for making sure that the comprehensive exam committee provides exam questions at least one week prior to the first day. Students may have to reschedule the exam dates if the Graduate Office does not receive the questions by this time. The student is required to complete taking his or

her comprehensive exam by November 1st for the fall semester, April 1st for the spring semester, and July 1st for the summer.

4. Doctoral Dissertation (minimum 12 credit hours)

The dissertation presents the student with the opportunity (and the obligation) to demonstrate an ability to conduct 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 may also serve as a source of conference papers and articles based on the dissertation and as the foundation for additional research for those who pursue academic careers.

The Doctoral 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 advising during the data-gathering process, to the writing of the final document. Working with his or her dissertation advisor, the student will first 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 must then be approved at an oral defense by the other members of the dissertation committee. 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. 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. Final Oral Defense

Once the doctoral dissertation is completed, the 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, at a minimum, must have seen, and had time to review, the final draft.

IV. Implementation Plan

The School's Office of Graduate Studies and Research is charged with maintaining all student records including grades and all course work taken, results of qualifying, comprehensive and oral dissertation defense examinations, 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 graduate programs and serves as a petitions committee for graduate students requesting special consideration of their programs of study or other matters.

USC's Graduate School regulations require *two* committees that 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 the Dean of the Graduate School. Each of the two committees 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 under "Forms Library.")

1. The Comprehensive Examination Committee administers the written and oral portions of the comprehensive examination. It consists of a minimum of four faculty members (including one outside member). Each member of the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Committee submits a comprehensive examination question, grades that examination question and reports the results to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research. They then conduct the oral comprehensive examination.

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. Before the dissertation oral examination can be conducted, the Doctoral Dissertation Committee must agree that the dissertation is ready for defense.

B. Annual Review

Each student must submit a brief updated progress report and a written plan for continued development to the Associate Director for Graduate Studies by April 15 of each year. This report is similar to the annual performance review required of all faculty members. The Graduate Council will meet to evaluate the progress of all Ph.D. students. The Associate Director for Graduate Studies will let each doctoral student know the results of this evaluation. The annual updated progress report is important for retention and assistantship decisions.

V. Residency Requirements

All doctoral students must meet residency requirements. The intent of a residency requirement is to ensure that doctoral students benefit from and contribute to the full spectrum of educational and professional opportunities provided by the graduate faculty of a research university. When establishing residency, the student should interact with faculty and peers by regularly attending courses, conferences, and seminars and using the library, library services, and other resources that support excellence in graduate education.

The doctoral residency requirements may be satisfied only after admission to the doctoral program and must be fulfilled by two consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment. Full time enrollment is defined as enrollment for 6 hours for students serving as graduate assistants and 9 hours for students who are not graduate assistants; consecutive semesters could be fall/spring, spring/summer, summer/fall, or spring/fall.

VI. Advisor Information

Students entering the program will be assigned a temporary coursework advisor (normally the Associate Director for Graduate Studies) whose initial role will be to help the student begin to develop a program of study. This person may or may not serve as the permanent coursework advisor; that is a decision for each student. The choice of a permanent coursework advisor should be based on the student's academic and professional interests, on the professional and academic interests of the advisor and on compatibility.

Doctoral students should select a permanent coursework advisor early, preferably during the first year of their doctoral studies. The Associate Director for Graduate Studies must approve the selection of a permanent coursework advisor. Occasionally, students may wish to change advisors as they progress through the program based on changes in research focus or compatibility. A change in advisors must be approved by the Associate Director for Graduate Studies.

VII. Doctoral Degree Program Form

(Form is available on the Graduate School's website, 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 24 months of coursework. This form creates a contract listing which courses students intend to take, and when they intend to take them, in order to complete the doctoral degree. Once approved, the Doctoral Degree Program Form is then submitted to the Graduate School for approval. This form can be amended as interests change or courses become available, with the approval of a student's coursework advisor and the Associate Director for Graduate Studies.

Appendix A

DOCTORAL STUDENT CHECKLIST

First Semester (Beginning):

Temporary Advisor Determined _____

First Semester (by the end):

Course Work Advisor Determined _____

Before the end of the semester in which 18 hours of coursework are completed:

Qualifying Exam Date Submitted _____
Faculty Approval (Name) _____
Submitted to (name of conference/journal): _____

By the beginning of last semester of required course work:

Program of Study Completed Date _____
Dissertation Advisor Chosen _____
(Advisor must be chosen in order to register for first 3 hrs. of JOUR 899 to work on proposal.)

Before the end of the semester in which the required 30 hours of course work (Core, Research area, Mass Communications area and Outside area) are completed:

Admitted to Candidacy Date _____
Comprehensive Exam Committee Chosen _____

Dissertation Committee Chosen _____

Semester following completion of required coursework:

Written Comprehensive Exams Date Taken _____
(must be taken prior to mid-term Date Passed _____
of the semester; 5 consecutive

work days, 3 hours per question)

Oral Comprehensive Exams

Date Taken _____

Date Passed _____

Dissertation Proposal Approved
(Only 3 hrs. of JOUR 899 will be allowed to work
proposal; no additional hours allowed if proposal is
not approved by the end of the semester)

Date _____

Beginning of last semester:

Application for degree filed

Date _____

Dissertation Oral Defense
(Must be held no later than 30 days
prior to graduation date)

Date Taken _____

Date Passed _____

Dissertation Submitted to Graduate School
no later than 20 days prior to graduation date
(Must make appointment at Graduate School
for submission of dissertation)

Date _____

Hooding Ceremony

Date _____

Appendix B

PH.D. STUDENT WORKSHEET
(effective Fall 2012)

Course	Semester Taken	Grade	Credit
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I. Basic Core (24 credit hours)

JOUR 801	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 803	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 805	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 808	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 810	_____	_____	_____
Adv. Stats. _____	_____	_____	_____

Two of the following three courses:

JOUR 804	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 806	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 807	_____	_____	_____

II. Mass Communications Major Area* (12 credit hours; four courses from JOUR courses at 700/800 level)

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

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

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

***NOTE: At least 6 hours from a combination of Mass Communications Electives and Outside Area of Study must be in research methods beyond the core course requirements of the SJMC Ph.D. and Master's degree programs (may include JOUR courses)**

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

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

V. Residency Requirement (List consecutive semesters being used to satisfy this requirement.)

Appendix C

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

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 responses:

Research _____ Date

Theory _____ Date

Inside Area _____ 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

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.

