

**Ph.D. in Communication  
Program Policy Statement  
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## **Ph.D. in Communication Program Policy Statement**

### I. Enrollment, Admissions, and Financial Aid

#### A. Enrollment Limitations/Criteria

The number of students accepted each year will depend upon available funding, faculty research, and faculty resources for advising. Based on resources and interest in the program, it is anticipated that a cohort of students will be admitted once each year with a fall semester start. Full-time enrollment in the program is preferred but part-time enrollment will be considered. The minimum and maximum number of students is projected to be between 6 and 10 students per cohort.

#### B. Admission Requirements/Criteria

Admission to the Ph.D. program is competitive. Those who meet standard minimum requirements are not guaranteed admission nor are those who fail to meet all of those requirements necessarily precluded from admission if they offer appropriate strengths and skills.

Applicants will adhere to the University's Office of Graduate and Professional Education procedures using the online admission process accessible at <http://grad.udel.edu/apply/>.

Admission decisions will be made by the Graduate Committee of the Department of Communication. Students will be admitted to the program based on enrollment availability and their ability to meet the following minimum entrance requirements:

- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, in communication or an allied discipline, with an accompanying transcript from that institution.
- A master's degree in communication or other related discipline from an accredited college or university, with an accompanying transcript from that institution, is optional.
- An undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher as well as a within major minimum GPA of 3.0 is required. If the applicant has earned a master's degree, a minimum GPA of 3.5 is required for that degree.
- A written statement of goals and objectives (the personal statement) that clearly addresses the following questions: (1) What specific area of Communication are you interested in exploring and which of our faculty member(s) do you consider most appropriate to mentor you in your academic work and why?, (2) What is one Communication-related question or concept that keeps you up at night with curiosity?, and (3) Are you interested in studying Communication from a quantitative, social-scientific perspective (as opposed to a more critical cultural or interpretive perspective)?

- Three letters of recommendation from an academic, employer, and/or other professional source who can address the scholarship potential of the applicant. All letters of recommendation will be submitted online per the Office of Graduate and Professional Education admission policy. See <http://grad.udel.edu/apply/> for details.
- Official results from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam taken with the last 2 years (for non-native English speaking applicants only). For the TOEFL a score of at least 650 for the paper based exam, 280 for the computer based exam, or 114 for the internet based exam is required. For the IELTS exam a minimum score of 8.5 is expected. All scores must be received before an admissions decision can be rendered.
- A curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé.
- A critical writing sample is required. This may be an essay, a research project manuscript, or other piece of writing the applicant believes is a good example of their writing. The same should be no longer than 25 double spaced pages.
- A video essay, not to extend beyond one minute, based on the topic, “Where do you see yourself in 10 years and how do you see this program in achieving that goal?”
- Applicants applying for admission and a graduate assistantship should have their complete application submitted by February 1 for admission in the fall semester. Applicants applying for admission only should have their complete application submitted by May 1 for admission in the fall semester. Students are not typically admitted to begin their studies during the spring semester.

Completed applications (application form, official transcript(s), TOEFL or IELTS scores (if required), letters of recommendation, CV/résumé, statement of purpose, writing sample, and video essay will be compiled by the Department of Communication’s Director of Graduate Studies. This information will be disseminated for review by members of the department’s Graduate Committee.

The Department of Communication’s Graduate Committee will review all applicants and decide on applicants to interview, conduct the interviews with other members of core faculty, and make final decisions about admissions.

### C. Transfer Policy

Graduate credit earned at another institution will be evaluated at the written request of the student. Such a request will be evaluated by the Department of Communication’s Graduate Committee. In order for the transfer to be considered the following are required:

- The grade earned in the course is no less than a B-.
- The course was completed at an accredited college or university.
- The original course syllabus must be submitted with the written request.
- The course must have an equivalent course in the Department of Communication’s course inventory.

- The course was completed in the last five years.
- Transferred courses may not have been used in the completion of another degree.

If approved by the Graduate Committee the credits, but not the grades or quality points, are transferable to the University of Delaware graduate records. Credits earned at another institution while the student was classified as a continuing education student at that institution are not eligible to be transferred toward a graduate degree at the University of Delaware. Credits from institutions outside of the United States are generally not transferable to the University of Delaware.

#### D. Retention Policy

Students are expected to complete the Ph.D. program in four years. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 to stay in good standing.

#### E. Student Expenses and Financial Aid

##### 1. Extraordinary Expenses

No extraordinary expenses are anticipated.

##### 2. Sources of Financial Support

- Most students in the program will be supported by graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs) provided by the Department of Communication and the College of Arts and Sciences.
- When available students in the program will be supported by graduate research assistantships provided by external grants through Department of Communication faculty members.
- Assistantships are awarded on the basis of merit based upon student admissions applications and nominations from the department. Awards are granted to full-time students in good academic standing with regular status.
- The university-wide application deadline for these merit-based awards is February 1<sup>st</sup>. Applicants are encourage to apply early and contact the major instructional department for additional application information and for any potential deadlines earlier than February 1<sup>st</sup>. The award is valid only for the term designated.
- Application for fellowship, tuition scholarship, or assistantship final aid is a part of the admission application form and is made at the time of application. Electronic application is require using the web address <http://grad.udel.edu/apply/>. U.S. applicants are also strongly encouraged to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form.

## II. Curriculum Specifics

### A. Degrees Awarded

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

### B. Curriculum

The Doctor of Philosophy in Communication requires 60 credits including 45 credits of graduate level coursework, 6 credits of graduate research (to be completed in the second year), and 9 credits of dissertation for students entering the program with a baccalaureate degree. The program is designed to be completed in four years (three years of coursework and candidacy exams, one year of candidacy for dissertation completion). See Appendix A for proposed communication courses with descriptions.

**No class may be used to fulfill more than one requirement.**

#### **Required Theory Courses (9 credits)**

COMM601 Epistemology and Theory in Communication 3

COMM606 Foundations of Contemporary Communication Theory 3

Students must take three additional credits from a theory driven course from a topic within their focused program of study. Students must confer with their advisers to determine with course will best fulfill this requirement. May come from a course outside of the Department of Communication.

#### **Required Research Methodology Courses (9 credits)**

COMM603 Communication Research Methods – Procedures 3

Students must take six additional credits of research methods courses focused on different research methodologies that would best benefit their own program of study. Students must confer with their advisers to determine which courses will best fulfill their expectations.

#### **Required Statistical Methodology Courses (9 credits)**

COMM604 Communication Research Methods – Analysis 3

Students must take an additional six statistical methods credits: three credits must be an advanced generalist statistics courses and three credits must be from specialist statistics courses. Students should confer with their advisers to determine which courses will best fulfill the expectations of their program of study.

It is expected that students will complete no more than 6 of these 12 additional research and statistical methodology credits from outside of the Department of Communication.

### **Second-Year Graduate Research (6 credits)**

In addition to coursework, during their second year, students enroll in *COMM868: Research*. They are to enroll in 3 credits during their fall semester and 3 credits during their spring semester. The student is to develop, design, and implement a piece of original research, with guidance from a faculty committee of the student's choosing. Once the faculty committee is chosen, with one faculty committee member designated as its chair, the student and the chair will work together to develop the idea behind the research project and write a proposal to be presented to the entire faculty committee. The student will meet with the faculty committee to defend the proposal and the faculty committee will evaluate the proposal, make suggestions on how to improve the proposal research project. The proposal should be defended during the first semester of the student's second year in the program.

Once the proposal is completed the student will then proceed to collect all necessary data and write a written report based on their findings. The written report should include an abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, and literature cited section. This research will serve as the basis for an oral during the spring semester of their second year, after the written report is submitted to the faculty committee. The research project, including the oral defense and presentation, should be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>. If revisions of the written report are required by the faculty committee, they are due by July 30<sup>th</sup>.

Upon successful completion of their Second-Year Research, all students should receive an official confirmation letter confirming this passing of a major program milestone from their faculty committee's chair. A copy of the letter should be provided to the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies. A template for the letter will be posted on the Department of Communication's shared drive.

A document based on original research that served as a basis for a student's Second-Year Graduate Research can be submitted to the University Graduate College as a Thesis to obtain the Master of Arts (MA) Degree in Communication. The MA is optional for each student and does not advance a student in the program. The written report must be formatted according to the University Graduate College standards. The Master's Thesis requires the signatures of the student's advisor (research committee chair), the Chair of the Department of Communication, the College of Arts and Sciences Dean, and the Dean of the Graduate College. The minimum number of credits required for the MA Degree in Communication with thesis is 24 semester credit hours plus 6 hours of *COMM869: Master's Thesis*.

### **Focused Program of Study (18 Credits)**

Students must take 18 credits of Communication or related courses, chosen in consultation with the student's adviser and/or the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies so the student can build the most appropriate program of study for the student.

Students may take no more than 6 credits of independent study (COMM866) total as part of their Focused Program of Study

No more than 9 credits of a student's Focused Program of Study may be taken outside of the Department of Communication without consultation with the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies.

**Communication Colloquium (0 credits)**

Students must enroll in the COMM890 – Communication Colloquium each semester they are enrolled in coursework for a total of up to six semesters.

**Dissertation (9 credits)**

COMM964 Pre-Candidacy Study

(3-12 until  
candidacy achieved)

COMM969 Doctoral Dissertation

9

**Ph.D. in Communication Sample Curriculum for Students Admitted with a Baccalaureate Degree**

**Year 1 – Fall**

COMM601 (3)

COMM603 (3)

COMM606 (3)

COMM890 (0)

**Year 1 – Spring**

COMM604 (3)

2 Pr. Of Study/Research/Theory Courses (6)

COMM890 (0)

**Year 2 – Fall**

2 Pr. of Study/Research/  
Theory Courses (6 total)

COMM868 (3)

COMM890 (0)

**Year 2 – Spring**

2 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/  
Theory Courses (6 total)

COMM868 (3)

COM890 (0)

**Year 3 – Fall**

3 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/  
Theory Courses (9 total)

COMM890 (0)

**Year 3 – Spring**

2 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/  
Theory Courses (6 total)

COM890 (0)

*Throughout Year 3 students are to be working on their dissertation proposal with dissertation chair.*

*The written and oral portions of the Candidacy Exams is to be held during winter session of Year 3*

**Year 4 – Fall**

COMM964 (if proposal isn't defended)  
or COMM969 (if proposal is defended)  
(9 total)

**Year 4 – Spring**

UNIV999 – Dissertation Sustaining

**Ph.D. in Communication Curriculum for Students Admitted with a Masters Degree**

Students will follow an individualized plan of study as set by the Graduate Director and the Department of Communication's Graduate Committee. The individualized program will require a *minimum* of 33 credits of coursework and 9 credits of COMM969 in order to earn the Ph.D. in Communication.

**C. Consequences for Failure to Make Satisfactory Progress**

Each student's progress to degree will be reviewed at the end of every academic year. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 to remain in good standing. In addition students must achieve, at minimum, a B in each of the five core courses. If a minimum of B is not achieved the course may be retaken a maximum of once in an effort to achieve the required grade.

Students who fail to progress in course work as planned will be notified in writing of their progress by the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies. Students are required to submit a written revised plan to continue their plan of study. This revised plan must be approved by the Director of Graduate Study and the Graduate Committee. Each student will be evaluated on an individual basis for extenuating circumstances influencing their progress toward degree completion.

Students who fail to make progress necessary to achieve the required cumulative GPA of 3.0, or whose cumulative GPA falls below a 2.0, will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

**D. Candidacy**

Upon the recommendation of the doctoral student's dissertation committee and the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies, students may be admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. The stipulations for admission to doctoral candidacy are that the student has (1) had a program of study approved and course work completed, (2) completed one academic year of full-time graduate study in resident at the University of Delaware, (3) successfully completed candidacy examinations, (4) had a dissertation proposal accepted by their dissertation committee, and (5) if the dissertation requires human participants, received approval by the Institutional Review Board. The deadline for admission to candidacy for the fall semester is August 31. The deadline for admission to candidacy for the spring semester is January 31.

Responsibility for seeing that admission to candidacy is secured at the proper time rests with the student.



## E. Candidacy Examinations

Two written and one oral candidacy examinations will evaluate a student's knowledge of theory and research methodology as they relate to their overall program of study. Students will be required to identify three faculty members to serve on their candidacy examination committee with the assistance of the student's academic advisor by the start of their fifth semester (during year 3). The academic advisor will serve as chair of the examination committee and may also be one of the three individuals who administer the questions of the exam. All other faculty members of the examination committee must be approved by the student's academic advisor and be a member of the Department of Communication's approved Ph.D. faculty (see Appendix B).

These exams will be administered over the course of the five-week winter session of the student's third year of coursework. On the first day of winter session a student will be presented with a question (or a series of questions) that ask the student to relate their research content area to theory, broadly defined. Students will have the first two weeks of winter session to complete their responses. Their written response will be submitted on the Friday of the second week of the winter session. The response must be of high quality, with the eventual goal for the response to serve as the basis for the Literature Review chapter of the student's dissertation.

During the fourth week of the five-week winter session, on a day and time previously agreed upon between the student and their academic advisor, the student will sit for a written exam based upon research and statistical methodologies. It is recommended, though not required, that the student's exam committee have representation of faculty members who have taught at least one of the research or statistical methodology courses the student had previously taken for the preparation of this portion of the exam. What is of importance is that members of the committee have the background necessary to pose methodological questions for this portion of the exam.

It is up to the committee to determine the questions, with any number of committee members collaborating on each of the two exams. It is generally assumed that the adviser/committee chair will be involved in the writing of the theory exam, but each committee can determine the exact combination of committee members to exams.

Successful completion of the written examination is required prior to scheduling the oral defense. The oral defense will be scheduled during the fifth week of the five-week winter session. The oral examination will consist of the student's presentation of their written responses to *both* the theory and methodology exams. Committee members will provide feedback and the student will defend their responses.

Students are required to pass candidacy examinations. The results of this examination will be one of the following:

- Pass: Students may proceed to the next stage of their degree requirements.
- Conditional Pass: If the examination committee determines that the student's performance was generally acceptable but with a specific deficiency, condition(s) will be specified that the student must satisfy to achieve a pass and remain in the program. These conditions may include re-examination of one or more question areas to be completed within 3 months.
- Re-examination: This result is appropriate for a student whose performance was unsatisfactory but who displayed evidence of the potential to complete doctoral degree education. Re-examination must be completed within 3 months. The possible outcomes of this re-examination are pass or failure. The student may not take the exams a third time.

The advisor and examination committee will determine on a case-by-case basis the composition of re-examinations.

- Failure: This result indicates that the student is not capable of completing the requirements for the doctoral degree and the student would be recommended for dismissal from the program

Students may appeal the decision based upon the comments received about the student's exam answers from candidacy exam committee members. Written appeals from the student will be evaluated by the Department of Communication's Graduate Committee. If members of the Graduate Committee were also members of the student's candidacy exam committee other members of the Department of Communication's Ph.D. faculty may serve on the appeals board. A minimum of three faculty members are required to serve on the appeals board.

After the appeals process, if the student still receives a Failure on their Candidacy Exams, it would be recommended to the Graduate College to dismiss the student. The student may then take advantage of the appeals process at the Graduate College.

## F. Dissertation Committee and Proposal

### 1. Dissertation chair and committee selection

Students will select a dissertation chair upon approval of their academic advisor (who may be the same individual) and with approval of the Department of Communication's Graduate Committee. The student and their dissertation chair will create a dissertation committee at the time the student begins to develop the dissertation proposal. The dissertation committee shall include at least two faculty members from within the Department of Communication's Ph.D. faculty. Students must also name at least one

dissertation committee members from outside of the Department of Communication's Ph.D. faculty with approval of their dissertation chair and the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies. A dissertation committee may have no more than six total members. All Ph.D. dissertation committee members must hold a doctoral degree.

## 2. Defense of the dissertation proposal

A copy of the dissertation proposal must be available to faculty dissertation committee members at least two weeks in advance of the proposal defense. The dissertation proposal defense will be schedule only after a majority of members of the dissertation committee have determined that a defense is appropriate. The dissertation proposal defense will be open to the public, and invitations will be sent to all Department of Communication faculty and graduate students at least one week prior to the defense date.

## G. Defense of the Dissertation

The format of the dissertation must adhere to the guidelines specified by the University's Thesis and Dissertation Manual. The manual is available electronically on the internet at <http://www1.udel.edu/gradoffice/forms/thesismanual.pdf>

The dissertation defense will be scheduled only after the dissertation chair has determined that a defense is appropriate. The dissertation defense will be open to the public, with invitations send to all Department of Communication faculty and graduate students at least two weeks prior to the defense date. A copy of the dissertation must be made available to faculty dissertation committee members at least two weeks prior to the dissertation defense. The dissertation is expected to reflect the results of original and significant research written in a scholarly and literate manner worthy of publication. The dissertation must be approved by the dissertation chair, the Chairperson of the Department of Communication, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Dean of the Graduate College.

### III. Evaluation and Assessment

#### A. Assessment Plan

The Graduate Committee will be responsible for the quality of this new Ph.D. program. Both formative and summative methods will be used to assess achievement of the program's learning outcomes. The successful completion and oral defense of a doctoral dissertation is the culmination of all learning outcomes. Each course in the curriculum contributes to this final outcome. Each course will be evaluated by students after completion of the course. Course evaluation summaries identifying strengths, weaknesses, and suggested revisions will be completed annually by the faculty members who have taught them. These summaries will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee so that an overall evaluation of the curriculum will take place annually. The Director of Graduate Studies will communicate with faculty in those departments in which the doctoral students are taking statistics and/or cognate courses to assure that their content remains germane to the program.