

**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, 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 Graduate College 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. Students entering directly to the Ph.D. program will be required to obtain an M.A. degree during their studies.
- A master's degree in communication or other related discipline from an accredited college or university, with an accompanying transcript from that institution, is preferred.
- If you opt to take the GRE, applicants with the best chance of admission have a combined score of 300 for the verbal and quantitative reasoning sections. Also expected is a minimum score of 4.5 for the analytical writing portion. If you do not take the GRE, you must provide other evidence of quantitative ability (such as good grades in statistics or advanced math courses), and evidence of academic writing potential (through your writing sample).
- 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 Graduate College admission policy. See <http://grad.udel.edu/apply/> for details.
- If required, international students must submit 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). 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 helping you achieve that goal?”
- Applicants applying for admission and a graduate assistantship should have their complete application submitted by January 5 for admission in the fall semester. Applicants applying for admission only should have their complete application submitted by April 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 available for review in the Graduate College’s application software 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, 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 who enter with a Master's degree are expected to complete the Ph.D. program in four years. Students who enter with a Bachelor's degree are expected to complete the Ph.D. program in five years. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.3 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 Ph.D. program will be supported by graduate teaching assistantships and tuition scholarships 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 merit-based awards administered by the Graduate College is February 1st. Applicants seeking such awards are encouraged to apply before the department's January 5 deadline and contact the major instructional department for additional application information and for any potential deadlines earlier than February 1st. These university-wide awards are valid only for the term designated.
- Application for fellowship, tuition scholarship, or assistantship financial aid is a part of the admission application form and is made at the time of application. Electronic application is required 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. Program Learning Goals

Program Goals

A graduate of our Ph.D. in Communication program will be able to:

- Articulate the central theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts of the discipline
- Apply communication science theory and methods to conduct research on complex questions and societal problems
- Demonstrate a capacity to communicate research findings to academic and lay audiences
- Conduct independent and cooperative research that is publishable in the communication discipline's core peer-reviewed journals
- Establish competency in teaching at the undergraduate level
- Incorporate ethical communication principles and practices into their research and teaching
- Recognize the cultural basis of communication and acknowledge their own standpoint, with respect for the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Employ communication strategies to resolve challenges and empower people.
- Appreciate the landscape and norms of pursuing an academic career in the communication discipline

C. Curriculum

For students entering with an M.A. degree, the Doctor of Philosophy in Communication requires 60 credits including 51 credits of graduate level coursework, and 9 credits of dissertation. These students should complete the degree in four years (three years of coursework and candidacy exams, one year of candidacy for dissertation completion). For students admitted with a Bachelor's degree, the Doctor of Philosophy in Communication requires 75 credits, including 60 credits of graduate level coursework, 6 credits of graduate research (the equivalent of a Master's thesis, to be completed in the second year), and 9 credits of dissertation. These students should complete the degree in five years. See Appendix A for proposed communication courses with descriptions.

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

Required Theory Courses (9 or 12 credits)

COMM601 Epistemology and Theory in Communication

3

COMM630 Interpersonal Communication Theory 3

COMM670 Media Theory 3

Students entering with a Bachelor's degree must take a total of 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 which course will best fulfill this requirement.

A course offered outside of the Department of Communication may be requested for approval.

Required Research Methodology Courses (9 or 12credits)

COMM603 Communication Research Methods – Procedures 3

Students entering with a Master's degree must take six additional credits of research methods courses focused on different research methodologies that would best benefit their own program of study. Students entering with a Bachelor's degree must take a total of nine 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 or 12credits)

COMM604 Communication Research Methods – Analysis 3

Students entering with a Master's degree must take an additional six statistical methods credits: three credits must be in advanced generalist statistics courses and three credits must be from specialist statistics courses. Students entering with a Bachelor's degree must take a total of nine additional credits of statistical methods: six credits must be in 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 (for students entering with a Master's degree) or 9 (for students entering with a Bachelor's degree) of these additional research and statistical methodology credits from outside of the Department of Communication.

Second-Year Graduate Research (6 credits)

For students entering the Ph.D. program with a Bachelor's degree, during the second year, the student should enroll in *COMM868: Research*. The student should enroll in 3 credits during the fall semester and 3 credits during the 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 30th. If revisions of the written report are required by the faculty committee, they are due by July 30th.

The final document based on this original research will be submitted to the University Graduate College as a Thesis to obtain the Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree in Communication. 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 *COMM868*.

Focused Program of Study (24 Credits)

Students admitted with a Master's degree must take 24 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. Students admitted with a Bachelor's degree must take 24 credits of Communication or related courses, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor and/or the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies so the student can build the most appropriate program of study.

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

No more than 12 credits of the 24 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)

*Once the student has registered for all required courses for the degree but has not yet met all of the stipulations for passing into candidacy, the student must maintain status in the program by registering for pre-candidacy credits. These credits do not count toward the degree requirements.

COMM969 Doctoral Dissertation

9

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

Year 1 – Fall

COMM601 (3)
COMM603 (3)
COMM630 (3)
COMM890 (0)

Year 1 – Spring

COMM604 (3)
COMM670 (3)
1 Pr. Of Study/Research/Theory Courses (3)
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)
COMM890 (0)

Year 3 – Fall

3 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/
Courses (9 total)
COMM890 (0)

Year 3 – Spring

3 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/ Theory Theory
Courses (9 total)
COMM890 (0)

Year 4 – Fall

2 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/
Theory Courses (6 total)
COMM890 (0)

Year 4 – Spring

COMM 964 (6 credits)

COM890 (0)

Throughout Year 4 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 or spring of Year 4.

Year 5 – Fall

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

Year 5 – Spring

UNIV999 – Dissertation Sustaining

Ph.D. in Communication Sample Curriculum for Students Admitted with a Master's Degree

Year 1 – Fall

COMM601 (3)
COMM603 (3)
COMM630 (3)
COMM890 (0)

Year 1 – Spring

COMM604 (3)
COMM670 (3)
1 Pr. Of Study/Research/Theory Courses (3)
COMM890 (0)

Year 2 – Fall

3 Pr. of Study/Research/
Theory Courses (9 total)
COMM890 (0)

Year 2 – Spring

3 Pr. of Study Courses/Research/
Theory Courses (9 total)
COMM890 (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)
COMM890 (0)

Year 4 – Fall

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

Year 4 – Spring

UNIV999 – Dissertation Sustaining

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 or spring of Year 3.

D. Consequences for Failure to Make Satisfactory Progress

Each student's progress to degree will be reviewed at the end of every academic term. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.3 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 3.3, or whose cumulative GPA falls below a 2.0, will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

E. 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 residence 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.

F. Candidacy Examinations

Two written and one oral candidacy examination 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 last year of coursework. 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).

It is best if these exams are administered over the course of the five-week winter session of the student's final year of coursework. The timing of the exams is flexible and must be agreed upon by the student and their committee, with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. On the first day of the written exam, the student will be presented with a question (or a series of questions) relating their research content area to theory, broadly defined. Students will have two weeks to complete their response. The response must be of high quality, with the eventual goal for it to serve as the basis for the Literature Review chapter of the student's dissertation.

Within the following three weeks, on a day and time agreed upon between the student and their academic advisor, the student will sit for an in-person, four hour 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. It is important 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 exam questions, with any number of committee members collaborating on each of the two exams. The advisor should coordinate the writing of exam questions. Questions should be submitted by the committee to the Graduate Academic Program Coordinator, who will distribute them to the student.

Successful completion of the written exams is required prior to scheduling the oral exam, which should take place no later than three weeks after students are notified of their written exam results.

Students are required to pass all three candidacy examinations. Written exams must be passed before the oral exam takes place. The oral exam must also be successfully completed in order to apply for candidacy status.

Committee members have the following options in evaluating the exams:

- 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. The possible outcomes of this conditional pass are pass or failure.
- 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

Appeals process

A student who has failed their candidacy exams can submit an appeal to the department's appeals board. Written appeals from the student will be evaluated by the Department of Communication's Graduate Committee. If members of the Graduate Committee are 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.

The student's appeal must be submitted within ten days of their written notification of failing the exam; the Department Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies should be made aware that an appeal is forthcoming as soon as possible. The appeal should be in writing and must include the student's answers to their exam questions as well as a clearly articulated explanation justifying why they believe they should have passed. If a reexamination was given, questions and answers for both sets of exams must be provided.

Upon notification of an appeal from the Department Chair and/or the Director of Graduate Studies, the student's exam committee must provide the comments they made in response to the student's answers and/or a general statement of why the student's answers were unsatisfactory. The exam committee has ten days from the time of notification from the Department Chair and/or the Director of Graduate Studies to make this material available.

The appeals board will issue a written decision to the student, the exam committee, the Department Chair, and the Director of Graduate Studies within 10 days of receiving the full set of appeals material from the student and the committee.

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

G. Dissertation Committee and Proposal

1. Dissertation chair and committee selection

Students will select a dissertation chair with approval from their academic advisor (who is usually 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 will include at least two additional faculty members from within the Department of Communication's graduate faculty. Students must also name at least one dissertation committee member from outside of the Department of Communication with approval of their dissertation chair and the Department of Communication's Director of Graduate Studies. The outside committee member can be from another department within University of Delaware, or a faculty member at a different institution. A dissertation committee will have no less than four members and no more than six total members. All Ph.D. dissertation committee members must hold a doctoral degree. Students must complete a [Dissertation Committee Form](#) and submit it to the Department of Communication's Graduate Program Coordinator, who will forward it to the Graduate College.

2. Defense of the dissertation proposal

A copy of the dissertation proposal must be available to the student's dissertation committee members at least two weeks in advance of the proposal defense. The dissertation proposal defense will be scheduled only after the student's advisor has determined that a defense is appropriate. Once the oral defense of the proposal is complete the [Doctoral Degree Candidacy Recommendation Form](#) must be completed, signed by all committee members, and submitted to the Department of Communication's Graduate Program Coordinator, who will forward it to the Graduate College.

H. Defense of the Dissertation

The format of the thesis must adhere to the guidelines specified by the University's [Thesis and Dissertation Manual](#).

Prior to scheduling a defense, the candidate must use iThenticate, the university-provided plagiarism detection software, to check their work. The advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies should receive a copy of the iThenticate report prior to submitting the final dissertation draft.

The dissertation defense will be scheduled only after the candidate's advisor has determined that a defense is appropriate. The dissertation defense will be open to the public, with invitations sent to all Department of Communication faculty and graduate students at least one week prior to the defense date. A copy of the dissertation must be made available to 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. After a successful defense with the candidate's committee, 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.

In addition, once the oral defense of the dissertation is achieved, the [Certification of Doctoral Dissertation Defense form](#) must be completed, signed by all committee members, and a PDF of the final dissertation must be submitted to the Department of Communication's Graduate Program Coordinator, who will forward it to the Graduate College.

III. Evaluation and Assessment

A. Assessment Plan

The Graduate Committee will be responsible for the quality of this Ph.D. program. Both formative and summative methods will be used to assess achievement of the program's learning goals. 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.