

# 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.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communications, a professional school grounded strongly in the liberal arts, holds full national accreditation for its graduate and undergraduate programs. In its earliest mission, the School's "core values" emphasized the education and training of undergraduate students for careers in print journalism. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the School extended its teaching mission to encompass graduate study at the master's degree level, preparing recent graduates and those pursuing mid-career changes for professional careers. The School enrolled its first Ph.D. students in the fall of 1995. The Ph.D. is designed to meet the needs of outstanding graduate students who wish to prepare for teaching and research positions in colleges and universities or research positions in the print or electronic media, advertising agencies, marketing, public relations or opinion research firms, business or government.

## **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. Learning Objectives/Outcomes for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree**

#### **A. General Statement**

The Ph.D. offered by the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of South Carolina is a *research* degree. Doctoral students are expected to engage in research projects while enrolled in the program and to participate in professional activities such as presenting papers at scholarly and professional meetings, publishing in journals, and the like. Doctoral students are expected to become student members of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the primary professional organization serving the mass communication field, as well as other organizations related to their field of study. By attending conferences sponsored by such organizations, doctoral students can meet colleagues with whom they will work throughout their professional careers.

Students will be expected to acquire a wide range of knowledge, to try different projects and work at different depths of analyzing data. At times, students will work as junior partners in research projects with their faculty adviser or other faculty members. At other times, a student will be expected to attempt a solo project, designing, researching and writing independently.

## B. Specific Competencies

### 1. Effective writing skills:

Comments – Students must be able to write clear and correct English. Beyond mechanical competence, their writings should reflect intelligent application of such concepts as diction, economy, syntax, sentence and paragraph structure, transition, organization and tempo. The writing should also capture color, lend credibility and create interest. The student must demonstrate an ability to present complex ideas in understandable terms.

Measurement – Ph.D. candidates will be asked to produce evidence of professional writing skills throughout their graduate program. Seminar papers will be required and the writing rigorously critiqued. Written examinations will be graded not only on content but on style. The doctoral dissertation must meet exacting professional standards for written work. Any student who fails to consistently produce high quality written work will be expected to improve to an acceptable level.

### 2. A thorough knowledge of basic statistics and quantitative research methods:

Comments – Students must possess a thorough knowledge of research designs, quantitative data collection methods, sampling procedures and statistical analysis techniques. Students should be familiar with and understand current journalism and mass communication research studies reported in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Public Opinion Quarterly* and other scholarly publications serving our disciplines.

Measurement – Students must demonstrate statistical competency. This generally means that students who have not completed a college-level course in statistical reasoning with a grade of "C" or better must take EDRM 710, STAT 515 or their equivalents (undergraduate or graduate) during the first or second semester of doctoral work. All students take a three-course sequence in research methods at the doctoral level and must successfully complete a comprehensive examination question in this area.

Doctoral students will be assigned, as part of their assistantships, to work on research with an advisor or other faculty member. All doctoral students will have opportunities to work on research with faculty in research projects or seminar papers.

Students must follow an appropriate sequence of research coursework and are expected to submit seminar or other research papers to conferences and journals. Normally, research papers are not treated as simply class assignments; an attempt should be made to tailor each paper, even those done for seminars outside the School, for presentation in some way.

### 3. An understanding of mass communication theory:

Comment – Students will be expected to become familiar with contemporary scholarship involving major mass communication theories.

Measurement – Students must satisfactorily complete a doctoral-level course in mass communication theory and pass a comprehensive examination question in this area.

### 4 (a). A working knowledge of mass communication law and legal research methods:

Comments – Students will be expected to understand current trends in and interpretations of media law including such areas as libel, privacy, access to public information, regulation of commercial speech, internet law, copyright and related matters. In addition, students will become familiar with the process of legal research including the use of cases, administrative regulations, law review articles and other resources available in the law library.

Measurement – All students must satisfactorily complete a doctoral-level course work in mass media law.

~or~

4 (b). A working knowledge of communication history and historical research methods:

Comments – Students should be able to appreciate the lessons learned from mistakes and successes of past media practitioners as well as the opinions of media critics who have helped shape the discipline. Therefore, students will be expected to understand current trends in and interpretations of communication history. In addition, students will become familiar with the process of historical research including the use of archives, primary evidence and library resources.

Measurement – Students must satisfactorily complete a graduate-level course in mass communication history.

5. Effective skills as a communicator:

Comments – Students will be expected to demonstrate skills in gathering, organizing and presenting information. Effective interviewing and presentation skills will be required of all students.

Measurement – In addition to their normal course work, doctoral students will demonstrate effective skills as a communicator through development and presentation of their seminar requirements, the oral defense of comprehensive examinations and doctoral dissertation.

6. An understanding of professional ethics and ethical issues:

Comments – Students should be able to discuss current ethical issues related to the mass media such as conflicts of interest, sensationalism, misleading advertising, perpetuation of sexist and racist stereotypes in the media, and relationships with news sources. Students should be able to think through and take a personal position on contemporary ethical problems and begin to develop a personal philosophy of professional behavior.

Measurement – Students must satisfactorily complete a doctoral-level course in the ethics of mass communication and pass a comprehensive examination question in this area.

7. An understanding of the theory and practice of college-level instruction:

Comments – Doctoral students will comprise the vast majority of the professorate in the years to come. Students should be familiar with college-level teaching methods and philosophies as well as demonstrate their ability to perform at high levels as an instructor in the classroom. They should also be familiar with the culture and the obligations of faculty governance expected of faculty members in an institution of higher learning.

Measurement -- Students must satisfactorily complete a doctoral-level course in teaching at the college level. Doctoral students will be given some actual practice in college teaching and may be given the opportunity to teach an undergraduate class.

### III. Measurement Procedures

#### A. General Examinations

In addition to regular examinations administered in connection with seminars, other courses and the foreign-language examination (see below), students must complete both a qualifying examination and the doctoral comprehensive examination.

##### 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 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*. A doctoral student who does not successfully pass the Admission to Candidacy Examination or cannot demonstrate that they have met the requirements through previous coursework in a given area may be required to enroll in additional coursework at the master’s (700) level before enrolling in doctoral-level coursework in that area.

The University’s Graduate School, which requires this examination but leaves to the School the administration and evaluation of the test, explains that “the scope of the exam should be such that the program [School] faculty can determine the candidate’s potential for ongoing intellectual development, capacity for critical analysis and synthesis of ideas, and a knowledge of the major theoretical concepts and current thinking in the proposed field of study.”

In the School, this is defined as bringing to one’s doctoral studies a solid understanding of basic mass communication research methods, communication theory, mass media history and mass media law. Because these are the areas traditionally tested in the master of arts comprehensives administered by the School, these questions serve as the Admission to Candidacy examination. A doctoral student who has satisfactorily completed M.A. comps in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of South Carolina within four years prior to enrollment for doctoral course work may request the Associate Director for Graduate Studies and Research to allow substitution of this exam for the Admission to Candidacy Examination. A student who has completed the comprehensive examinations for the master of mass communication degree at USC within four years prior to enrollment for doctoral courses may request of the Associate Dean that the research methods and law portions of that exam be substituted for their counterparts in the Admission to Candidacy Examination.

A student who can demonstrate they have successfully completed coursework in any or all four areas at another institution may make a request to the Associated Director for Graduate Studies and Research that this course work be substituted for their counterparts in the Admission to Candidacy Examination.

##### 2. The Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

The Doctoral Comprehensive Examination is in two parts:

a. The written examination is designed to demonstrate the student’s overall mastery of the fields he/she has 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: research methods, theory, ethics and the student’s individual outside area of study. The questions are based on

the general course work completed by the candidate during his/her doctoral program. 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. The 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.

### B. Course Work

The doctoral program requires a minimum of 36 hours of graduate-level coursework *beyond* the master's degree. In addition, a minimum of 12 hours of dissertation credits are required for a total of 48 credit hours required at the doctoral level. The course work must include the following core seminars:

- JOUR 801--Seminar in Mass Communication Research Design
- JOUR 802--Seminar in Ethical Reasoning in Mass Communication
- JOUR 803--Seminar in Mass Communication Theory and Theory Construction
- JOUR 804--Seminar in Mass Communication Historical Research Methods *or*  
JOUR 806--Seminar in Mass Communication Legal Research Methods
- JOUR 805--Seminar in Teaching Mass Communication

Plus 21 additional hours of elective course work as approved by the student's doctoral course work adviser.

The course work is divided into three main areas (see Appendix B). At least nine hours must be in research methods and at least 12 hours must be in mass communication (this can include such areas of emphasis as communication theory, communication law, communication history or media economics). At least nine hours must be taken in one outside specific field (such as economics, business, political science or any other field) approved by the student's coursework advisor. Students are then allowed to select six hours of additional elective credits.

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

### C. 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 stick for several years after graduation. The dissertation can 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.

#### D. 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. A dissertation defense must occur within eight years of the first semester of doctoral 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 *three* committees which serve specific roles in the supervision and examination of a doctoral candidate. These committees require 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 examinations 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 before the Dissertation Oral Examination Committee.
3. The Dissertation Oral Examination Committee examines the student on the dissertation and informs the Office of Graduate Studies and Research as to whether the student passed or failed the defense. The dissertation cannot be submitted to the Graduate School until it has been approved and signed off on by members of this committee. This committee consists of a minimum of four members (including one outside member).

##### 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 in February of each



year. Each document is a narrative statement which 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 – what the student wishes to do in the semesters ahead and how this satisfies the methodology, mass communications, and third area 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, in writing, the results of that evaluation. The Office of Graduate Studies and Research will conduct a survey of graduate alumni and maintain a database of their current positions and responsibilities.

## **V. Admissions**

Applicants must hold a master's 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. If so, the student must complete the master's degree before admission to candidacy for doctoral work.

## **VI. Residency Requirements**

The granting of a doctoral degree by the School of Journalism and Mass Communications presupposes a completion of the master's degree, a minimum of 36 graduate hours of doctoral course work and a minimum of 12 dissertation credits. The doctoral residency requirement may be satisfied only after admission to the doctoral program and must be fulfilled by enrollment in at least 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.

## **VII. 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 College'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 36 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 570 (paper-based) or 230 (computer-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.

### **VIII. 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.

The 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, but in general a change in advisers primarily is based on a change in research and dissertation objectives and compatibility.

### **IX. Doctoral Degree Program Form**

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

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:

Dissertation Oral Defense Committee \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**

**DOCTORAL STUDENT WORKSHEET**

**I. Research Methods Area** (at least 9 hours, depending on your major. Students with a quantitative emphasis will likely have more methods courses.)

JOUR 801	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 804/806	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**II. Mass Communications Major Area** (12 hours)

JOUR 802	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 803	_____	_____	_____
JOUR 805	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**III. Third Area of Concentration** (Must be outside the College, approved by advisory committee) (At least 9 hours)

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

**IV. Elective courses** (6 hours) (May be taken inside or outside the College of Journalism and Mass Communications)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**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.