

The PhD in Mass Communications

Semester One:

- In consultation with your advisor, develop an individual plan of courses and seminars that:
 - supports your general research interests;
 - includes at least one 800- or 900-level course in three or more primary substantive areas that also emphasize at least two different methodological approaches; and
 - includes at least 32 credits of coursework and research before completing the preliminary examination and achieving dissertator status.
- LSC 700 and one additional one-credit colloquium-type course taken on a pass/fail basis may count toward the student's 65-credit minimum.
- If you have completed graduate-level coursework at another institution and would like course credits to count toward your degree, you should submit a request, along with supporting documentation (i.e., a course syllabus from the other university), to the Director of Graduate Studies.
- All PhD students are required to complete a communication theory course (typically LSC 720), a research methods course and a statistics course. These courses should be taken during the first and second semesters of a student's program. Students should contact their academic advisor about specific courses that satisfy these requirements. If a methods course is not offered by any social science department on campus in a particular semester, a student may be allowed to fulfill this degree requirement with three credits of independent study focusing on research methodology. Discuss your options with your academic advisor.
- You do not need to plan to fulfill the requirements of a minor since the PhD in Mass Communications is an interdisciplinary degree. Nonetheless, many LSC PhD students complete minors in Science and Technology Studies, Statistics, Political Science, or Sociology.

Semester Two:

- Check in with your advisor regarding your progress and any intended changes to your course plan.
- Start discussing your research ideas in more detail with your advisor in preparation for submitting a formal application to the Joint Committee on the Ph.D. in Mass Communications.
- You should submit your program proposal when you have:
 - a clearly defined research topic;
 - decided, in consultation with your advisor, who your five committee members will be; and
 - at least one semester of course work remaining in the program.

- The Joint Committee will evaluate your course work (completed and proposed) against your stated research focus to determine whether you are prepared to handle the theoretical and methodological requirements of your dissertation research. See the Student Services Coordinator for an example of this document.

Semesters Three and Four:

- Check in with your advisor regarding your progress and any intended changes to your course plan.
- Submit a formal program proposal to the Joint Committee on the Ph.D. in Mass Communications. This proposal should be developed in consultation with your advisor who will write a letter of support. It should present a coherent and focused selection of courses relevant to your dissertation work, and a 3.5 cumulative GPA at UW-Madison. See your advisor and the Student Services Coordinator for additional rules and requirements.

Semester Five:

- Check in with your advisor regarding your progress and any intended changes to your course plan.
- If you already had a Master's degree when you joined the graduate program, you should pass the preliminary examination by the end of the fifth semester and no later than the end of the seventh semester.*

Preliminary Examination:

- The preliminary examination is a significant benchmark in a doctoral student's academic career. It is given to assess the student's knowledge of areas within their academic discipline. Passing the preliminary exam culminates in admission to candidacy for the PhD degree.

Semester Seven:

- Check in with your advisor regarding your progress and any intended changes to your course plan.
- If you already had a Master's degree when you joined the graduate program, you **MUST** pass the preliminary examination by the end of this semester.*
- If you did not have a Master's degree when you joined the graduate program, you should pass the preliminary examination by the end of the seventh semester or soon after, but absolutely no later than the end of the ninth semester.*

Semester Nine:

- Check in with your advisor regarding your progress and any intended changes to your course plan.
- If you did not have a Master's degree when you joined the graduate program, you **MUST** pass the preliminary examination by the end of this semester.*

Dissertator Status:

- Once you have completed the preliminary examination and at least 65 graduate-level credits (and cleared all grades of “I” or “P”), you will be considered a dissertator and will be eligible for dissertator fee status.
 - Register for three credits of dissertator’s research (LSC 990) each fall and spring semester until your work is complete.
 - Students have five years from the date of passing their preliminary examination to take their final oral examination and deposit their dissertation. Failure to complete their degree within this five-year period may result in their having to retake the preliminary examination and be re-admitted to candidacy.
 - Plan ahead. Contact your advisor and other degree committee members to schedule a date for your dissertation defense meeting.
 - Notify the Student Services Coordinator **at least three weeks prior** to the defense date, so she/he can request a degree warrant.
 - Work backwards from your defense date to plan earlier deadlines, such as dates for submitting a first draft to your advisor (remember to allow time for your advisor to give you feedback and for you to do needed revisions), and the date for delivering final drafts to the committee (usually at least 14 days before your defense date).
- * Notify the Student Services Coordinator at least three weeks prior to the exam date so she/he can request a degree warrant on your behalf for that date.