

The Ph.D. in Mass Communications

Semester One:

- In consultation with your advisor, develop an individual plan of courses and seminars that:
 - Supports your general research interests, and ultimately the innovative research for your thesis
 - Includes at least 65 credits of coursework and research before completing preliminary examinations and achieving dissertator status
 - Recognizes the “skills” courses are unlikely to be counted toward the 65 credits, and faculty are looking for the presence of high level course experiences
- You do not need to plan to fulfill the requirements of a minor since the Ph.D. in mass communications is an interdisciplinary degree. Many LSC Ph.D. students, nonetheless, 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 making formal application to the Joint Committee on the Ph.D. in Mass Communications
- You should submit your program proposal when you have: 1) a clearly defined research topic 2) decided in consultation with your advisor who your five committee members will be and 3) 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.

Semester 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 or the student services coordinator for additional rules and requirements.

Semester Five:

- Check in with your advisor regarding progress and any intended changes to your course plan.
- If you already had a master’s degree when you joined LSC, you should pass preliminary examinations by the end of the fifth semester and not later than the end of the seventh semester.

Preliminary Exams

The preliminary examination is a significant benchmark in a doctoral student's academic career. It is given to assess knowledge of areas within the academic discipline. Passing of the preliminary exam culminates in admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. Each of your five committee members will set an individualized question.

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 preliminary examinations by the end of this semester.
- If you did not have a master's degree when you joined the graduate program, you should pass your preliminary examinations by the end of the seventh semester or as 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 us, you must pass preliminary examinations by the end of this semester.

Dissertator Status:

- Once you have completed your preliminary examinations and at least 65 graduate 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 dissertations. 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.
- In your final semester, plan well ahead with your advisor to schedule a dissertation defense date.
- 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).

****Your Student Services Coordinator (SSC) will send an email at the start of every semester requesting students to declare their intentions to achieve major milestones (submit a program proposal, take prelim exams, dissertation defense, graduation) during the current semester. Stating your intentions to achieve a milestone does not mean you have to adhere to these intentions, however, it is necessary so your SSC can send you detailed instructions necessary to reach the milestone. It is critical that you pay close attention to these directions to avoid any logistical errors in the preparation for the milestone, e.g. all warrants to signal a milestone must be sent to the Graduate School a minimum of three weeks prior to key dates.***