



SILS Policies and Procedures **DOCTORAL PROGRAM HANDBOOK¹**

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The SILS doctoral program aims to provide an environment that enables creative and energetic students to become innovative thinkers, researchers, teachers, and leaders in information and library science. The program achieves this by providing the flexibility to customize student programs that coordinate student and faculty interests and activities. We seek students who:

- Enjoy intellectual challenges and demonstrate analytical and critical thinking;
- Are committed to a life of research and scholarly inquiry;
- Possess the discipline and will to be independent investigators and the vision and communication skills to be influential leaders in the field;
- Are attracted to information and library science as a field that incorporates diverse theories, scholars, and methodologies;

¹ (These procedures are supplementary to the procedures and requirements given in the Graduate School's *Graduate School Handbook* and the *SILS Bylaws*. In the case of discrepancies, those documents will take precedence over this one.)

- Support evidence-based practice through the transmission of theoretical and research findings through teaching and service activities, and
- Aim to be leaders in the field of information and library science.

A. Admission

1. The program seeks outstanding students who possess the qualities to be successful independent investigators. Approval of admission is based upon an assessment of the totality of the evidence in support of the application, rather than on a consideration of isolated particulars.
2. Considerations in the evaluation of applicants for admission include the following:
 - a. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in this country, or its equivalent from a foreign institution. Applicants who possess a master's degree or equivalent from an institution of recognized standing are especially encouraged to apply.
 - b. A GPA of 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale) in the last two years of the undergraduate program and a record of superior performance in all previous academic preparation.
 - c. A written statement of the applicant's research focus and/or interests to be addressed during the doctoral program, which provides convincing evidence of the applicant's intellectual maturity and a correspondence between the applicant's research interests and those of the SILS faculty.
 - d. Evidence during the applicant's interview of intellectual maturity and support of the applicant's research interests by member(s) of the SILS faculty.
 - e. For applicants whose native language is not English, a minimum TOEFL score of 100.
3. On an overall basis the body of evidence outlined above should establish a correspondence between the student's research interests and those of the faculty. Further, endorsement by one or more faculty willing to assume the advisor/mentor role for the student is the ultimate outcome of evaluation of this body of evidence.
4. Exceptions to these admission policies may be allowed for students with the potential for outstanding research contributions through their special background or experience.

B. Academic Background and Knowledge Expected

1. A student is expected to have the following foundation before entering the program.

- a. Graduate-level coursework in the foundations of information and library science. This expectation may be met by completing INLS 520 (Organization of Information), INLS 509 (Information Retrieval), INLS 500 (Human Information Interactions), and/or other relevant courses in the School's curriculum.
- b. Knowledge of research methods and their use in information and library science studies. This expectation may be met by completing INLS 581 (Research Methods) or a similar survey course of social science research methods.
- c. Knowledge of computing equivalent to that obtained in INLS 161 (Information Tools). This expectation may be met by a demonstration of competence gained through experience, as well as by a record of formal course work or the completion of recommended course work.

Upon admission, the PhD Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Research and Doctoral Committee and the student's advisor, will evaluate the student's transcript and the student will be informed if additional coursework is required. In some cases, the student may be asked to submit evidence of course content and to discuss the courses and their content with their faculty advisor/mentor prior to identifying any knowledge gaps that need to be filled. If the student believes that the evaluation of their prior coursework was incomplete or additional information should have been taken into account, he/she should schedule a meeting to discuss the additional coursework requirements with their advisor and the PhD Program Coordinator.

2. If the student is asked to take additional coursework, it should be completed early in the student's program.

C. Academic Advisor

1. A faculty member who has endorsed the admission of the applicant will serve as the student's academic advisor. Such an endorsement should include consideration of both the correspondence between the student's and the potential advisor's research interests and the ability of the advisor and student to work well together.
2. In the case where the advisor is an assistant professor, a secondary advisor will be appointed to assist the advisor. In the case where a student has research interests that cut across faculty members, the student may be assigned co-advisors; such a change may be undertaken at any point prior to the proposal defense. If co-advisors are appointed, they should clearly establish their relationship with each other (i.e., as equal partners in advising the student or which one is taking the lead).
3. The student or the faculty member may terminate an advisor/advisee relationship upon notice to the PhD Program Coordinator. Note that a change in advisor may, in particular, be called for due to the focusing of research interests that occurs as a student moves from completion of the comprehensive examination to the dissertation proposal.

4. The student and the advisor should meet early in the first semester of the program, to mutually set their expectations for the advising support to be provided during the first year of the program. Such meetings should occur at least annually (in conjunction with the student's submission of the annual progress report), as the student's need for guidance will evolve.
5. The advisor(s) and the student are encouraged to seek further advice from other faculty members (particularly those who might be potential committee members) in planning the student's program of study. As the student's research interests evolve, e.g., in preparation for a particular dissertation topic, the advisor is expected to recommend courses or experiences in addition to the remedial ones identified at time of admission.
6. The advisor is responsible for supporting a student's progress. While the ways in which an advisor might support a student will vary from student to student and from advisor to advisor, it is recommended that the advisor and student plan to meet one-on-one several times each semester; that the advisor will respond promptly to a student's request for additional meetings; and that the student and advisor will, together, set realistic goals for the timing of submission of documents for feedback and the return of that feedback. Conversations between the student and the advisor might include course plans (during the first two years or so), the shaping of the student's dissertation research and studies leading up to that work, and planning for meeting the program's milestones (outlined below).
7. If the advisor leaves the School through retirement or a job change, they should ensure a smooth transition to another advisor or, if agreeable to the advisor, the student, the PhD Program Coordinator, and the Graduate School, to continue to serve in that capacity.

D. Course work

1. The doctoral program of study is rooted in a set of core themes and principles of information and library science and is customized to the needs and interests of students and research strengths of the faculty. Exceptionally well-prepared students will take a **minimum of 36 hours of formal courses, reading courses, or directed research exclusive of the dissertation** (i.e., exclusive of credits in INLS 994). Students who enter with no graduate background should expect to take additional courses beyond the 36-hour minimum. Ideally, the student will develop a program of studies in cooperation with the advisor. All courses offered for credit toward the degree must be at the graduate level. [Note that courses with the suffix X and courses with the prefix GRAD do not count toward the 36 hour minimum.]
2. There are five required courses for the doctoral degree: INLS 881, a course in statistics, a course in theory development, an advanced research methods course, and a professional seminar in IS Research and Teaching.

- a. INLS 881, Research Issues and Questions I, should be taken during the first semester in the doctoral student's program of study. This course presents a wide range of research issues and questions. It also examines multiple methods of investigation commonly employed in the information field in the context of selected content areas. Finally, it is designed to socialize students to doctoral study and aspects of academic life.
- b. Doctoral students are also required to take at least three hours of statistics. Depending on their research interests, some students will find it necessary to take additional courses in statistics and statistical methods. The SILS Faculty has approved the following courses as satisfying the statistics requirement of the doctoral program.²

Biostatistics	BIOS 550/551 or BIOS 660/661
Education	EDUC 710/784
Political Science	POLI 783/784
Psychology	PSYC 830/831
Sociology	SOCI 708/709
Statistics	STOR 654/655 or STOR 664/665

- c. Doctoral students are also required to take one course in theory development and one course in advanced research methods that fit their research interests and dissertation plans. Mastery of research methods and theories may be accomplished by graduate level courses offered within SILS or in such departments as Sociology, Psychology, Communications Studies, and Schools such as Education, Nursing, and Journalism and Mass Communication (among others). [Appendix 1 lists possible courses of this type that are currently listed in the Graduate School catalog.]
 - d. Beginning in year 3 of the doctoral program, students are required to enroll in a professional seminar in ILS Research and Teaching each semester the course is offered until they advance to candidacy. This course is designed to prepare students for aspects of academic life.
3. It is strongly recommended that students engage in guided research in preparation for the dissertation and future scholarly activities. The research experience(s) may be accomplished in a variety of ways including completion of INLS 988 (Research in Information and Library Science) under the supervision of a faculty member.
 4. Students, particularly those who aspire to a life of teaching, research, and service in an academic institution, are encouraged to complete courses and workshops in college teaching.

While SILS does not require students to engage in teaching as part of their doctoral studies, we have been successful in scheduling teaching opportunities for students who are interested in them. These can vary from guest lecturing in a class or continuing studies offering to paid service as a graduate teaching fellow with responsibility for instruction in

² Other statistics courses may be approved to fulfill this requirement with permission of the advisor and Coordinator of the PhD Program.

a regularly scheduled class. Students who would like to teach at SILS should discuss their plans with the Associate Dean as early as possible.

To be eligible for teaching, a student must have completed a course of instruction in teacher training. It is recommended that, at least a year prior to teaching a full course, the student work with one of the SILS faculty in a teaching practicum; to do this, the student would register with the faculty member for INLS 886 (Graduate Teaching Practicum; added to the SILS curriculum in 2011). At least one semester prior to teaching a full course, the student should complete INLS 888 (Seminar in Teaching and Academic Life) or the Future Faculty Fellowship Program offered by the UNC Center for Faculty Excellence twice each summer. During the first semester that the student is teaching, the student is expected to be concurrently enrolled in INLS 889 (Seminar in Teaching Practice). The student may register for INLS 889 multiple times, to continue to develop their teaching skills.

5. Transfer of academic credits from other institutions is governed by requirements and policies of the Graduate School and the School of Information and Library Science. A doctoral student may transfer relevant graduate courses upon recommendation of the program and approval by the Graduate School. The doctoral student may be examined on transferred course work at the time of the doctoral oral examination. There is no limit to the number of hours that can be transferred into a doctoral program to meet departmental courses requirements—*with the program's approval*. However, minimum residency requirements—four semesters—of the Graduate School will still need to be met.

E. Expectations, Evidence of Progress, and Procedures

Appendix 2 provides a summary of the four phases of the doctoral program; Appendix 3 provides a more detailed chronology of the doctoral program.

The faculty regularly reviews the progress of doctoral students using the milestones indicated below. Students are expected to move through these milestones at the pace described for each, below. If a student is making progress, but more slowly than expected, he or she will be asked to work with the advisor to make a concrete plan for completing the degree within the Graduate School limit of 8 years. (Students should also be aware that financial aid from SILS may not be available after the first four years of the program.) If a student's performance is unsatisfactory at any of the checkpoints, he or she may be asked to leave the program.

1. Coursework: Doctoral students are expected to obtain at least a grade of P in each course. A grade of L in three courses or a grade of F will result in academic ineligibility.
2. 18 hour review (after the completion of the first 18 credits of course work): This is a review that determines whether the student should continue in the doctoral program. The student's advisor(s) conduct(s) this review, with input from all of the student's instructors and is intended to determine whether the student has the potential to successfully complete the doctoral program. The student is informed of any deficiencies identified by the review along with the suggested strategies for improvement. In the case of severe deficiencies or

unsatisfactory progress, as judged by the advisor in consultation with the full faculty, a student may be counseled to leave the doctoral program. The review consists of the following steps:

- a. The student prepares documentation of their progress; this is equivalent to the first of the student's annual reports. This documentation is intended to be much like the annual reports that faculty provide to the Dean, so should include: (1) a current CV, with this year's work highlighted; (2) a list of courses completed during the previous academic year and planned in the next academic year; (3) a list of any milestones completed during the year or scheduled for the near future, e.g., comprehensive exams, proposal defense, or dissertation defense; (4) a description of other accomplishments not listed on your CV; and (5) an outline of plans for the coming year. This documentation should be submitted to the student's advisor and the PhD Program Coordinator at the beginning of the students' second year.
 - b. The advisor collects input from all the instructors who have taught the student over this period.
 - c. The advisor may also convene a meeting of interested faculty to advise the student on strengths and weaknesses and to entertain questions by the student regarding future activities and experiences. The student may request that a meeting be convened, and suggest faculty to be invited.
 - d. Based upon this faculty input, the advisor completes the 18-hour review form (see Appendix 4) or memo equivalent; discusses the comments and recommendations indicated on the form with the student, who countersigns it. The student may request that a meeting of interested faculty be convened by the advisor, to advise the student on strengths and weaknesses and provide guidance regarding future activities and experiences. The 18-hour review form (or a memorandum to the same effect) becomes part of the student's file. Continuation in the program is dependent upon a satisfactory review.
3. Annual Reviews: At the beginning of each academic year, the student prepares a report of progress that is presented to the advisor and PhD Program Coordinator. One of the motivations for the format of the report is to prepare the student for faculty life, and intentionally imitates annual faculty reports. The report should include the same types of information needed for the 18-hour review (listed in 2.a, above).

The annual report should be submitted to and will be reviewed by the student's advisor and the PhD Program Coordinator. It will be summarized for review by the full faculty. If the student is judged to be making unsatisfactory progress toward completion of the degree, the advisor and/or the PhD Program Coordinator will be asked to meet with the student to discuss how the student's performance can be improved.

4. Research Work Submitted for Publication: Doctoral students are expected to develop research competence during their doctoral studies. Research competence is manifested by outcomes of small-scale research efforts with student colleagues and/or faculty mentors and the presentation of outcomes in venues either within the School (e.g., in class, brown

bag, research colloquium) or outside the school (e.g., conference presentation). At least two works must be submitted to an external refereed venue prior to taking the comprehensive exams; these works may be co-authored with other students or with faculty.

5. **Coursework Completion:** Normally, a full-time student, who enters with a master's degree in information and library science, should complete their coursework within two or two and a half years. It is considered unsatisfactory progress if a full-time student has not completed coursework within three years, with no other signs of progress. Part-time students or students entering without a master's degree are expected to progress at a comparable rate, based on their individual circumstances. If a student is making unsatisfactory progress, he or she should work with the advisor to develop a plan for completing the degree in a timely manner.

6. **Pre-Comprehensive Examination Requirements**

Before taking the comprehensive exam, students must:

- a. Submit two papers for publication (see item E.4, above);
- b. Complete all coursework requirements (see 5, above);
- c. Identify a Comprehensive Examination Committee Chair: Normally, this is a student's academic advisor, however, as explained in item C.3, the focus of a student's research interest may necessitate a change in advisor at this point in the process.
- d. Form a Comprehensive Examination Committee
- e. Develop a Dissertation Prospectus

7. **Comprehensive Exam:** This milestone has two components, written and oral. It is considered unsatisfactory progress if a student has not taken the exam one year after completing coursework with no other signs of progress toward completion of the degree. The fundamental purposes of the comprehensive examination are to determine the candidate's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate and to challenge the candidate to consider issues that the examination committee considers to be critical to the candidate's plans for the dissertation.

- a. The written examination package consists of (1) a statement of the student's research interests, (2) a literature review which covers content areas of theory and research, and research methods and analytical approaches relevant to the student's dissertation plans; and (3) a brief dissertation prospectus (2-3 pages). With the advisor's approval, the written exam package will be distributed to the committee at least four weeks in advance of the oral examination. The Comprehensive Examination Committee will use this package as the basis for the oral examination.
- b. The oral examination will test the extent to which the student has internalized the literature covered in the written examination package and will assess the candidate's

- ability to discuss their research area with colleagues. It will explore the candidate's readiness to pursue scholarship in the areas defined by the written examination package. The questions will challenge the student to consider the use of subject matter knowledge, theories, concepts, and research methods and analytical strategies related to the research areas addressed in the written exam package. The oral exam may also explore the motivation, research design, results, and/or implications of the dissertation prospectus submitted to the committee.
- c. The student must be registered during the semester of the Comprehensive Examination. The Comprehensive Examination Committee should be constituted no later than one month before the oral examination. The Committee will consist of not less than five persons who are selected by the student in consultation with the advisor(s), who will serve as the Chair of the Examination Committee. A majority of the members must be full members of the Graduate Faculty. A list of Examination Committee members, signed by the Advisor, should be provided to the Coordinator of the PhD Program prior to the Comprehensive Examination (using the form available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdcomm.pdf>)
 - d. At the end of the oral examination, the Examining Committee decides whether the student has passed the comprehensive examination, and completes the necessary form (Doctoral Exam Report Form, Part I: Report of Preliminary Written Examination; and Doctoral Exam Report Form, Part II: Report of Oral Examination; available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdexam.pdf>). A student passes the oral examination upon approval by at least two-thirds of the members of the Examination Committee; a majority of those approving must be full members of the Graduate Faculty. The vote of the committee is considered by the Graduate School to be final.
 - e. If the student has failed or has performed poorly on part or all of the oral examination, the Examination Committee may make recommendations as to what the student should do before taking part or all of the examination again.
 - f. A doctoral student who fails the oral examination may not take the examination a second time until at least three months have elapsed. A student who fails an examination for the second time becomes ineligible for further graduate work and may not continue in the program or take the examination a third time without approval by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School.
 - g. For the oral examination, at least four members of a five-person Examination Committee must participate; at least five members must participate if the Committee is larger.
8. Dissertation Proposal: Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, the student in consultation with the advisor(s) forms a dissertation committee and prepares a dissertation proposal to present to the committee. Normally, a student will complete and defend the proposal, or make substantial progress toward that point, within six months after completion of the comprehensive exam. It is considered unsatisfactory progress if a student has not shown substantial progress one year after completing the exam. The Report of Doctoral Committee Composition should be completed when the committee is constituted (using the form available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdcomm.pdf>). A majority of the Dissertation committee must be full members of the Graduate Faculty. At least three members must be SILS faculty. At least one member must be selected from outside the School and may be

selected from among scholars from other UNC schools or departments, or other institutions where scholarly work is conducted. If the dissertation involves a minor field, the dissertation committee must include at least one member from that field. Normally, the members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee also sit on the Dissertation Committee.

- a. The candidate prepares a dissertation proposal which, once approved by the dissertation advisor, is provided to all members of the Dissertation Committee. The proposal will be distributed to the committee at least four weeks in advance of the proposal defense.
 - b. The date for the defense of the dissertation proposal is set by the Dissertation Committee in consultation with the student. This defense is normally closed to all except the student and the Dissertation Committee. Following the defense, the Dissertation Committee may approve the proposal as it stands, may approve it on condition that certain changes be made, or may ask that it be revised and resubmitted for consideration at a future meeting of the committee. If changes are to be made to the proposal or if it needs to be revised and/or resubmitted, the Dissertation Advisor prepares a written list of required revisions and/or additions to be signed by the advisor and the student and shared with the full committee. When the proposal is approved a report of the approval is submitted to the Graduate School by the Student Services Manager (Report of Approved Dissertation Project; available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdcomm.pdf>).
 - c. Upon acceptance of the proposal, the student should provide one corrected copy to the SILS Library.
 - d. A doctoral student may apply for admission to candidacy after he or she has completed all course work required for the programs of the major and the minor(s); has completed any foreign language, language substitute, or other skill requirements; has passed both the doctoral oral and written examinations; has met any conditions specified by the Comprehensive Examination Committee resulting from the written and oral examinations, and has received formal approval of the dissertation proposal. The form is completed and submitted to the Student Services Manager (Application for Admission to Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree; available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdcanfrm.pdf>)
 - e. The student must be registered for at least one course during the semester when the dissertation proposal is defended. This may be accomplished by registering for INLS 994, which constitutes full time registration. A total of at least 6 hours of INLS 994 is required before graduation. The student must also be registered during the semester he or she defends the dissertation (the final oral). Each registration for INLS 994 must be for a minimum of 3 credit hours. Many students will also register for INLS 994 to maintain continuous registration during the research and writing of the dissertation.
9. Writing the Dissertation. The student and the committee will agree on a plan for progress reports and the reading of early drafts. The dissertation advisor will oversee the performance of the plan. Each doctoral student is expected to consult with members of the

committee as necessary through the progress of the research; progress reports are required at least once a year unless the committee requests more frequent reporting.

10. Dissertation Defense

- a. The student will prepare a draft of the dissertation for review by the Dissertation Advisor. Upon approval of the advisor the draft will be provided to Dissertation Committee members. The draft dissertation will be distributed to the committee at least four weeks in advance of the dissertation defense. This draft must conform to the rules in The Graduate School's *Guide to Theses and Dissertations*, which requires the student to select and follow the guidelines of an appropriate style manual. [The latest edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association is recommended.]
- b. The final oral examination is a defense of the dissertation; it is open to the University community.
- c. A student passes the final oral examination only upon approval of at least two-thirds of the members of the Examination Committee; a majority of those approving must be full members of the Graduate Faculty. If the Committee consists of five members, at least four must be present for the examination; if the Committee is larger, at least five must be present. The committee may, at the time of the final oral but no later, require alterations and corrections. The student is advised of such requirements as soon as is feasible. The dissertation advisor is responsible for verifying that the changes required by the committee have been made, and may delegate this responsibility to the committee member(s) who imposed the requirements. When these requirements have been met, the Doctoral Exam Report form, Part III, Report of the Final Oral Examination (available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdexam.pdf>) is submitted, and the dissertation, in final typed form designed to meet the standards as defined in *A Guide to Theses and Dissertations*, is registered with the Graduate School.
- d. The student will submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to the UNC Library Electronic Theses and Dissertations repository. The Dissertation Committee Chair must certify that the required edits were made and the final document approved for electronic submission (using the Doctoral Exam Report Form, Part IV: Approval of Final Electronic Dissertation; available online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdexam.pdf>).

Appendix 1: Potential Course Offerings in Research Methods and Theory Development

Note: See also special topics classes that SILS and other Schools and Departments offer from time to time. This list is only suggestive. There may be others in these and other departments, which fit with your research interests. Many of these courses presume subject knowledge; please communicate with the instructor to assess fit or other options. Note: The course prefixes and/or titles may have changed so see the School or Department website for correct prefix and/or title.

INLS 884 Seminar in Research Methodology
INLS 887 Seminar in Theory Development
ANTH 675 Ethnographic Method
ANTH 754 Phenomenological Anthropology
ANTH 860 Art of Ethnography
COMM 725 Interpretative Studies in Organizational Communication
COMM 726 Critical Studies in Organizational Communication
COMP 758 Information Theory
EDUC 883 Case Study Methods
EDUC 981 Field Techniques in Educational Research
EDUC 982 Advanced Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation
ENGL 801 Research Methods in Composition and Rhetoric
EPID 806 Clinical Research Skills
HIST 700 Introduction to Historical Methods and Research
JOMC 701 Mass Communication Research Methods
JOMC 703 Qualitative Methods for Mass Communication Research
NURS 958 Designing Intervention Studies
NURS 979 Qualitative Analysis
NURS 980 Observational Methods
NURS 981 Longitudinal Methods and Analysis
PHIL 735 Advanced Studies in Epistemology
PLAN 801 Design of Policy-Oriented Research
PLAN 802 Advanced Seminar in Research Design
POLI 781 Interviewing in Social Science Research
PSYC 840 Computational Statistics
PSYC 841 Introduction to Multivariate Techniques for the Behavioral Sciences
PSYC 842 Test Theory and Analysis
PSYC 843 Factor Analysis
PSYC 844 Structural Equation Models with Latent Variables
PSYC 851 Multidimensional Scaling
PSYC 853 Analysis of Frequency Tables in Behavioral Research
PSYC 854 Quantitative Research Synthesis (Meta-Analysis)
SOC 707 Measurement and Data Collection
SOC 711 Analysis of Categorical Data
SOC 717 Structural Equations with Latent Variables
SOC 718 Longitudinal and Multilevel Data Analysis
SOC 720 Systematic Methods of Qualitative Research
SOC 753 Experimental Design in Sociology
SOC 754 Survey Sampling
SOC 760 Data Collection Methods
SOC 761 Questionnaire Design
SOC 762 Case Studies in Surveys
SOC 763 Survey Computing

Appendix 2: Phases of the Doctoral Program

Admission Phase

- Advisor/Mentor assigned
- Entry deficiencies listed

Coursework Phase (Typically Year 1-2 for full-time students)

- Complete any entry deficiencies
- Complete INLS 881
- Complete statistics requirement
- Complete theory development requirement
- Complete advanced research methods requirement
- Shape doctoral program of study
- Complete 18-hour review (usually at end of Year 1 for full-time students)
- Complete annual review(s) - Year 1 through graduation

Comprehensive Examination Phase (Typically Year 3 for full-time students)

- Identify comprehensive examination committee chair
- Recruit comprehensive examination committee members
- Prepare and submit comprehensive examination package
- Complete comprehensive oral exam
- Enroll in professional seminar in ILS Research and Teaching each semester the course is offered until advance to candidacy

Dissertation Phase (Typically Year 4+)

- Prepare dissertation proposal (may occur in Year 3)
- Defend dissertation proposal
- Submit a print copy of the approved proposal to the SILS Library
- Engage in dissertation data collection, analysis, and writing
- Provide initial draft to Dissertation Chair/Mentor(s) for review
- Submit approved draft to dissertation committee members
- Complete dissertation defense
- Submit final dissertation to Graduate School and UNC Librarian Electronic Theses and Dissertations repository

Appendix 3: Doctoral Program Chronology

Advisor/Mentor(s) assigned

[Note: If an untenured faculty member is assigned as primary mentor/advisor, a tenured co-advisor/mentor will also be assigned. Co-advisors/mentors may also be assigned in cases where the student's interests fit with multiple faculty members.

Complete entry deficiencies

This will apply to students without a master's degree or, possible, to students with a master's degree from outside of information studies. Typically, core requirements include INLS 500, 509, 520, and 581, but may be adapted to meet special needs

Meet other requirements

These include INLS 881, a statistics course, a theory development course, and an advanced research methods course.

18 hour review

Upon completion of 18 semester hours of coursework, the student's Advisor will conduct an 18 hour review of the student's progress by polling the student's instructors and informing the student of strengths and weaknesses. Note: If satisfactory progress has not been achieved, the student may be counseled out of the doctoral program.

Annual review(s)

Every year in the fall, doctoral students are requested to submit an annual report of their progress in the program to their Advisor and the Coordinator of the PhD program. A report is made to the faculty on doctoral student progress and recommendations made by the faculty are transmitted to students who are not making good progress.

Submit work for publication

Before taking the comprehensive examination, a student will prepare and submit two papers for publication.

Recruit comprehensive examination committee

In concert with the Advisor, the student will form a comprehensive examination committee. This committee will consist of 5 members, including 3 SILS faculty. As it is preferable that this committee also serve as the dissertation committee, the student is encouraged to include at least 1 outside member. If the students' choice of dissertation topic is outside the scope or interest of the current advisor(s), the student is encouraged to seek an appropriate Advisor who can guide them through the comprehensive examination and dissertation process.

Prepare and submit comprehensive examination package

Upon or near completion of coursework, the student will develop a comprehensive exam package that includes an overview of their research interests, a literature review specifying the areas of theory, research, and methodology that relate to their research interests/questions, and a brief dissertation prospectus. This package serves as the written examination.

Comprehensive oral examination

After acceptance of the comprehensive examination package by the examining committee, the oral exam is conducted. It will have the same scope as the comprehensive examination package.

Typically Years 1 & 2

Typically Year 3

Prepare and defend the dissertation proposal

The student prepares the dissertation proposal and distributes it to the committee. The date for the defense of the dissertation proposal is set by the Dissertation Committee in consultation with the student. The dissertation committee normally consists of the same members as the comprehensive examination committee. However, membership, including the Advisor, may be adjusted to reflect the scope and method of the dissertation.

Once a student's proposal has been approved by the committee they should submit a print copy of the proposal to the SILS library.

Complete the dissertation research

The student may use members of the dissertation committee as resources during the conduct of the research, analysis, and writing of the dissertation. The Advisor must be satisfied that the dissertation is ready for defense before the dissertation is provided to the dissertation committee members. Committee members must receive the dissertation at least one month before the dissertation defense date.

Dissertation defense

The dissertation defense is announced to the University community and is open to the public. The student will deliver a brief overview of the dissertation (up to 20 minutes) so that those who have not had the benefit of reading it will have a sense of the research questions, methods, findings, and implications for further research. Committee members will ask questions about the dissertation. Other attendees may ask questions if time allows. At the conclusion of the defense, all present except members of the dissertation committee will be excused to allow the committee members to discuss their judgment of the dissertation. The student will be invited back when the committee has made its decision and will be informed of that decision, including any desired additions or corrections to the dissertation.

Submit the dissertation

The final version of the dissertation must meet Graduate School requirements for formatting and presentation. The student will submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to the UNC Library Electronic Theses and Dissertations repository.

Year 4+

Appendix 4: Doctoral Student 18-Hour Review Form

Name:

Advisor:

Date of Matriculation:

Date of Review:

Courses Taken:

Summary of Comments from Instructors:

Suggestions for Advancing Progress:

Recommendation for Continuation:

Advisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5: Suggestions for the Comprehensive Examination Phases & Dissertation Phases of the PhD Program of Study

Comprehensive Examination Phase

Forming a Committee:

*Purpose of the *Committee: The overall purpose of the committee is to support the student successfully through the comprehensive exam, proposal and dissertation defense, and through graduation. The committee works together as a team to this end, but the committee is led by the student's advisor with each committee member playing a different role in this process.*

The student's advisor normally serves as the chair of the committee. Although it's not typical, it is possible that a change in advisor may be called for due to changes in the focusing of research interests as a student moves from completion of the comprehensive examination to the dissertation proposal. If a student is considering a change in advisor the student should first discuss this with the PhD Coordinator.

**It is preferable that this committee serve as the comprehensive examination and dissertation committee.*

Suggestions

In selecting committee members, students may reach out to faculty with whom they've taken classes, faculty with whom they've worked as research assistants, faculty whose research overlaps with theirs, and/or faculty with expertise in a particular method or theory.

Since this committee will preferably serve as the dissertation committee, it should have at least one outside member (a requirement of dissertation committees for SILS PhD students). In selecting the non-SILS committee member(s), students may consider all of the above, as well as people who they've met at conferences, people whose research they've drawn upon, etc.

Students need to provide the Graduate Student Coordinator with a copy of the vita for any non-UNC committee members which will be submitted to the Graduate School.

Students should maintain communication with their committee members throughout the comprehensive exam, proposal, and dissertation process. Their advisor is the point person throughout the process, but other committee members can offer guidance on different aspects of the process as well. This can include questions about subject area, methods, study design, etc.

Comprehensive Examination Components

1. Prospectus:

Purpose of Prospectus: The prospectus provides a preliminary roadmap for the student's proposed dissertation research. The document also serves to communicate the student's research interests to potential committee members.

Suggestions

The content of the prospectus can vary, but at a minimum includes a statement of purpose, research questions, and an overview of the proposed study design that will address those questions. Depending on the proposed research, the prospectus may also include sections on theoretical approaches, particular methods, and data analysis techniques.

Typically prospectuses are 2-3 pages in length.

The prospectus can be a useful document in selecting committee members. Students may find it helpful to send the prospectus to potential committee members in order to give them an idea of the student's intended research and what that committee member might contribute to the committee.

The prospectus can be a useful document in defining the areas to be addressed in the literature review and in the oral examination.

The prospectus represents the student's initial steps toward developing a proposal and conducting research for the dissertation. The prospectus is not binding, and students should continue to develop their research plans as they work on their comprehensive exam package and dissertation proposal.

Developing a research study is an iterative process and guidance from the advisor is critical. Students should discuss their research questions and research design before and while writing their prospectus. Discussions should be frequent and substantive. These discussions will continue through the proposal and dissertation stages.

2. Literature Review

Purpose of Literature Review: The literature covered in the comprehensive exam package should help the student address research questions outlined in the prospectus, including materials pertaining to subject area, theory, research methods, and analytical approaches.

Suggestions

Typically the literature review consists of five sections/subject areas, but can be more or less.

The literature review included in the written examination package is typically around 50-60 pages long (single-spaced, excluding the reference list), though it may vary in length depending on the areas being covered.

Literature reviews can take many forms, and can vary in the degree of synthesis, analysis, and interpretation of sources. It can be helpful to clarify expectations with the committee about how the student should write the literature review.

Before beginning to write the literature review, students should share the prospectus with committee members. This document can help committee members and the student to define the areas that will be covered, to determine the scope of the literature review for each area, and to guide the selection of key literature to be covered in each area.

It can be helpful for students to convene a meeting with all committee members at the beginning stages of preparing the literature review to develop a bibliography for each of the subject areas. Alternatively, students could meet individually with committee members for discussions focused on specific topic areas.

In developing the bibliography for the literature review, students may also find it helpful to discuss with committee members details about the scope of each section. The degree of depth and breadth will vary depending on the subject area.

In consultation with their advisor and other committee members, students may find it helpful to develop a timeline for expected completion of the comprehensive exam package and oral exam defense.

Some doctoral students find it helpful to take graduate level seminars or independent studies related to their research focus while completing their comprehensive examination literature review. Often readings covered in seminars or independent studies further the students' understanding of the subject areas.

3. Oral Examination

Purpose of Oral Examination: The oral examination is intended to assess the student's grasp of their particular subject areas, as well as determine the student's ability to move forward to the dissertation proposal phase of their research.

Suggestions

The oral examination begins with a brief (10-15 minute) presentation by the student that provides an overview of the written materials and how these connect to the student's research interests. Students may find it helpful to go over the presentation with their advisor ahead of time.

Oral examinations can vary in format. Exams can include informal conversations about the student's research area, as well as questions prepared ahead by the committee members. Discussions can touch on broader questions about the area and pointed questions about the student's particular research plans.

Exams may fluctuate in intensity over the course of the discussion, especially as the student addresses questions that may hit upon potential blind spots or areas that the student needs to consider further.

The discussions that take place in the oral examination should be informative for the student, and typically provide direction for the dissertation proposal.

Students should talk with their advisor about what to expect and how to prepare since oral examinations can vary in format and intensity.

Students may want to clarify with the advisor ahead of time who will be responsible for taking notes during the exam regarding committee member questions and concerns. Often, the advisor will take on this responsibility.

Proposal Development Phase

Purpose of the Dissertation Proposal: *The purpose of the dissertation proposal is to justify and plan for your dissertation research, show how your project will contribute to existing research, and demonstrate to your chair and committee that you understand how to conduct discipline-specific research within an acceptable time-frame.*

Your dissertation proposal may also allow you to make sure that you are being advised by the best person to help you complete your research.

Suggestions

Writing the Dissertation Proposal

Normally, a student will complete and defend the proposal, or make substantial progress toward that point, within six months after completion of the comprehensive exam. It is considered unsatisfactory progress if a student has not shown substantial progress one year after completing the exam.

Most dissertation proposals are roughly 20 - 50 single-spaced pages, depending on the degree of depth required by the chair and the committee.

Typically, proposals include:

- *Introduction/Background* - states the central problem the student plans to explore, identifies the research questions and/ or hypotheses, and gives background on the subject, as well as relating it contextually to any broader issues surrounding it.
- *Aims and objectives*- demonstrates what the research study hopes to achieve; what outcomes are predicted.
- *Literature review* - similar to, but usually shorter than the literature review developed for the comprehensive exam, the literature review for the proposal includes materials pertaining to subject area, theory, research methods, and analytical approaches. It will demonstrate how the student's research connects to previous academic studies, and how the methods may differ from or be building upon those used by other researchers.
- *Dissertation methodology* - introduces the overall methodological approaches the student will use, indicates how they fit the overall research design, lists what sort of data you will collect, how that data will be collected (quantitatively or qualitatively), how the student will analyze and interpret the data gathered, and discusses any biases there may be in your chosen methods.
- *Constraints of the research* - many topics have broad links to numerous larger and more complex issues, thus the student may need to acknowledge these larger issues, and the role they play by focusing their research on just one section or part of the subject.
- *Detailed research & completion timeline*

Dissertation proposals that have been successfully defended are available in the SILS Library. Students might find it helpful to review those, especially ones that are similar in methodology or have been approved by their dissertation committee chair or committee members.

The dissertation proposal is written specifically for a student's dissertation committee; thus, the specifics of the document should be negotiated with them. Since the dissertation proposal is a negotiated document, students should be prepared to draft, redraft, and resubmit.

Students can share drafts and solicit feedback from committee members throughout the writing process, although the frequency and level of feedback will vary across committee members. The advisor is the primary point of contact, and is responsible for the bulk of the reading of early drafts and providing substantive feedback.

Students should work with their advisor to develop a timeline for working on the dissertation proposal, with scheduled benchmarks and regular check-ins about progress.

Oral defense

The dissertation proposal defense is an oral examination that normally lasts about 2 hours. It is closed to the public. Students should talk with their advisor about what to expect and how to prepare.

The defense normally begins with a brief (10-15 minute) presentation by the student that provides an overview of the student's research study. The intent is to provide an overview of the key points and to help everyone focus their attention on the work. Students may find it helpful to go over the presentation with their advisor ahead of time.

Following the presentation, students will field questions from the committee to identify possible problems with the proposed research and to examine ways to improve the dissertation research. The committee is looking for the student to have a clear understanding of their proposed research, including research questions and methodology. Some questions may be for clarification, and some of them will be trying to find holes in the proposal.

Students may find it helpful to prepare answers to the following questions ahead of time: the purpose of the research; why they want to conduct this research; how they plan to perform their research; and when they intend to conduct the research. They should be prepared to describe the methods they propose for collecting and analyzing data and be able to convince the committee that these methods are appropriate.

Students may want to clarify with the advisor ahead of time who will be responsible for taking notes during the exam regarding committee member questions, concerns, and required alterations or corrections. Often, the advisor will take on this responsibility.

The dissertation committee may approve the proposal as it stands, may approve it on condition that certain changes be made, or may ask that it be revised and resubmitted for consideration at a future meeting of the committee. If changes are to be made to the proposal or if it needs to be revised and/or resubmitted, the Advisor prepares a written list of required revisions and/or additions to be signed by the advisor and the student and shared with the full committee.

Once a student's proposal has been approved by the committee they should submit a print copy of the proposal to the SILS library.

Dissertation Phase

Purpose of the Dissertation: *The dissertation demonstrates your command of a subject area within the field, as well as your expertise as a researcher. The dissertation provides evidence of your ability to independently carry out a successful research agenda.*

Suggestions

General

It is recommended that students attend other student's dissertation oral exams in order to develop an understanding of what makes for a successful dissertation project, as well as to support their peers. Doing so can also help demystify the defense process and expand a student's understanding of the field.

The dissertation is an independent project, but students are encouraged to seek out peer support throughout the process, including a writing group with other students also working on dissertations, other individuals required as part of a method (like a second coder to ensure inter-coder reliability), or emotional support. The dissertation can be an isolating experience, so it can be helpful to intentionally cultivate a social and professional community.

It is generally not recommended that students take courses beyond the required dissertation hours (INLS 994) during the writing of the dissertation. However, staying involved with relevant research communities through conference attendance, reading groups, and the like can often be helpful for maintaining momentum.

Writing the Dissertation

It may be helpful for students to look at other completed dissertations that explore a similar area or use a similar methodology to get a sense of what the dissertation should cover, and how it should be structured.

Students should work with their advisor to develop a timeline for working on the dissertation, with scheduled benchmarks and regular check-ins about progress.

Students can share drafts and solicit from committee members throughout the writing process, although the frequency and level of feedback will vary across committee members. The advisor is the primary point of contact and is responsible for the bulk of the reading of early drafts and providing substantive feedback.

Graduate carrels in Davis Library provide a small lockable office with desk and window that can be ideal for students who need a quiet writing environment. PhD students writing dissertations have priority, but student who want them are encouraged to apply early.

<https://library.unc.edu/davis/graduatecarrels/>.

Dissertations must be correctly formatted according to the Graduate School's guidelines before submitting to their committee, although students can decide to format the document from the beginning or at the end depending on what works best for them. However, students should be mindful that they need to leave time for this because it can be a lengthy process.

While the prospectus and proposal represented steps in the process, the dissertation is the culmination of their research. Students should treat the dissertation document that they share with their committee as the finalized version, as if they were submitting it for publication.

Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense is an oral examination that normally lasts about 2 hours. Students should talk with their advisor about what to expect and how to prepare.

The defense usually begins with a brief (20-30 minute) presentation by the student that provides an overview of the student's research study. Some of the aspects of the presentation will include a compelling introduction to your research problem, a (very) brief overview of the literature that your project builds upon, a little about the methodology and study design, the main findings, and a conclusion that drives home the implications and major takeaways.

The major difference between the dissertation defense and the previous oral defenses is that the dissertation is public. Other members of the SILS community, UNC, and friends and family are all invited to attend. All members of the public are also invited to ask questions, if time permits, after the committee has asked their questions.

Past students have found it beneficial to go over the presentation with their advisor ahead of time. Additionally, students may find it helpful to practice their presentation with their peers before the defense.

In many ways, the dissertation defense resembles a job talk for a faculty position. Students may treat this as a practice run for that process.

Defenses may fluctuate in intensity over the course of the discussion, especially as the student addresses questions that may hit upon potential blind spots, the validity or generalizability of your findings, or areas that the student needs to consider further.

Students may want to clarify with the advisor ahead of time who will be responsible for taking notes during the exam regarding committee member questions, concerns, and required alterations or corrections. Often, the advisor will take on this responsibility.

The Dissertation Committee may approve the dissertation as it stands, may approve it on condition that certain changes be made, or may ask that it be revised and resubmitted for consideration at a future meeting of the committee.

Appendix 6: Suggested Advisor / PhD Student Expectations Checklist

<p>This checklist can help to structure ongoing communication between the advisor and PhD student throughout a student's progress toward completion of the degree. It can be used to clarify what is expected for the applicable areas below. It is recommended that the advisor and the student keep a copy of the checklist, update it as needed, and refer to it during discussions throughout the student's PhD program.</p>	
<p>PhD general formalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how many years • possibility to extend • funding conditions • funding amount 	
<p>Advisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication frequency and format • meeting frequency • types of feedback expected • other 	
<p>Other SILS administration (Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; PhD Coordinator, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication frequency • Funding (semesters and summer) • Travel funding for conferences • RA & TA assignment • Annual review • Other 	
<p>Coursework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INLS 881 • 1 course statistics • Theory class • Research methods class • Professional Seminar in ILS Research and Teaching • Program of Study 	
<p>Publications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of papers required • may be co-authored with other students or with faculty. • published or submitted • types of journal/conferences aimed • posters 	

<p>Comprehensive written & oral examination formalities</p> <p><i>Written Examination Components</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prospectus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length • Topics to be included 2. Statement of research interests 3. Literature review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics to be covered • Literature review form (synthesis, analysis, etc.) • Length <p><i>Oral Examination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how long for presenting • how long for questions • deliberation, decision 	
<p>Committee formalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • committee during PhD thesis • committee at defense • how many people & who chooses them • requirement for internal and external experts • timing and frequency of committee meetings 	
<p>Proposal formalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • length requirement • format • will the advisor correct the proposal before submission to committee • need advisor approval before submission to committee • admin procedure from submission to defense 	
<p>Proposal defense formalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how long for presenting • how long for questions • deliberation, decision • revision requirements • public/private defense 	
<p>Dissertation formalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • length requirement • format 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will the advisor correct the dissertation before submission to the committee • need advisor approval before submission to the committee • admin procedure from submission to defense 	
<p>Dissertation defense formalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how long for presenting • how long for questions • deliberation, decision • revision requirements • public/private defense 	
<p>RA Supervisor (might be one-on-one with faculty member or as a member of a lab)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how tight is the collaboration • what is expected from each person actively involved in the project • what can each person expect to obtain from the collaboration and the project completion (e.g. authorship) • is there a risk for the persons involved not to go along well and what to do in such case 	
<p><u>Formalities</u> of research project(s) Is it the student or the advisor responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to define the research topic • to decide the methodology used • to define a project outline with objectives, milestones and checkpoints • to check that the project is on track • to decide on project plan adjustments • administrative aspects • are there requirements and restrictions according to funding agencies 	
<p>Presentations and posters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirement and possibilities • presentation within the institute • presentation outside the institute • possibilities to get grants for international conferences 	

Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none">• requirements or possibilities	
Career plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ideas, wishes, goals• what actions can be initiated already now• how to allocate time for it	
Social activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• within the doctoral program• within the institute• within the lab• other• general recommendations	
Other Areas (Add your own)	