

iSCHOOL DOCTORAL PROGRAM HANDBOOK



School of Information Science
College of Information and Communications



Updated Spring 2022

DAVIS
COLLEGE

MILESTONES

SIX CREDITS EACH SEMESTER (part time)

These timelines are only rough guides of what is possible. A student's path through the program depends on their interests and guidance from advisor.

YEAR 1

Fall - Coursework

Spring - Coursework

YEAR 2

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Coursework

**Annual Review*

Spring - Coursework

YEAR 3

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Submit Qualifying Exam

**Annual Review; Qualifying Exam Verification Form; Doctoral Program of Study Form*

Spring - Finish Coursework; Begin Comps Preparation

**Doctoral Committee Appointment Form*

YEAR 4

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Take Written and Oral Comps

**Annual Review; Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification Form*

Spring - Dissertation Proposal Preparation

**Doctoral Committee Appointment Form*

YEAR 5

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Dissertation Proposal

Finished/Defended/Approved

**Annual Review; Dissertation Proposal Defense Form*

Spring - Work on Dissertation

**Dissertation Fellowship Form*

YEAR 6

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Dissertation Draft Completed

**Annual Review*

Spring - Dissertation Finished/Defended/Presented

**Enter Dissertation Defense Announcement into GMS; Dissertation Signature and Approval Form*

*Forms due during the semester

Table of Contents

Doctoral Program Handbook Intro	2
Admission	4
Academic Background and Knowledge Expected	5
Financial Support.....	6
Other Support and Resources.....	6
Academic Advisor	7
Coursework	8
Residency Requirement.....	9
Teaching Options.....	10
Milestones: Expectations, Evidence of Progress, and Procedures.....	12
Coursework.....	12
Annual Reviews	12
Comprehensive Exam.....	14
Dissertation Proposal	15
Dissertation Defense.....	16
Milestone Timelines	18

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[Email us for information](#)

[Visit us on the website](#)

Doctoral program handbook¹

The iSchool doctoral program strives to enable students to become innovative thinkers, researchers, teachers, and leaders in library and information science. We seek students who:

- Are committed to a life of research, scholarly inquiry, teaching, and service;
- 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 as it strives to support people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs;
- Enable evidence-based practice via the transmission of theoretical and research findings through teaching and service activities, and
- Provide leadership in the field of information and library science.

The doctoral program has three learning outcomes. These are:

- Students will exhibit an understanding and mastery of theory development and research methods and an ability to adapt and apply them in the field of library and information science.
- Students will demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of relevant theoretical concepts by identifying, describing, and analyzing major theories, problems, and practices in seminal and contemporary scholarship in the field of library and information science.
- Students will identify, adapt, and apply key elements of the theory, practice, resources, and technologies of college-level instruction specific to library and information science pedagogy.

¹ The Policies and Procedures of the Graduate School as expressed in the Graduate Bulletin, which was in effect at the time of the student's admission, will supersede statements within this document, though a student may agree to be covered by an updated version of the iSchool doctoral program requirements.

ADMISSION



Considerations in the evaluation of applicants for admission include the following:

- A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in this country, or its equivalent from a foreign institution. Applicants will also possess a master's degree or equivalent from an institution of recognized standing.
- A GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale for all academic work. Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended are required (whether or not a degree was earned) as evidence of course/degree completion and grades earned.
- A written statement of the applicant's research focus and/or interests to be addressed during the doctoral program, which provides evidence of the applicant's intellectual maturity and a correspondence between the applicant's research interests and those of the iSchool faculty.
- A resume showing educational and professional experience.
- Letters of recommendation (3), which evaluate the applicant's academic performance (undergraduate and/or graduate). Note that one of the three letters may be from a supervisor and focus on job performance.
- International applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a satisfactory score on the TOEFL or the IELTS International Academic Course Type 2 exam. The minimum acceptable TOEFL score is 570 for the written test or 80 for the internet-based test. The minimum acceptable overall band score on the IELTS International Academic Course Type 2 exam is 6.5. Note that TOEFL and IELTS exam scores are valid for two years.
- Evidence during the applicant's interview of intellectual maturity, ability to communicate effectively, and demonstrated interest in research.
- Evidence during the applicant's interview of a career development plan and the doctorate will help the applicant achieve the plan.

Admission

- The program seeks students who possess the qualities to be successful independent investigators and teachers.
- Admission is based upon an assessment of the totality of the evidence contained in the application, rather than on a consideration of isolated particulars.

Considerations in the evaluation of applicants for admission include the following:

- A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in this country, or its equivalent from a foreign institution. Applicants will also possess a master's degree or equivalent from an institution of recognized standing.
- A GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale for all academic work. Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended are required (whether or not a degree was earned) as evidence of course/degree completion and grades earned.
- A written statement of the applicant's research focus and/or interests to be addressed during the doctoral program, which provides evidence of the applicant's intellectual maturity and a correspondence between the applicant's research interests and those of the iSchool faculty.
- A resume showing educational and professional experience.
- Letters of recommendation (3), which evaluate the applicant's academic performance (undergraduate and/or graduate). Note that one of the three letters may be from a supervisor and focus on job performance.
- International applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a satisfactory score on the TOEFL or the IELTS International Academic Course Type 2 exam. The minimum acceptable TOEFL score is 570 for the written test or 80 for the internet-based test. The minimum acceptable overall band score on the IELTS International Academic Course Type 2 exam is 6.5. *Note that TOEFL and IELTS exam scores are valid for two years.*
- Evidence during the applicant's interview of intellectual maturity, ability to communicate effectively, and demonstrated interest in research.
- Evidence during the applicant's interview of a career development plan and the doctorate will help the applicant achieve the plan.
- On an overall basis the body of evidence outlined above should establish a correspondence between the student's research interests and those of the iSchool faculty. Further, endorsement by one or more faculty member willing to assume the advisor/mentor role for the student is an essential outcome of evaluation of this body of evidence.
- Exceptions to these admission policies may be allowed for students with the potential for outstanding contributions through their special background or experience.

Academic background and knowledge expected

A student is expected to have the following foundation before entering the program. These are:

- Knowledge of basic research methods and their use in library and information science or related fields. This expectation may be met by completing ISCI 705 Research Design and Evaluation or a similar course, which broadly introduces social science research methods.
- Knowledge of information organization and access equivalent to that obtained in ISCI 706 Information Organization and Access. This expectation may be met by previously completed formal course work, or through the completion of ISCI 706 or another course more relevant to the applicant's interests.
- During the admissions process, the Research and Doctoral Committee members will evaluate the student's transcript and the student will be informed if additional coursework is required as conditional to their admission. In some cases, the student may be asked to submit evidence of course content and to discuss the courses and their content with their initial faculty advisor/mentor prior to identifying any knowledge gaps that need to be filled. If the student believes that the evaluation of prior coursework was incomplete or additional information should have been considered, the student should schedule a meeting to discuss the additional coursework requirements with their advisor and the iSchool Director.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT



The program offers financial support to students. The most common form of support is a Graduate Assistantship (GAship). GAships are for full-time students and provide a 9-month stipend, partial tuition abatement, and health insurance coverage. These stipends are renewable on an annual basis.

- **Students will be assigned to a faculty member for a GAship their first year. They will be matched with faculty members based on the type of experience they would like to get out of the GAship, whether this is research or instruction-based. More on GAships can be found in the below Course Work section.**

Additional funding for students both within and outside of the department may be available. Additional resources:

- **Spectrum Scholarships**
- **Presidential Fellowship**
- **Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program**
- **ALA Scholarship Program**
- **LITA Scholarships**
- **CLIR Fellowships**

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- [Presidential Fellowship](#)
- [Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program](#)
- [ALA Scholarship Program](#)
- [LITA Scholarships](#)
- [CLIR Fellowships](#)
- [Trustee Fellowships \(UofSC Graduate School\)](#)

[UofSC National Fellowships and Scholar Programs](#) office also offers support (including writing tips) for students applying for fellowships.

Other support & resources

The program offers conference travel support to students. By September 15, 2022, and January 15, 2023, PhD students should submit a Jotform (<https://form.jotform.com/210125643992051>) to fill out, which asks their anticipated conference travel plans, including the following information:

- Name of conference
- Role(s) during the conference (e.g., presenting a paper, serving on a committee)
- How the conference aligns with student career goals
- Anticipated budget

Students should send this email before making travel arrangements unless their travel is funded outside of the department (e.g., scholarships, grants). The Research and Doctoral committee will review requests following the two travel support request deadlines (September and January 15) and prioritize funding based on the student's year in the program (more preference given to students in later stages) and role(s) in the conference (priority will be given to students actively presenting or engaging in committee work). **Please note that funding may be partial or full depending on department budget.**

The program offers software support to students. Students may request software licenses to support their research after January 15 of their first year in the program. Students past their first year of the program may request software licenses once their current license has expired. Their requests should be emailed to the Research and Doctoral committee chair(s). Upon their approval, students can then purchase software through my.sc.edu (<https://my.sc.edu/software>). Students will then make an

appointment with Jeanna Holmes (HOLMESJ2@mailbox.sc.edu) to get reimbursed. Please note that reimbursement can take up to three weeks.

Mental Health Resources & Support

[University Health Services](#) provides essential therapy and emotional wellness services for students at the University of South Carolina. Services include counseling, psychiatry, emotional and mental wellness, and online support. Consultations, walk-in sessions, and emergency & after-hours crisis services are available.

Writing Center and Career Services

[The University Writing Center](#) now offers more services for graduate students. In fact, twenty-five percent of appointments are grad students. All tutors are grad students themselves, though, so check out the [Graduate Student Resources Hub](#), which just opened in Spring 2022 that provides space and services for graduate students, with two dedicated staff members to help. The Hub also offers non-English as first language (EPI) support.

[The Graduate School Ombuds](#) serves as a confidential, neutral, informal, and independent resource for graduate students' concerns and conflicts. The contact for graduate students is Dale Moore:

Dale Moore Graduate School Ombuds Graduate School 1705 College Street Close-Hipp Suite 552
Columbia, SC 29208 Phone: 803-777-4243

Academic advisor

- A faculty member who has endorsed the admission of the applicant will serve as the student's initial academic advisor. "Initial" is defined as any period between one year and prior to a student taking comprehensive exams. Ideally, the student should decide on a permanent advisor before taking comprehensive exams. 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.
- In the case where the advisor is an assistant professor, a secondary advisor who has tenure will be appointed. This secondary advisor provides stability for the student and also support for the untenured faculty advisor. Co-advisors are also appropriate in the case where a student has research interests that cut across faculty members – either within or outside of the iSchool. A change in advisor(s) 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 with one taking the lead). Students will fill out an Advisor Declaration Form at the beginning of each fall semester as a way for the committee to track student-advisor pairs.
- The student or the faculty member may terminate an advisor/advisee relationship upon notice to the iSchool Director. The iSchool Change of Advisor form must be completed upon advisor change.
- The student and the initial advisor will communicate prior to the beginning of the first semester of the program to make initial course choices. The student and advisor will meet early during the first semester to mutually set their expectations for the advising support to be provided during the first year of the program. Annual meetings, in conjunction with the student's submission of the annual progress report, will allow the advisor to provide guidance as the student's needs and plans evolve.
- 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 in preparation for a particular dissertation topic, the advisor is expected to recommend courses or experiences in addition to the remedial ones identified at the time of admission.
- 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,
 - the advisor and student will meet one-on-one several times each semester;
 - the advisor will respond promptly to a student's request for additional meetings; and
 - 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, the shaping of the student's dissertation research and studies leading up to that work and planning for meeting the program's milestones (outlined in Milestones: Expectations, Evidence of Progress, and Procedures section below).
- If the advisor leaves iSchool through retirement or a job change, that person should ensure a smooth transition to another advisor or, if agreeable to the advisor, the student, the iSchool Director, and the Graduate School, to continue to serve in that capacity.

Course work

- While the doctoral program of study is rooted in the core themes and principles of library and information science, it is also customized to the needs and interests of individual students and the research strengths of the iSchool faculty. Well-prepared students will take a minimum of 36 hours of formal courses, independent study courses, or internship courses exclusive of the dissertation (i.e., exclusive of credits in ISCI 899). Students who enter with little or no graduate background in library and information science or a related field should expect to take additional courses beyond the 36-hour minimum. The student will develop a program of study in cooperation with the advisor. All courses offered for credit toward the degree must be at the graduate level.
- Courses numbered below 500 do not count for graduate credit. For courses numbered between 500 and below 799, the student should consult with the course instructor to ascertain whether the standard course assignments will be sufficient in order for the course to count for doctoral credit or whether substitutions or additions to the normal assignments will be in order.

There are five required courses for the doctoral degree:

- ISCI 801 Research Issues in Library and Information Science
- ISCI 802 Theory and Research Methods in Library and Information Science
- ISCI 804 Preparation for Academic Careers in Library and Information Science
- ISCI 803 Information and Society, and
- ISCI 805 Information Policy and Ethics in Society
- This set of required courses presents a foundation for doctoral study in library and information science and in doing so exposes students to 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 content areas of interest to enrolled students and the faculty member offering the class. Finally, as a package these courses are designed to socialize students to doctoral study and academic life.

- Aside from ISCI 801, which will be typically taken during the first Fall semester of the student's doctoral program, the required classes may be taken in any order, but as early as possible, given the student's interests and actual course offerings.

Doctoral students are required to take at least three (3) hours of Qualitative Methods, which may be chosen from advisor approved options such as:

- EDFI 731 Qualitative Inquiry;
- ANTH 719 Field Problems in Ethnology;
- CRJU 817 Qualitative Research Methods and Data Analysis;
- HPEB 715 Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health;
- POLI 709 Qualitative Methods of Political Analysis;
- SOWK 811 Qualitative Methods of Inquiry for Social Work Research; or
- ANTH 780 Ethnography of Communication.

Doctoral students are required to take at least three (3) hours of Quantitative Methods (statistics), which may be chosen from advisor approved options such as:

- EDRM 710 Educational Statistics I;
- STAT 700 Applied Statistics; or
- STAT 702 Introduction to Statistical Theory.

Twelve (12) hours of ISCI electives are required. These may be chosen from advisor-approved 800-level seminars or 700-level courses appropriate to student research interests. The outputs for these courses must lead to products that are designed for scholarly publication or presentation.

Nine (9) hours of cognate courses are required. These are advisor approved courses from another discipline or disciplines, which are related to a student's research interests (e.g., mass communication, sociology, education, anthropology, computer science, English, geography, history, marketing, philosophy, political science, psychology, public administration).

Twelve (12) hours of dissertation preparation (ISCI 899) are required to account for research time related to the dissertation and these hours are beyond the 36-hour minimum of course work for the degree.

- It is suggested 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 ISCI 796 Independent Study in Library and Information Science under the supervision of a faculty member. In addition, it is strongly recommended that each student take advanced courses in research methods, statistical methods, and theory development that fit with research interests and dissertation plans. Such courses could fit in either the ISCI Electives or Cognate categories. ISCI 899 hours are signed off by the iSchool director and supervised by the student's advisor.

Residency requirement

The intent of the University and Graduate School residency requirement is to ensure that doctoral students benefit from and contribute to the full spectrum of educational and professional opportunities provided by the graduate faculty of a research university. When establishing residency, the student should interact with faculty and peers by regularly attending courses, conferences, and seminars and using the library, library services, and other resources that support excellence in graduate education. The doctoral residency requirement may be satisfied only after admission to a doctoral degree program. It requires enrollment in at least 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 (including May Session) will count toward the 18 hours required for residency.

Teaching options

Students who would like to teach in any capacity (e.g., as a course assistant, as an adjunct instructor) should discuss their plans with their advisors and the iSchool Director, then contact the Committee on Instructional Quality.

- They must complete a two-part Graduate TA (GTA) / Graduate Instructional Assistant (GIA) Orientation workshop series at the beginning of their first semester as a GTA or GIA (i.e., before they actually start working in the classroom). This training is required for all graduate students who will be working in some kind of instructional role regardless of their department/program. These workshops are held at the beginning of each fall and spring semester, and students are not permitted to be hired as GTAs or GIAs if they have not completed both Workshop A and Workshop B. [GTA Orientation](#). Contact the Chair of CIQ for details.
- Development in instruction are available through the Center for Teaching Excellent (CTE). Further, students can complete the zero-credit course GRAD 701: Teaching Assistant Development. This course is of no cost to them.

INTERESTED IN TEACHING?



Doctoral students interested in teaching have a few options.

Are you an experienced instructor?

You can apply to adjunct for iSchool courses through the Committee on Instructional Quality. Contact the Chair of CIQ for details.

Not an experienced instructor?

You can seek out opportunities to serve as a Course or Graduate Assistant for an experienced faculty member, which might include assisting with the teaching in a variety of ways (e.g., guest lecturing, pre-marking of assignments, course organization). Based on further demonstration of effective teaching skills, the student may then progress to teaching as the Instructor of Record in an undergraduate class, or, in some cases, in a graduate class under the supervision of an experienced faculty member. Compensation varies as the student progresses from the level of Teaching Assistant to Instructor of Record.

Doctoral students may also be considered for a GAship

In this role, the doctoral student is paired with a researching faculty member to provide support on research projects or the daily duties of a faculty member doing research. These duties may include but are not limited to: data entry, data cleaning, data analysis, transcription, literature review, citation formatting, basic editing of research outputs. These GA positions are arranged by the iSchool Student Services Coordinator on a semester-by-semester basis. Students who would like to engage in research based GAships should discuss this plan with their advisors and the iSchool director.

- Doctoral students interested in teaching have a few options. If they are experienced instructors, they can apply to adjunct for iSchool courses through the Committee on Instructional Quality. If they are not experienced instructors, they can seek out opportunities to serve as a Course or Graduate Assistant for an experienced faculty member, which might include assisting with the teaching in a variety of ways (e.g., guest lecturing, pre-marking of assignments, course organization). Based on further demonstration of effective teaching skills, the student may then progress to teaching as the Instructor of Record in an undergraduate class, or, in some cases, in a graduate class under the supervision of an experienced faculty member. Compensation varies as the student progresses from the level of Teaching Assistant to Instructor of Record.
- Transfer of academic credit from other institutions is governed by requirements and policies of the Graduate School. ([*Transfer Credit Information from UofSC Bulletin*](#))

ANNUAL REVIEW

THE PhD STUDENT ANNUAL REVIEWS WILL BE DUE ON OCTOBER 1 EACH YEAR.

The Research and Doctoral committee will divide the student annual review forms among committee members, who will assess these forms using an assessment rubric evaluating how each student has met the program learning objectives. They will also assess the student for the following (all contingent upon student progress in the program):

- Quality and focus of coursework, including grades
- Minimal number of incompletes, which are taken care of quickly
- Selection of and contact with a primary advisor
- Formation of committees for comps, proposal, and dissertation
- Timeliness in completion of requirements (for coursework, comps, proposal, and dissertation research)
- Involvement in scholarly activities (e.g., conference submissions/presentations, journal papers)
- Professional engagement (e.g., service in the School/College/University; services in professional organizations)
- Additional expectations for GAs as set by Student Services

Milestones: expectations, evidence of progress, and procedures

- Faculty members regularly review the progress of doctoral students using the milestones indicated below. Students are expected to move through these milestones at the pace described for each. If a student is making progress, but more slowly than expected, that student will be asked to work with the advisor(s) to develop a plan for completing the degree within the Graduate School limit of 10 years. If a student's performance is unsatisfactory at any of the checkpoints, financial aid will not be granted and the student will be counseled out of the doctoral program.

Coursework

Doctoral students are expected to obtain at least a grade of B in each course. A GPA that is lower than 3.0 will result in academic ineligibility. Per Graduate School policy, graduate students whose cumulative GPA drops below a 3.0 will be placed on academic probation effective the following semester (i.e. if a student's GPA drops below 3.0 after final grades are posted for the fall semester, they will be placed on academic probation starting in the following spring semester). Students are then given one calendar year in which to raise the GPA to at least a 3.0. Students who have a GAship will have one semester to raise the GPA to at least a 3.0 otherwise they will lose their GA support for one semester.

Annual reviews

- PhD student annual reviews will be due on **October 1** each year. **Students in their first year do not have to submit annual reviews.** Students will complete a form provided by the department indicating their coursework, research, teaching, and service-based accomplishments over the past 12 months. They must attach a personal statement to the form reflecting on how their annual progress (i.e., over the past 12 months) has contributed to the program learning objectives.
- Students are responsible to schedule a meeting with their advisors to review their progress. Advisors fill out the form [*Advisor Review of Doctoral Student Progress*](#) assessing student progress. If the student has a graduate assistantship (GA), their immediate supervisor also fills out the GA Supervisor form.
- The student is in charge of submitting: 1) Doctoral Student Annual Report, 2) a personal statement attached to the report addressing how they have met the learning objectives of the doctoral program. The student is also in charge of scheduling a meeting with their advisor no later than two months before the annual report is due to discuss their annual progress. Based on this meeting, the advisor will fill out the advisor form, reporting on the student's progress.
- If the student is working as a GA, they are also responsible for scheduling a meeting with their GA supervisor no later than two months before the annual report is due to discuss their GA performance. Based on this meeting, the GA supervisor will fill out the supervisor form, reporting on the student's progress.
- The student should take the lead in informing their advisors and GA supervisors that they must fill out the form and keep them abreast of the deadline.
- All forms must be completed by **October 1** to be assessed by the committee. Students must submit all forms in order to register for the Spring semester.

The Research and Doctoral committee will divide the student annual review forms among committee members, who will assess these forms using an assessment rubric evaluating how each student has met the program learning objectives. They will also assess the student for the following (all contingent

upon student progress in the program):

- Quality and focus of coursework, including grades
- Minimal number of incompletes, which are taken care of quickly
- Selection of and contact with a primary advisor
- Formation of committees for comps, proposal, and dissertation
- Timeliness in completion of requirements (for coursework, comps, proposal, and dissertation research)
- Involvement in scholarly activities (e.g., conference submissions/presentations, journal papers)
- Professional engagement (e.g., service in the School/College/University; services in professional organizations)
- Additional expectations for GAs as set by Student Services
- Based on a committee-wide discussion, the Research and Doctoral committee will draft letters to each student which include committee recommendations / requirements for resolving difficulties in making expected progress. Letters and completed assessment rubrics will be issued to students in **November**. Annual review letters and assessment forms will become part of the student's record and be used to inform future letters of recommendation. All research activity already presented or published will be included in a student accomplishments book to be disseminated at the Deans and Directors Lecture, typically held in the Spring semester.
- Qualifying Examination through Research Work Submitted for Publication: Doctoral students are expected to develop research competence during their doctoral studies. Research competence is manifested by outcomes of research efforts with student colleagues and/or faculty mentors and the publication and/or presentation of such outcomes in venues outside the school (e.g., conference presentation). The qualifying examination requirement is met with the acceptance of an article to a peer reviewed journal, a full proceeding accepted for a conference, or a full paper presented at a national conference. **The student's advisor must approve the publication and/or presentation venue(s)**. The qualifying examination requirement must be met prior to taking the comprehensive exams. These works may be co-authored with other students or with faculty, **but the student submitting the qualifying examination should be the lead author**. The student must fill out and submit the Qualifying Exam Verification Form after successfully completing the qualifying exam process.
- When the student passes the qualifying exam, they must complete the Doctoral Program of Study Form.
- Coursework Completion and Pre-Comprehensive Examination Requirements: Normally, a full-time student, who enters with a master's degree in library and information science (LIS), will complete coursework within three years. It is considered unsatisfactory progress if a full-time student has not completed coursework within this time period. Part-time students or students entering without an LIS master's degree are expected to progress at a comparable rate, based on their individual circumstances. If a student is making unsatisfactory progress, the student will need to work with the advisor to develop a plan for completing the degree in a timely manner.
- Students will not be permitted to register for dissertation preparation hours (ISCI 899) if they have not made satisfactory progress toward completing their other coursework in a timely fashion. Students who fail to make satisfactory progress toward completing coursework or who fail to exhibit other signs of progress (as determined in their annual review) for two consecutive semesters will be placed on probation and given one additional semester in which to demonstrate satisfactory progress. If the student fails to make progress during the probationary period, they will be subject to dismissal from the program. Additionally, failure to make satisfactory progress for a period of two or more consecutive semesters will result in a reduction

or cancellation of the student's GA support (as assistantships are dependent upon satisfactory progression)

In sum, before taking the comprehensive exam, a student must:

- Meet the qualifying examination requirement;
- Complete all coursework requirements either previous to or during the semester of the Comprehensive Exam.

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. Students who have completed coursework but fail to take their comprehensive exams within one year of completing coursework will not be permitted to continue registering for courses and will not be able to register for dissertation preparation hours (ISCI 899).
- 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.
- The student's Comprehensive Exam Committee will be constituted no later than three (3) months before the oral examination. This Committee will consist of not less than three persons who are selected by the student in consultation with the advisor(s). This committee will also serve as the Chair/Co-Chairs of the student's Doctoral Committee unless adjustment is agreed upon by the student and Committee members after the Comprehensive Exam is completed. A majority of the members must be regular members of the Graduate Faculty. There must be one outside (non-iSchool) member of the committee. A list of the Doctoral Committee members, signed by the Advisor(s), will be provided to the iSchool Director and the Chair of the Research and Doctoral Committee prior to the Comprehensive Examination. The student must complete the Doctoral Committee Appointment Form to establish their committee. Note that the outside reader/member must be listed on the comprehensive exam committee form even if that person does not participate in grading the comprehensive exam.
- The student will work with the chair of this committee to outline the initial research questions that will guide the dissertation. This provides the committee with a framework for developing exam questions. Though flexible, the student's dissertation topics should not differ significantly from those submitted to the Comprehensive Exam committee. As part of this, the chair and student will negotiate the three (3) content areas of the exam. This will typically include:
 - LIS Theory related to the stated research questions
 - Theory from an outside area related to the stated research questions
 - Methods. This section will primarily address the method the student expects to utilize in the dissertation (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or mixed). However, the student will be expected to know how to approach their study utilizing a variety of methods.
- The committee members will meet to discuss the research questions and agree on the three areas for the exam. Committee members will then work together to write the exam questions. These questions should elicit responses from the student that show comprehension of each area and its specific application to their research questions. The test will consist of two (2) questions for each of the three areas, for a total of six (6) questions.
- The student will write between 5-10 pages in response to each question for a total of at least 30 pages and at most 60 pages. **Page lengths exclude references. Any responses that exceed 10 pages will not be read after the 10th page.** The student must include a full reference list of

all sources consulted to be added to the end of the exam and include parenthetical citations throughout the responses. It is expected that the student will utilize existing work they have done, as well as engaging in a review of additional relevant literature to help fully answer these questions. The student will have one (1) month after receiving the questions to submit responses to the committee chair.

- Students oversee setting their own timetable within the month to complete comps. Students can consult their reading list as well as any outside readings to assist them in writing the exam. Students are also able to email their committees with any questions, however these questions should be for clarification rather than content related.
- The committee chair will forward responses to committee members. Two (2) weeks after submission, the committee and student will meet for an oral examination covering the written material. This oral component will not be made public. 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 examination package. The oral exam may also explore the motivation, research design, results, and/or implications of the dissertation. The oral examination should not exceed two hours.
- At the end of the oral examination, the Committee will determine whether the student has passed the comprehensive examination. At this point the student may be asked to leave to allow the Committee to discuss general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the exam. Then the student will be invited to return to the room and the decision given by the Chair.
- If the student's performance on part or all of the examination is unsatisfactory, the student's Doctoral Committee may choose to either have the student revise unsatisfactory sections and resubmit or retake the comprehensive exam. If the student's revisions on unsatisfactory sections are deemed unsatisfactory, they will be asked to retake the full exam. If the student retakes the comprehensive exam and their performance is again deemed unsatisfactory, they will be dismissed from the program.
- When the student passes the comprehensive exam, their committee must complete the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification Form
- *Admission to Candidacy:* Requires that the student 1) be fully admitted to the doctoral degree program by the academic unit, 2) pass the comprehensive examination, 3) have their committee complete the doctoral comprehensive exam verification form, and 4) submit an approved doctoral program of study to the Dean of The Graduate School in order to be admitted to candidacy by the Graduate School. [Note that admission to candidacy must be granted at least one full academic year before the awarding of the degree.] The comprehensive exam is considered to have been 'passed' when all of the above conditions are met. In addition, it is iSchool policy that the student must have passed the comprehensive examination to be admitted to candidacy.

Dissertation proposal

- Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, the student prepares a dissertation proposal to present to the student's previously constituted Doctoral Committee, though adjustments in membership are possible. 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 comprehensive examination and being

admitted to candidacy. Students who fail to make satisfactory progress by completing and defending the dissertation proposal or otherwise demonstrating substantial progress within one year of completing the comprehensive exam will be subject to the same policies and restrictions regarding satisfactory progress that are stated above. In particular, students who do not complete and defend their dissertation proposal within a year of completing their comprehensive exams will be placed on probation for one semester and will be permitted this period of time to remedy the issue by completing the proposal and either defending or scheduling the defense by the end of the probationary semester. Failure to do so will result in the student not being permitted to register for additional dissertation preparation hours (ISCI 899) and could result in dismissal from the program.

- The candidate re-submits the *Doctoral Committee Appointment Form* prior to the dissertation proposal defense; ideally after comps have been defended. Students must re-submit this form even if their committee has stayed the same post-comps.
- The candidate prepares a draft dissertation proposal, which, once approved by the Chair(s) of the student's Doctoral Committee is provided to all members of that Committee at least two weeks before the oral defense to allow Committee members to review and prepare questions for the oral.
- The student's Doctoral Committee, in consultation with the student, sets the date for the defense of the dissertation proposal, again, at least two weeks after the proposal has been distributed. The dissertation proposal defense will begin the student will briefly (15-20 minutes) presenting the proposed research. Following the presentation, committee members will be given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions and provide the student with guidance on their proposed research (90 minutes maximum). At this point the student may be asked to leave to allow the Committee to discuss general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the proposal. Then the student will be invited to return to the room and the decision given by the Chair.
- The student's Doctoral 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.
- Upon approval of the dissertation proposal, the Doctoral Committee Chair will notify the Chair of the Research and Doctoral Committee of the participants and the results (including the planned title of the dissertation) using the Dissertation Proposal Defense form.
- *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. The student must register for a minimum of 12 hours of ISCI 899—Dissertation Preparation—over the period of writing the dissertation. Students may fill out the [*Dissertation Fellowship*](#) form to receive a fellowship of up to \$500 to support their dissertation research.

Dissertation defense

- The student will prepare a draft of the dissertation for review by the Dissertation Advisor and other members of the student's Doctoral Committee, as the student and advisor deem appropriate. This could be drafts sent chapter-by-chapter or a complete dissertation draft. This is up to the committee and student.
- The dissertation advisor is responsible to members of the student's committee for determining that the draft or draft chapters is in appropriate form for their evaluation. The student must engage in all suggested revisions made by their advisor and these revisions must be made to

the advisor's satisfaction prior to the draft being approved by the advisor to be sent to other committee members.

- Upon approval by the advisor, the final draft or draft chapters will be provided to the student's Doctoral Committee members. This draft must conform to the rules in The Graduate School's *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide*. ([Formatting Guide](#)) While the Graduate School prefers the *Chicago Manual of Style*, use of other style guides is allowed in recognition that different fields have different style traditions. As use of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) is a more prevalent style guide in the information field, it is, therefore, recommended.
- The dissertation advisor, student, and committee members will identify a date by which the student can expect feedback on the dissertation draft or draft chapters. The student must engage in all suggested committee revisions to their advisor's satisfaction prior to the scheduling of a dissertation defense.
- The student distributes copies of the final complete dissertation draft, incorporating all suggested committee revisions, to committee members **at least one month** before the date of the final oral examination to give them time to review the document and point out any additional issues that need to be attended to prior to the defense. The Dissertation Defense will be scheduled only after all members of the committee have had an adequate opportunity to review a final draft of the dissertation.
- The final oral examination is a defense of the dissertation; it is open to the University community. The student is responsible for entering the defense announcement in the Graduate School's Graduate Management System (GMS) at least **14 days in advance** of the defense. ([Graduate Management System](#)) In addition, the student's advisor will announce the time and place of the dissertation defense to the iSchool community including the title and an abstract for the dissertation.
- Similar to the dissertation proposal defense, the dissertation defense will begin with an open portion, where the student will briefly (15-20 minutes) present the proposed research. Following the presentation, committee members and visitors will be given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions (30 minutes maximum). After open questioning, the visitors will be asked to leave and a closed session follows, where the committee members may ask additional questions of the student. At this point the student may be asked to leave to allow the Committee to discuss general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the dissertation. Then the student will be invited to return to the room and the decision given by the Chair.
- Successful defense of the dissertation will be recognized by completion and submission of the *Dissertation Signature and Approval Form* to the Graduate School. This form must be submitted (with all original, wet signatures – no scans accepted) after the student successfully passes their dissertation defense. It must be signed by all dissertation committee members, including the outside reader. The Graduate School currently maintains a Doctoral Progress to Degree web page with current information from the point of appointing a student's Doctoral Committee. ([Doctoral Degree Progress](#)) **The student is responsible for making any committee specified revisions to dissertation prior to this form being submitted.**
- The student is responsible for following all requirements, deadlines, and formatting guidelines for defending and submitting their dissertation. Students must schedule their dissertation defense to take place prior to the defense deadline for the term in which they wish to graduate (or a prior term); they must also ensure that they submit their dissertation for a required format check by the deadline listed for the semester in which they plan to graduate. Students can find all relevant dates, formatting guidelines/templates, and formatting workshops on the Graduate School's "[Thesis and Dissertation](#)" page.

MILESTONES

NINE CREDITS EACH SEMESTER (full time)

These timelines are only rough guides of what is possible. A student's path through the program depends on their interests and guidance from advisor.

YEAR 1

Fall - Coursework

Spring - Coursework

Summer - Coursework

YEAR 2

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Coursework

**Annual Review*

Spring - Finish Coursework; Submit Qualifying Exam

**Qualifying Exam Verification Form; Doctoral Program of Study Form*

Summer - Begin Comps Preparation

**Doctoral Committee Appointment Form*

YEAR 3

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Take Written and Oral Comps

**Annual Review; Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification Form*

Spring - Dissertation Proposal Drafted, Finished, Defended, and Approved

**Doctoral Committee Appointment Form; Dissertation Proposal Defense Form*

MILESTONES

SIX CREDITS EACH SEMESTER (part time)
These timelines are only rough guides of what is possible. A student's path through the program depends on their interests and guidance from advisor.

YEAR 1

Fall - Coursework

Spring - Coursework

YEAR 2

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Coursework

**Annual Review*

Spring - Coursework

YEAR 3

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Submit Qualifying Exam

**Annual Review; Qualifying Exam Verification Form; Doctoral Program of Study Form*

Spring - Finish Coursework; Begin Comps Preparation

**Doctoral Committee Appointment Form*

YEAR 4

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Take Written and Oral Comps

**Annual Review; Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification Form*

Spring - Dissertation Proposal Preparation

**Doctoral Committee Appointment Form*

YEAR 5

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Dissertation Proposal

Finished/Defended/Approved

**Annual Review; Dissertation Proposal Defense Form*

Spring - Work on Dissertation

**Dissertation Fellowship Form*

YEAR 6

Fall - Submit Annual Review; Dissertation Draft Completed

**Annual Review*

Spring - Dissertation Finished/Defended/Presented

**Enter Dissertation Defense Announcement into GMS; Dissertation Signature and Approval Form*

***Forms due during the semester**



Have any questions?

Contact the Graduate Student Services Manager at 803-777-0270 or [visit the website.](#)