



Ph.D. in Science Communication

Program Handbook

2025-2026

Department of Life Sciences Communication

Reference this handbook to learn about the policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the Ph.D. in Science Communication.

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Navigating Policy and Resources at UW-Madison

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at UW-Madison:



[Graduate Guide](#)

[Graduate School AP&P](#)

[UW-Madison Policy Library](#)

[Graduate Student Life](#)

[Graduate School at UW-Madison](#)

Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed above. Several key positions in this department and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

Graduate Program Coordinator

Graduate Program Coordinators are well versed in most elements of graduate education that extend beyond academic instruction in your program and will likely be your first stop for questions related to anything in this handbook. The Graduate Program Coordinator for the Science Communication Ph.D. program is Lynn Bartholomew, who is also the department's Academic Advising Manager. Contact her with questions at lbartholome2@wisc.edu.

Director of Graduate Studies

Each graduate program has one faculty member designated to direct its educational vision and structure. The Director of Graduate Studies in LSC is Dr. Nan Li; she can be reached at nan.li@wisc.edu.

Faculty Advisor

Each student will be assigned a faculty advisor in each graduate program in which they are enrolled. Your faculty advisor(s) will be a key source of guidance for your academic development. Further definition can be found here: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232. Guidelines for finding, changing, and working with your advisor can be found in the Advising & Mentoring section below.

The name and contact information of your faculty advisor can be found on your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under “Academic Progress” and then “Advisors.”

Graduate School Services

For general inquiries and graduate student services from the Graduate School, see the operations and front desk contact information on this contact page: grad.wisc.edu/contacts.

Department & Program Overview

Why a Ph.D. in Science Communication?

Our PhD program prepares students to become leaders in the field of science communication. As part of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS), our department is at the forefront of both theoretical and applied research, focusing on how to effectively communicate complex scientific topics to diverse audiences. Our doctoral program equips students with cutting-edge knowledge and skills to address communication challenges in areas such as emerging technologies, public health, environment, agriculture, and biological sciences, all within a rapidly evolving media landscape. The program offers a flexible, customizable curriculum along with funded research and teaching opportunities, ensuring graduates are highly competitive in the job market. Our graduates have built successful careers in academia, industry, government, and nonprofit sectors, where they serve as key drivers in advancing the field of science communication and enhancing public engagement with science.

Working closely with their advisors and committees, students draw from courses offered in departments across campus to develop a plan of study in preparation for independent and original research in their area of specialization.

What is research?

Basically, research involves a process of inquiry, discovery, and understanding. Research consists of a systematic and purposive search for answers to as yet unresolved questions. It culminates in discovering and reporting to others knowledge that was not previously available. In practice, each discipline's standards of evidence, method, and presentation of research are guided by systems of peer review. Doctoral study provides the opportunity to learn these standards and procedures, and culminates in peer review of a student's research by their doctoral committee. Command of the discipline is tested in the preliminary examinations; the ability to apply this knowledge by executing original research is tested by the dissertation and oral defense of it.

What is the "discipline"?

There are several related academic disciplines in the field of science communication. Since these disciplines employ different methods of gathering, testing, and presenting research evidence, most of our students specialize in one or, at most, two of these disciplines, combining courses and seminars in the Department of Life Sciences Communication with complementary work in related departments. Since many

specialized disciplines can be applied to the study of science communication, each doctoral student is expected to put together a combination of courses, seminars and committee members that compose a sensible – even though unique – whole.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Ph.D. in Science Communication is a unique strength. In addition to the quality of science communication faculty, many UW-Madison departments in related areas are also rated highly by the National Research Council's ranking of doctoral programs. Students of science communications at Wisconsin enjoy unique breadth and depth of faculty expertise, regardless of their chosen concentration.

The interdisciplinary nature of the program is reflected, in part, by the breadth of coursework chosen. In addition to communication courses, students must take classes in several outside departments and programs. Students must demonstrate that they have the theoretical background and methodological training necessary to write the dissertation and to conduct research in the field of study after graduation.

Advising & Mentoring

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike.

The Graduate School's definition of an advisor can be found here: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232. Your advisor has two main roles: 1) To assist you in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field, and 2) to chair the doctoral committee that will determine whether you have performed at an acceptable level in each of your degree milestones (see "Degree Requirements" section below for further information on building your committee).

Knowing the procedures and requirements of the University is the student's responsibility, not the advisor's. Students should discuss the role and their specific expectations with their advisors or prospective advisors. Both parties have a responsibility to make their expectations understood.

Finding & Selecting an Advisor

Although an orientation advisor is assigned to each student upon entry in to the program, students should seek permanent advisors by the end of the first year of graduate study. The permanent advisor should be a faculty member whose

methodological expertise and research interests match closely those that the student intends to acquire.

While no faculty member is obliged to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, invitations are usually accepted; except where the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve the student's needs better. A student who later decides that a different faculty advisor would be preferable should discuss this with the current advisor and then feel free to seek the change. Selection of an advisor, or a change of advisors, should be based on fit between the faculty member's ability to guide the student expertly into the chosen area of research. When you have selected, or change, advisors, file the appropriate form with our Graduate Program Coordinator.

Changing Your Advisor

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor, discuss this with both your current and prospective advisors to seek the change.

If you change your advisor, you must notify the Academic Advising Manager. No other follow-up is needed.

Every graduate student must have an advisor or else they may be suspended from graduate study at UW-Madison by the Graduate School. Be sure to follow procedures to re-select a new advisor (described above) prior to finalizing the termination of your current advising relationship. You can confirm that the name of your advisor has been updated in the official record by looking in your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors."

A Graduate Student Guide to Working with Faculty Advisors

Through [this interactive, self-paced micro-course](#), graduate students learn about the characteristics of functional and dysfunctional relationships with faculty advisors, strategies for communicating effectively and aligning expectations, as well as program grievance processes and Hostile and Intimidating Behavior resources. Completion of the micro-course takes about 20 minutes and is optional but encouraged for all graduate students.

Degree Requirements

Doctoral Degree

All students in Science Communication Ph.D. are responsible for keeping aware of the following requirements to complete the degree.

Requirements

The Science Communication Ph.D. program requires a minimum of 65 credits, covering theory, methods/statistics, and elective courses. Students select their courses in consultation with their faculty advisor, and all coursework must be approved by the Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC) through the program proposal process (see section below).

Doctoral students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 to meet satisfactory progress criteria. Courses with a grade lower than AB will not count toward the required 65 credits or fulfill any core content area requirements. Attendance of LSC 700 is strongly recommended for new graduate students.

At least 50% of the required coursework (33 of 65 credits) must be in graduate-level coursework. Courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified with the text “50% graduate coursework requirement” under “course options” in Course Search & Enroll. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244>.

Students must successfully pass their preliminary examination. See instructions for preliminary examination further in this handbook.

Students must successfully defend their dissertation before the student’s five-member doctoral committee. See instructions for defending your dissertation further in this handbook.

Required courses:

Colloquium¹

LSC 700: Colloquium in Life Sciences Communication 1 credit

Science Communication Theory

3 credits

LSC 720: Introduction to Communication Theory & Research
or LSC 902: Public Opinion of Life Science Issues

Research Methods²

3-4 credits

Graduate Level Statistics³

3-4 credits

Electives Based on Dissertation Topic & Goals⁴

55 credits

Total Credits

65-67

¹Students may count up to three colloquia (including one semester of LSC 700) toward the 65-credit requirement for the program.

²Course to be selected in consultation with advisor. Examples of courses that may fulfill this requirement include: COM ARTS 762, ED PSYCH/COUN PSY/CURRIC/ED POL/ELPA/RP & SE 719, ED PSYCH 762, ED PSYCH/COUN PSY/CURRIC/ED POL/ELPA/RP & SE 788, ED PSYCH/ELPA 827, ED PSYCH 963, JOURN/LSC 811, JOURN 812, SOC/C&E SOC 750, SOC 751, or SOC 752.

³Course to be selected in consultation with advisor. Examples of courses that may fulfill this requirement include: ED PSYCH 760, ED PSYCH 761, ED PSYCH 763, ED PSYCH 773, ED PSYCH 960, ED PSYCH 964, ED PSYCH 965, LSC 660, POLI SCI 811, or POLI SCI 813.

⁴Courses selected in consultation with advisor to create a cohesive program of study. Students may count up to three independent studies (up to nine credits) with at least two different faculty members toward the 65-credit requirement for the program.

Optional Research Credits

Students may register for up to 1 credit of LSC 990 per semester for regular, scheduled research activities supervised by LSC faculty, such as research lab or funded projects involving consistent team meetings. Such credits will **not** count toward the 65-credit degree requirement. To enroll, students must apply to the Academic Advising Manager at least eight weeks before the registration deadline. Upon the Graduate Curriculum

Committee's approval, the credit will be registered under the student's supervisor. Application forms are available upon request from the Academic Advising Manager.

Committee

Each student will assemble a doctoral committee for prelims and the dissertation in consultation with the advisor. Alterations may occur if members are unavailable or if the planned dissertation focus shifts slightly, requiring somewhat different expertise.

The doctoral committee members are chosen by the student, in consultation with the advisor, usually after some courses and seminars with each potential member have been taken. The student invites faculty members to serve on the doctoral committee; such an invitation need not be accepted, but in most cases, it is.

In selecting faculty to serve on a doctoral committee, advisors and students should seek to gather a set of people with expertise in the student's area of training, the dissertation focus, and career goals. The advisor and student should strive to balance breadth and depth.

Doctoral committees consist of five faculty members. Doctoral committees feature three faculty from within the Department of Life Sciences Communication, and two from outside the department. Following completion of the preliminary examination, if the advisor and the student decide that the dissertation requires a research specialty for which somewhat different committee membership is appropriate, changes should be made as soon as practical (described in the Program Proposal section).

Doctoral committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, administer preliminary and final oral examinations, evaluate a thesis or dissertation, and/or sign a degree warrant. For general guidance from The Graduate School on the role and composition of committees as well as an online tool to determine if your committee meets minimum requirements, see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201.

Annual Progress Report

The Graduate Committee requires all doctoral students to submit a progress report each year in the early spring semester to ensure they are meeting critical milestones and staying on track for graduation. The report outline is sent to students in December and is due in February. Students must complete a Progress Report Form (a copy of the form will be emailed to all students prior to the submission deadline), detailing key achievements such as publications, presentations, professional development activities,

and their graduation plans. The Graduate Committee will review all reports and provide written feedback to the students.

Before submitting the progress report, students should meet with their faculty advisor to discuss their progress and milestones. The final report must be signed by the faculty advisor. Along with the report, students are required to submit a copy of their unofficial transcript and CV.

Instructions and more details will be provided with the annual call for submissions in December.

Program Proposal

Doctoral students must submit a program proposal to the Academic Advising Manager in the Department of Life Sciences Communication *before their final semester of coursework*. The program proposal contains a student's long-range research goals, and the coursework that has been taken, or that is proposed to be taken, in the doctoral program. This proposal should be developed in consultation with the student's advisor, who will write a letter of support. It should present a coherent and focused selection of courses relevant to the dissertation work.

Doctoral programs should reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the Ph.D. in Science Communication. In addition to communication courses, students must take classes in several outside departments and programs. Students must demonstrate that they have the theoretical background and methodological training necessary to write the dissertation and to conduct research in the field of study after graduation.

The GCC reviews program proposals twice a year, during mid-semester meetings in the fall and spring. The committee will either approve the program of study or may require modifications to ensure that the student is prepared to handle the theoretical and methodological requirements of their dissertation research.

Students should submit their proposal to the LSC Academic Advising Manager, while advisors may choose to send their letters of support directly to the manager.

Program proposals should be submitted when the student has all of the following:

- 1) a clearly defined research topic
- 2) decided in consultation with the advisor who the five committee members will be
- 3) confirmed with the committee members
- 4) at least one semester of course work remaining in the program

Course Transfer Pre-Approval

A student's final course plan must be approved by the Graduate Committee as part of the program proposal process (detailed below). This includes courses taken at UW-Madison and any courses from a master's degree earned prior to joining the program which the student and their advisor believe contribute toward preparation for their dissertation research.

Because the program proposal is completed with only 1-2 semesters left of coursework, the Graduate Committee created an optional course transfer pre-approval process so students can receive an initial decision about the number of credits that can be transferred to their Ph.D. in Science Communication. The pre-approval request must be submitted with the annual progress report to be considered. This process is offered as a convenience to students to assist with course planning and should not be completed during the same semester as the program proposal.

Courses asked to be reviewed for pre-approval should be intentionally selected based on their applicability to the student's Ph.D. program to provide depth and breadth to prepare them for writing their dissertation. Typically, students are allowed to transfer up to 9 credits of coursework from their master's degree. In very rare circumstances, students may transfer up to 12 credits. Transfer credits cannot duplicate courses taken in the Science Communication program at UW-Madison.

Any transferred courses will be considered electives as part of the student's graduate program and cannot be directly transferred as an LSC requirement (science communication theory, research methods, statistics, and colloquium). All courses requested to be transferred must be from accredited institutions where English is the language of instruction.

Certain types of courses may not count toward the Ph.D. program and should not be included in a course transfer pre-approval request including thesis credits, audited and pass/fail courses, English as a Second Language courses, professional classes (e.g., newswriting, advertising, public relations), courses with overlapping content, courses with redundant content, and independent studies taken in lieu of paid employment. Refer to the program proposal section below for more details.

Course transfer requests must include the following information:

- Institution where course(s) were taken

- Course name and description
- Number of credits (note: Courses taken on a quarter-hour basis count as 3/4 of one semester credit. 12 quarter hours = 9 semester credits.)
- Final transcript that includes:
- Final grades
- Grading scale (e.g., how these courses would be evaluated if not on a 4.0 scale)
- Description of how the course content relates to the student's graduate program in LSC
- Evidence that these are graduate-level courses
- For example, a link to the institution website outlining what numbering system is used to identify graduate coursework. An example can be found on the Graduate School website for UW-Madison here: <https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/course-numbering-system/>
- Evidence that the courses were taught in English if from an institution outside of the U.S.

It is expected that the student's advisor has reviewed all syllabi for these courses and the syllabi will be available for the Graduate Committee to review if requested. The advisor's signature on the progress report which includes the pre-approval request indicates to the Graduate Committee that they have reviewed the syllabi for the courses and approve of them being considered for the student's Science Communication Ph.D. program of study.

The Committee will decide whether to pre-approve any submitted courses based on the submission. This pre-approval is conditional upon final approval of the program proposal that includes the student's full program of courses.

Courses cannot be accepted that were earned ten or more years prior to admission to the Ph.D. program. See the Graduate School's website for more information on prior coursework policies: <https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/prior-coursework/>.

Format:

Course transfer pre-approval requests should follow the format of the program proposal sample outlined below using the "Courses taken at another institution" section for guidance and an attached document outlining the required information for each course.

Program Proposal Requirements

Ph.D. program proposals are comprised of **four** documents:

1. **Cover letter from the faculty advisor** including (a) a description of the student's research and how it fits within the academic discipline, and (b) a discussion of the appropriateness of the student's methodological approach.
2. **Cover letter from the student** including:

- a. brief description of the student's educational background
- b. statement of overall research interests
- c. explanation of the dissertation research and methodological approach
- d. a clear plan for data collection, including whether the data has already been collected or if appropriate funding has been secured to support the data collection process
- e. expected date of prelims
- f. the intention to complete a minor and the area of concentration (if applicable).
- g. list of five confirmed committee members, their departments, and a brief explanation of their suitability to serve on the committee. The doctoral committee should reflect the conceptual and analytical interests of the student. At least two, of the five committee members, must be from outside the department of Life Sciences Communication. Students are not required to have three committee members from inside the major department. Committees are frequently comprised of three (or even four) committee members from outside the major department.)

3. **Chronological list of proposed and completed coursework.** (Follow sample format)

4. **Subject area list of proposed and completed coursework.** (Follow sample format)

For items #3 and #4, list only the Master's courses that are germane to the Ph.D. program and have been approved by the advisor based on this. Refer to the course transfer pre-approval section for details on what courses may or may not count towards the Ph.D. program, the average number of credits allowed to transfer, etc.

Including work taken at the master's level, students must complete a minimum of 65 credits. Thesis credits do not count as part of the 65 credits.

Doctoral students must maintain a minimum of 3.5 cumulative GPA to meet satisfactory progress criteria. No course, with a grade lower than AB, counts toward the 65 credits or as part of the required content areas. (**Note:** Indicate grading scale – if other than 4.0 – for courses taken at other universities.)

Changes to course plan or committee membership after program proposal approval

Students may change up to two courses and up to one doctoral committee member in consultation with the faculty advisor, without having to file a revised program proposal. Notify the Academic Advising Manager of all course substitutions.

If more changes are needed, then the proposal changes should be summarized in one page and returned for the Graduate Committee for approval. Students who change more than two courses or more than one committee member, or who change the focus of their dissertations, must submit a revised proposal.

Given the high mobility of UW-Madison faculty, and the uncertainty of course offerings, many students anticipate the problem of having to make course substitutions by listing an alternate course selection. (e.g., Soc. 360 or Ed Psych 760)

Course Credits that do not count toward the Ph.D.

Do not include these courses in the program proposal

Sample Program Proposal

It is important that students adhere to the sample program format including using page numbers.

Proposals that deviate from the sample format will be returned to the student to be reworked and will be evaluated the following semester.

(cover page)

Name

Madison Address (include zip code)

E-mail Address

Student ID Number

Master's Degree: Institution

Major

Thesis Title

Degree Date

Undergraduate Degree: Institution

Major

Degree Date

Ph.D. Minor (***elective***): Area of Study

Science Communication doctoral students are ***not required*** to complete a minor.

Prelims: Date you expect to take exams

Program by Academic Semester

A. Courses Taken at Other Institutions: Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI

(List only the courses that apply to the Ph.D. program)

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
Fall 2015				
COMM 5953	Seminar in Comm: Comm about Risk	3	A	Griffin
Spring 2016				
COMM 6002	Research in Action	3	A	Griffin
Fall 2016				
COMM 6815	Data Analytics & Reasoning in Comm	3	A	Griffin
Total Credits & Cumulative GPA		9	4.0/4/0	

Program by Academic Semester

B. Courses Completed at UW-Madison

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
Fall 2017				
J 801	Mass Comm & the Individual	3	A	Shah
EdPsych 762	Intro to Design of Educ Experiments	3	A	Kim
J 901	Colloquium: Mass Communication	1	CR	Riddle
Spring 2018				
LSC 875	Science & Social Media	3	A	Brossard
EdPsych 960	Structural Equation Modeling	3	A	Kaplan
LSC 700	Colloquium in LSC	1	CR	Brossard
Summer 2018				
LSC 350	Visualizing Sci & Tech (grad component)	3	A	Reaves
Fall 2018				
LSC 902	Public Opinion in Science	3	A	Scheufele
EdPsych 763	Regression Models in Education	3	A	Steiner
STS 902	Current Topics in STS	1	CR	Alatout
Total Credits & Cumulative GPA		24	4.0	

Program by Academic Semester

C. Courses remaining at UW-Madison

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
Spring 2019				
CA 970	Seminar in Comm Sci	3		Xenos
EdPsych 964	Hierarchical Linear Model	3		Kim
J 880	Politics in the Digital Media Age	3		Kim
Summer 2019				
CS 540	Intro to Artificial Intelligence	3		TBA
LSC 999	Independent Study	3		Brossard
Fall 2019				
CS 577	Intro to Algorithms	4		TBA
CS 765	Data Visualization	3		TBA
Spring 2020				
CS 760	Machine Learning	3		TBA
LSC 831	Psych of Entertainment Media	3		TBA
Fall 2020				
EdPsych 719	Intro to Qualitative Research	3		TBA
LSC 999	Independent Study	1		TBA
Total Credits		32		

Program by Content Area

A. Communication Theory

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
J 801	Mass Comm and the Individual	3	A	Shah
J 880	Politics in the Digital Media Age	3		Kim
CA 970	Sem in Comm Science	3		Xenos
LSC 831	Psych of Entertainment Media	3		TBA

B. Science, Risk & Environmental Communication

COMM 5953	Semin in Comm: Comm about Risk	3	A	Griffin
LSC 350	Visualizing Sci & Tech (grad component)	3	A	Reaves
LSC 875	Science & Social Media	3	A	Brossard
LSC 902	Public Opinion in Science	3	A	Scheufele
LSC 999	Independent Study	3	A	Brossard
LSC 999	Independent Study	1		TBD

C. Research Methods & Statistics

COMM 6002	Research in Action	3	A	Griffin
COMM 6815	Data Analytics & Reasoning in Comm	3	A	Griffin
EdPsych 762	Intro to Design of Educ Experiments	3	A	Kim
EdPsych 763	Regression Models in Education	3	A	Steiner
EdPsych 960	Structural Equation Modeling	3	A	Kaplan
EdPsych 964	Hierarchical Linear Modeling	3	A	Kim
EdPsych 719	Intro to Qualitative Research	3	A	TBA

D. Computational Sciences

CS 540	Intro to Artificial Intelligence	3		TBA
CS 577	Intro to Algorithms	4		TBA
CS 760	Machine Learning	3		TBA
CS 765	Data Visualization	3		TBA

E. Colloquia

LSC 700	Colloquium in LSC	1	CR	Brossard
J 901	Colloquium: Science Communications	1	CR	Riddle
STS 902	Current Topics in STS	1	CR	Alatout

Total Ph.D. Credits		65		
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Addendum:

This is a sample of the three types of courses that may show up in the addendum, the courses listed here do not necessarily match the sample proposal outlined above.

COMM 6002, Research in Action

Marquette University

Communication 6002 explores research methods in communication research, in particular techniques useful in gathering, organizing, verifying, and evaluating evidence through qualitative and quantitative methods. These methods are valuable for people who want to do scholarly research as well as for those who will be encountering research as part of their professional work in communication or other occupational fields. It includes the opportunity to develop your own research project, practical exercises in qualitative and quantitative methods, exercises designed to sharpen your abilities to reason critically from data, and an introduction to basic statistical testing through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS). The rigors of conceptualizing and refining a research question, and the techniques of objective and systematic information gathering, are important to professional and academic research in communication. Comm 6002 is designed to give you an opportunity to develop and carry out your own research project in a systematic manner, in controlled and guided stages of development: conceptualization; design; test of procedures. The format of the course is seminar. There will also be exercises to be completed.

Course Numbering System:

http://www.marquette.edu/mucentral/registrar/policy_coursenumberingpolicy.shtml

This course relates to my graduate program in LSC because...

LSC 999, Independent Research

UW-Madison

Instructor

Credits

Overview of independent study ...

EdPsych 960, Structural Equation Modeling (Incomplete)

Instructor

Credits

Describe reason for incomplete and plan/timeline for completion

Preliminary Examinations

LSC doctoral students take preliminary examinations after completing all course program requirements as agreed upon in student's approved "program proposal." Preliminary exams are conducted as 'open book' exams. Students will select five days within a 10-business day window to take their exams during business hours.

The five exact dates on which the student will be taking the exams must be chosen and communicated to the Academic Advising Manager before the start of the exam period. The student's committee members will each submit a preliminary exam question within an agreed-upon area of study. Students will complete one exam question per day over their 5-day exam. Students have 8 hours/day/set of questions and can take as many breaks as needed but must complete the exam within 8 hours. Students will schedule their start time each day with the Academic Advising Manager and receive the exam question from the committee member of their choosing.

When finished with the exam, students will email their exam answer to the Academic Advising Manager following LSC formatting guidelines. Students have one additional day to fix their references if needed. Initial answers will be graded, but students can provide a finalized reference list within one day of the last exam. Students should use Endnote or other reference software to limit the number of changes needed.

When scheduling exams, keep in mind that they must be completed early enough to allow time for grading prior to the dissertator deadline for the next term. Students and advisors should consult the [Graduate School's deadlines](#) to confirm the deadline for dissertator status for each semester.

Students who fail one or two prelim questions may be required to respond to a new prelim question; write a paper that addresses the deficiencies of the original prelim answer; or take an oral exam to demonstrate mastery of the content area.

Remedial action is determined by the faculty member who posed the original question. Students who fail three or more prelim questions may be required to take additional course work or complete a semester of independent study and research before being allowed to retake a partial or full preliminary exam. Students may also be dropped from the doctoral program. Remedial action is determined by a majority vote of the full doctoral committee.

Critical Steps to Prepare for Preliminary Examinations

Prior to starting exams:

- Review the Graduate School's policy listing on preliminary examinations:
<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/preliminary-examinations/>
- Review approved program proposal and student record to confirm completion of program requirements with advisor and confirm ability to start scheduling preliminary exams
- In writing, inform the academic advising manager of intention to take prelims this semester, cc advisor to confirm they have approved this plan
- In consultation with advisor and committee, prepare a reading list to help prepare for exams. Students may ask academic advising manager for previous exam questions from their committee members to assist with exam preparation
- In consultation with advisor, compile an initial list of prelim dates, consult the Graduate School's deadlines for the semester to determine how early exams need to be started in order to allow time for grading and obtaining signatures to meet the deadline for dissertator status. Refer to information in prelim exam overview above for details on preliminary exam timeline and requirements
- In consultation with advisor, inform the academic advising manager and committee of confirmed prelim exam dates as soon as possible. The advisor will collect final exam questions from each committee member and share with the academic advising manager
 - At least 2 weeks prior to the exam dates, the student must send the following information to the academic advising manager so they can request the warrant from the Graduate School.
 - committee members' names, titles and department home (feel free to copy/paste entire UW directory listing from wisc.edu for each committee member)
 - Minor(s) or certificate(s) the student is completing, if any
 - name of minor/certificate
 - name of advisor for the minor/certificate
 - date minor/certificate requirements were completed

Day(s) of Preliminary Exams

- The student will contact the academic advising manager at the agreed upon start time each exam date indicating which committee member's question they would like to work on that day (Students do NOT have to commit to an order in advance)
- Follow the "LSC preliminary exam formatting requirements" for document formatting and titling instructions (see below)

- At the completion of each exam date, send the PDF of the answer by the exam deadline (8 hours after the start of the exam) to the academic advising manager

Post Completion of Preliminary Exams

- The academic advising manager will forward combined PDF of all exam documents to the student's advisor and the advisor will review and send to committee members. The advisor will inform the student of their exam status once committee review is complete.
- Upon receiving a "pass" from all committee members, the academic advising manager will collect digital signatures from committee members for the preliminary exam warrant and will submit it to the Graduate School.
- Students will be required to complete the doctoral student experience survey which will be sent to them by the Graduate School after warrant submission.
- Review the Graduate School's policy page with information and FAQs on dissertator status: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1247>

Preliminary Exam Formatting Requirements

- At the top of each exam answer, type the following:
 - date of exam
 - student's name
 - committee member's name
 - exam question
- Add header/footer for each exam that includes:
 - page numbers
 - student's last and first name
 - the committee member's LAST name

For example: "BADGER Bucky SCHEUFELE Prelim Exam p. 1

- Title and save each exam as a PDF with the title and file name: BADGER Bucky SCHEUFELE prelim response

Dissertator Status

Students who have met all major and minor doctoral program requirements, passed the preliminary examination and filed the prelim warrant with the Graduate School are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. in Science Communication. They are officially recognized by the university as "dissertators" at the beginning of the semester after these requirements are met.

After obtaining dissertator status, students must continuously enroll for 3 credits of LSC 990¹ each semester, excluding summers unless they are graduating in summer or are required by their assistantship to enroll for summer. Students must request permission to enroll in LSC 990 each semester by emailing their advisor and cc'ing the Academic Advising Manager.

Oral Defense of Dissertation & Graduation

The oral defense of the dissertation is the last step toward graduation. Students must defend their dissertation the same semester they plan on graduating. Before they can defend their dissertation, they must complete the milestones listed above and achieve dissertator status. After achieving dissertator status, register for three credits of research credits (LSC 990) each fall and spring semester until work is complete. Students graduating in the summer must be enrolled for research credits that term. Students have five years from the date of passing their preliminary examination to take their final oral examination and deposit their dissertations. Failure to complete their degree within this five-year period may result in them having to retake the preliminary examination and be re-admitted to candidacy.

Pre-Defense

- Enroll in research credits during the graduation term
- Confirm plans to defend with advisor and notify the Academic Advising Manager as soon as a defense semester is identified. Review the [Graduate School's deadlines](#) to confirm the final degree deadline for the term in which the student plans to defend.
- Review the Grad School's "Guide to Preparing your Doctoral Dissertation" to ensure compliance with "formatting requirements": <https://grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide/>. Students can also look at dissertation examples from LSC graduates in the thesis library, ask the front desk for assistance accessing the dissertations.

¹ Students may register for up to 1 credit of LSC 990 per semester for regular, scheduled research activities supervised by LSC faculty, such as research lab or funded projects involving consistent team meetings. Such credits will **not** count toward the 65-credit degree requirement. To enroll, students must submit an application to the Academic Advising Manager at least eight weeks before the registration deadline. Upon the Graduate Curriculum Committee's approval, the credit will be registered under the student's supervisor. Application forms are available upon request from the Academic Advising Manager.

- Set regular meetings with advisor (and potentially committee members] to track dissertation progress
- Get advisor's approval to set an oral dissertation defense date
- Get advisor's approval of proposed dissertation title
- Set an oral defense date with committee, as soon as a defense date is selected do the following:
 - Update Academic Advising Manager and include defense date and committee members; asking them to request a warrant from the Graduate School. This must happen no later than 2 weeks prior to the defense date!
 - Work with LSC Front Desk to reserve a conference room in Hiram Smith Hall for the defense
- In consultation with advisor, submit a draft of dissertation to committee
- In consultation with advisor, submit final copies of dissertation to committee at least 1 week prior to the defense

Post-Defense Day

- Make any edits/changes requested by the committee to dissertation and re-submit to advisor and committee members who have requested to see them for final approval
- Once the committee has approved the final version of the dissertation, the advisor will notify the Academic Advising Manager, who will circulate the warrant to committee members for signature. Students submit a final copy of the signed warrant when depositing the dissertation.

Final Steps to Graduation

- Review the Grad School's instructions to deposit the dissertation: <https://grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide/#defend-and-deposit-your-dissertation>
- Students must sign up at MyUW "apply to graduate" to have their name in the graduation program. Watch email closely for messages about cap and gown rental and for more information about commencement, go to <http://commencement.wisc.edu/>

Doctoral Degree Checklist: Timeline & Deadlines

The Graduate School maintains a list of steps to complete your doctoral degree, including deadlines and important things to know as you progress toward graduation: grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide. In addition to what is posted on this webpage from the Graduate School, you must meet all required steps of the program (outlined below).

Enrollment Requirements

You are responsible for following Graduate School policies related to course enrollment requirements and limitations:

Adding / Dropping Courses

grad.wisc.edu/documents/add-drop

Auditing Courses

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1224

Canceling Enrollment

grad.wisc.edu/documents/canceling-enrollment

Continuous Enrollment Requirement for Dissertators

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1204

Enrollment Accountability

grad.wisc.edu/documents/enrollment-accountability

Minimum Enrollment Requirements

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208

Academic Exception Petitions

Academic exceptions are considered on an individual case-by-case basis and should not be considered a precedent. Deviations from normal progress are highly discouraged, but the program recognizes that there are in some cases extenuating academic and personal circumstances that may lead to an exception petition. Petitions for any academic exceptions including a leave of absence shall be directed to the LSC Graduate Curriculum Committee in consultation with the student's advisor. The following procedures apply to all petitions:

1. The specific requirement/rule/expectation pertinent to the petition must be identified.
2. The student's advisor must provide written support for the petition.

Leave of absence

Student in good standing who encounter extenuating circumstances and wishes to interrupt their program of graduate study can petition the Graduate Committee for a leave of absence following the academic exception petition policy above.

Leave of absence petitions must be submitted prior to the start of the semester the student wishes to take leave, including the reason and anticipated length of the leave. An approved leave of absence petition guarantees reentry to the program if the student reapplies to the Graduate School during the time period specified. Students whose petitions are denied may later apply for readmission, but their acceptance cannot be guaranteed.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Your continuation as a graduate student at UW-Madison is at the discretion of your program, the Graduate School, and your faculty advisor. Any student may be placed on probation or dismissed from the Graduate School for not maintaining satisfactory academic progress, and this can impact your academic standing (detailed below), financial aid (see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1040), or funding (consult your sources of funding, as applicable). Our program has its own definition of satisfactory academic progress and related procedures that supplement Graduate School policy, as described in this section.

Definition

Information about how the Graduate School determines satisfactory academic progress can be found at this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218. In addition to the Graduate School's monitoring of satisfactory academic progress, this program regularly reviews the satisfactory academic progress of its students, defined as the following:

Doctoral students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 to meet satisfactory progress criteria. Courses with a grade lower than AB will not count toward the required 65 credits or fulfill any core content area requirements.

Personal Conduct Expectations

Professional Conduct

The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards maintains detailed guidance on student rights and responsibilities related to learning in a community that is safe and

fosters integrity and accountability. You are responsible for keeping aware of their policies and procedures, found at the following page: conduct.students.wisc.edu

Doctoral students in LSC are expected to demonstrate integrity, accountability, and respect in their academic, research, and professional interactions. Students with assistantships must complete all mandatory trainings, including but not limited to research ethics, responsible conduct of research, Title IX compliance, and any additional department- or university-required trainings.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapter 14. For further information on this law, what constitutes academic misconduct, and procedures related to academic misconduct, see:

The Graduate School

Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Academic
grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-academic

Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards

Academic Misconduct Website
conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct

Academic Misconduct Flowchart
conduct.students.wisc.edu/documents/academic-misconduct-flow-chart

Non-Academic Misconduct

Non-academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapters 17 and 18. For further information on these laws, what constitutes non-academic misconduct, and procedures related to non-academic misconduct, see:

The Graduate School

Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Non-Academic
grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-nonacademic

Office for Student Conduct and Community Standards

Non-Academic Misconduct Website

conduct.students.wisc.edu/nonacademic-misconduct

University of Wisconsin System (UWS)

Chapter 17: Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures

docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/17

Chapter 18: Conduct on University Lands

docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/18

Research Misconduct

Per the [UW-Madison policy](#), “research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.” The policy applies to all those involved in the research process including graduate students.

For more information, please visit the [Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research research misconduct page](#).

If you have questions or concerns about research misconduct or integrity, this can be discussed confidentially with the Research Integrity Officer (rio@research.wisc.edu).

Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Bullying)

Hostile and intimidating behavior (HIB), sometimes referred to as “bullying,” is prohibited by university policy applicable to faculty, academic staff, and university staff. For further definition, policy, and procedures related to HIB see: hr.wisc.edu/hib. Students who feel they have been subject to HIB are encouraged to review the informal and formal options on the “Addressing HIB” tab of this website.

Grievance Process

Each college or program on campus has a grievance process that students can use to address other concerns regarding their experience in the program. This program's grievance process can be found detailed at:

<https://cals.wisc.edu/academics/graduate/sciencecommunicationphd/#policies>

Incident Reporting (Hate, Bias, Sexual Assault, Hazing, Students of Concern, Bullying)

The Office of Student Assistance and Support maintains a portal to report incidents of hate, bias, sexual assault, hazing, dating/domestic violence, stalking, missing students, and students displaying other concerning behaviors at UW-Madison:

Office of Student Assistance and Support Incident Reporting

osas.wisc.edu/report-an-issue/

As noted above in “Personal Conduct Expectations,” students who feel they have been subject to hostile and/or intimidating behavior (i.e., bullying) are encouraged to review the informal and formal options for addressing this behavior (including filing complaints when desired) at:

Human Resources Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Website

hr.wisc.edu/hib

Funding, Employment, and Finances

Admitted Science Communication PhD students are guaranteed financial support through a combination of assistantships and fellowships. In addition, doctoral students may pursue financial aid, apply for professional development grants, and seek additional hourly employment as needed.

Assistantships

Most graduate students who receive support serve as teaching, research, or project assistants. Assistantships are typically part-time positions that pay a monthly stipend. Additionally, positions that are 33.33% or more (based on a 40-hour work week) provide tuition remission for the student and make the student eligible for comprehensive health insurance coverage.

If you are admitted to the program, the Academic Advising Manager will provide you with detailed information about how to apply for departmental assistantship.

Fellowships

The department nominates its most competitive grad applicants for fellowship awards. University Fellowships are awarded through the Graduate School.

These fellowship nominations include:

1. [Graduate Research Scholars \(GRS\)](#)
2. [Kemper Knapp Fellowship](#)
3. [IRIS Area and International Studies Awards](#)

If you are admitted and believe you are a strong candidate for one of these fellowships, we encourage you to reach out to us directly via the CALS Life Sciences Communication email at lifescicomm@cals.wisc.edu.

Financial Aid

Students who are U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents can apply for Federal Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) and for Federal Work-Study through the [Office of Student Financial Aid \(OSFA\)](#). Eligibility is based on financial need. OSFA also offers information on the cost of attendance.

[Short-term loans](#) are available on a limited basis. They are given only to assist in unanticipated emergency situations and must be repaid within the semester in which they are borrowed.

The [Basic Needs Fund](#) connects students with essential resources such as food, healthcare, housing, clothing, internet access, and technology, etc. You can find more information about the fund [here](#).

Hourly Employment

Other employment opportunities are available both on campus and in the community. Openings for full and part-time jobs for students and spouses are listed on the Student Job Center website.

Travel and Professional Development Grants

Every student is encouraged to apply for the Graduate School's [Student Research Grants Competition](#) (formerly known as the Vilas Travel Grants) each year. These grants are intended to support both Conference Presentation Funds and Research Travel Awards. It's critical that students plan to apply early and follow campus travel policies for transportation and travel.

Also, graduate students in LSC are eligible to apply for departmental funding to support travel to academic conferences. Students can apply for up to \$1,500 for international travel and up to \$700 for domestic travel. To be considered for these awards, students must meet all eligibility criteria. Detailed information, including application instructions and deadlines, will be shared via your student email.

The Graduate School maintains policies related to graduate student funding/employment:

Maximum Levels of Appointments

grad.wisc.edu/documents/maximum-levels-of-appointments

Concurrent Appointments for Fellows/Trainees

grad.wisc.edu/documents/concurrent-appointments

Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208

Eligibility for Summer RA, TA, PA, and LSA Appointments

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5089

Guaranteed Funding

The Department of Life Sciences Communication is committed to supporting its doctoral students by offering five consecutive years of guaranteed funding. This funding package typically includes a combination of research assistantships (RAs), teaching assistantships (TAs), or fellowships, along with a stipend, full tuition remission, and comprehensive health benefits.

To maintain guaranteed funding, students must remain in good academic standing, make satisfactory progress toward their degree, and fulfill the responsibilities of their assistantship or fellowship. Funding assignments are determined based on departmental needs, faculty research projects, and student expertise.

Finding Funding Without a Guaranteed Appointment Campus-Wide and External Sources

To help you find resources to pay for costs related to graduate education, the Graduate School provides a comprehensive overview of the funding process on campus as well as descriptions of the types of funding available, sources of funding, minimum stipend rates and benefits, and links to applicable human resources policies (e.g. GAPP) at:

Graduate School: Funding and Financial Aid

grad.wisc.edu/funding

External Fellowship Database

grad.wisc.edu/funding/external-fellowship-database

UW-Madison Libraries Grants Information Collection

library.wisc.edu/memorial/collections/grants-information-collection

Additional Policies & Resources

Graduate School Policy: Residence for Tuition Purposes

grad.wisc.edu/documents/residence-for-tuition-purposes

Employee Disability Resources

employeedisabilities.wisc.edu

Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (GAPP)

hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp

Professional Development

When you participate in professional development, you build skills needed to succeed academically and thrive in your career. The following are professional development activities that we recommend for your consideration.

On Campus

The Graduate School develops and curates a wide variety of resources for professional development, including a tool to assess your skills, set goals, and create a plan with

recommended activities on campus (e.g., the popular “Individual Development Plan” or IDP) as well as programming to help you explore careers, prepare for a job search, build your network and learn from alumni, manage projects, communicate about your research, and much more.

DiscoverPD helps master’s and doctoral students at UW-Madison advance their academic and professional goals with customized recommendations based on a skills self-assessment. The 400+ professional development recommendations available in the DiscoverPD database are available in a range of formats to best meet your diverse needs, including in-person, virtual, asynchronous, and synchronous opportunities. All of this can be found at:

Professional Development from the Graduate School

grad.wisc.edu/professional-development

The Graduate School communicates professional development opportunities through an e-newsletter, *GradConnections*, that all graduate students receive at their wisc.edu email. Graduate students in traditional graduate degree programs receive the newsletter weekly during the academic year and every other week in the summer. Graduate students in online degree programs receive the newsletter every other week during the academic year and monthly during the summer.

In Our Program/Department

The Department of Life Sciences Communication is committed to providing comprehensive professional development opportunities that prepare doctoral students for diverse career paths in academia, industry, government, and nonprofit organizations. Through workshops, mentoring, and hands-on experiences, students gain the skills needed for successful careers in research, teaching, and science communication.

Key Professional Development Opportunities:

- **Research and Publishing:** Students are encouraged to collaborate with faculty on research projects, present at national and international conferences, and publish in peer-reviewed journals.
- **Teaching and Mentorship:** Doctoral students gain teaching experience through teaching assistantships, where they develop course materials, lead discussions, and engage in instructional training. The university also offers pedagogy workshops to enhance teaching effectiveness.

- Science Communication and Public Engagement: Given LSC's focus on science communication, students are encouraged to participate in public outreach activities and engage in interdisciplinary projects that bridge science and society.
- Professional Networking and Conferences: Students are supported in attending major conferences and symposia where they can present their research, connect with scholars, and explore career opportunities in their areas of expertise.