

Stanford University  
Department of Communication  
**Degree Requirements & Department Procedures  
for Ph.D. Students and Ph.D. Advisors**

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**1. Introduction**

This document is a formal description of the degree requirements and procedures that are specific to the Communication Department Ph.D. program.

It supplements the Bulletin (ExploreDegrees) and other University publications by providing information about department-specific policies and procedures. It also provides helpful resources to support you during your academic program. Further information and resources are available from the Director of Graduate Studies, your advisor, and department staff.

Because graduate school is an active partnership between the student and the department, the department expects students to familiarize themselves with this information and to seek clarification as needed.

Students are held to the degree requirements included in the [Stanford Bulletin](#) (ExploreDegrees) and the department's Degree Requirements & Department Procedures published in the year of matriculation; departmental practices and procedures outlined in this document may change year to year.

Department rules, policies and program requirements may be more restrictive than those of the University.

## **2. Departmental Graduate Studies Committee**

2. 1. The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) will consist of all faculty in the Department of Communication who are members of the Academic Council.

2.2. The role of the GSC is to:

- a. Approve policies and policy changes of the Ph.D. program as originated by the PhDC (see Section 3)
- b. Assign final approval or rejection to certain decisions of the PhDC pertaining to students
- c. Assign final approval or rejection to all appeals made by students regarding PhDC decisions
- d. Evaluate students for admission to candidacy
- e. Evaluate students for termination as recommended by the PhDC

2.3. All decisions of the GSC will be by majority vote unless a different percentage is specified by this document or University rules. All members of the Academic Council are expected to cast a vote unless on sabbatical or leave (faculty on sabbatical leave may vote if they wish). In the event of a tie, the Director of the Doctoral Program in Communication (hereafter referred to as the Graduate Director) will break the tie. If the Graduate Director is not eligible to vote, the Chair will break the tie. If the Graduate Director and the Chair are not eligible to vote, the faculty member with the most seniority at Stanford will break the tie.

2.4. All decisions of the GSC pertaining to a particular student will be described in writing, and will be given to the Chair, the Graduate Director, the relevant student, and the relevant student's advisor(s) (or temporary advisor). A copy of the decision will be placed into the student's file.

2.5. All decisions of the GSC pertaining to students in general will be described in writing and will appear as an amendment to this document. All faculty and students will be notified of the new rule via email.

2.6. If a member of the GSC wishes to write a report distinct from the official report, he or she may do so. The report will be given to the Chair, the Graduate Director, the relevant student(s), and the relevant student's (or students') advisor(s) (or temporary advisor). A copy of the report will be placed into the relevant student's (or students') file.

2.7. The GSC will follow all [rules and procedures as determined by the University](#).

2.8. The decision of the GSC is the final arbiter within the department, that is, the decision cannot be appealed further within the department, except when explicitly noted. The student may of course pursue all appeals as provided for by the [Academic Grievance Procedures](#) of the University.

2.9. Until the GSC completes its deliberations concerning a student, the student is entitled to funding.

2.10. If a decision of the GSC is appealed, the student is entitled to funding until the appeal is addressed.

### **3. Ph.D. Committee**

3.1. The Ph.D. Committee (PhDC) will consist of the Graduate Director plus two other members and one alternate to be appointed by the Chair. The Graduate Director, the members and the alternate will be Ph.D. faculty in the Communication Department, all of whom must be members of the Academic Council. The members of the PhDC will be disclosed to all Communication Ph.D. students annually at the beginning of Autumn Quarter.

3.2. The role of the PhDC is to:

- a. Originate changes in policies of the Ph.D. program (although approval of the policies must be made by the GSC)
- b. Address concerns with a student referred by the Graduate Director or required by the Rules and Regulations
- c. Address the concern of a student which the student feels was not addressed by the Graduate Director
- d. Evaluate any student on probation to determine whether the student should:
  - i. Remain on probation
  - ii. Be removed from probation
  - iii. Be terminated from the Ph.D. program

3.3. All decisions of the PhDC will be by majority vote unless explicitly noted.

3.4. All decisions of the PhDC pertaining to a particular student will be described in writing, and will be given to the Chair, the Graduate Director, the relevant student(s), and the relevant student's advisor (or temporary advisor). A copy of the decision will be placed into the student's file.

3.5. All decisions of the PhDC pertaining to students in general will be described in writing and will be sent to the GSC for final approval or rejection.

3.6. If a member of the PhDC wishes to write a report distinct from the official report, he or she may do so. The report will be given to the Chair, the relevant student(s), and the relevant student's (or students') advisor(s) (or temporary advisor). A copy of the decision will be placed into the student's file.

3.7. Any decision of the PhDC may be appealed to the GSC. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Director, stating the basis/bases for the appeal.

3.8. The PhDC will review all students on probation by the end of any quarter in which the student is on probation. The PhDC must determine whether the student should remain on probation, should be removed from probation and placed into good standing, or should be terminated from the Ph.D. program.

3.9. Until the PhDC completes its deliberations concerning a student, the student is entitled to funding (not including summers).

3.10. If a decision of the PhDC is appealed, the student is entitled to funding until the appeal is addressed (not including summers).

#### **4. Program Requirements and Deadlines**

4.1. The Ph.D. program of the Department of Communication has a number of requirements as listed in this document and the *Stanford Bulletin*.

4.2. When a Ph.D. student fails to meet a requirement and fails to remediate the failure (when remediation is possible), the PhDC will be asked to determine whether the student should be dismissed from the Ph.D. program following the procedures detailed under each requirement.

4.3. Failure to meet a deadline for a particular requirement, such as submission of the Minor Project, will be treated in all respects as if the student had performed below an acceptable level on that requirement, i.e., failed because of poor performance.

4.4. Students should not take an incomplete in any required course. If, due to unusual circumstances, the student receives an incomplete, they must complete the course within one academic quarter. If the student fails to complete the course by the last day of examinations of the subsequent quarter, the student will be considered to have failed the course and the rules under Section 7 for failure in a course will be applied. Students with exceptional circumstances such as a medical or personal emergency may petition the PhDC for an extension beyond one quarter. Such petitions will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

4.5. The student, their advisor and the Graduate Director will be notified in writing by the Student Services Administrator: a) that the student has missed a deadline, and b) of the consequences of missing the deadline.

#### **5. Advisor**

5.1. It is the responsibility of the department to assign a faculty advisor, see *Bulletin*. Faculty advisors serve as intellectual and professional mentors to their graduate students, provide knowledgeable support concerning the academic policies and procedures that pertain to graduate students in the program, help to prepare students to be competitive for employment, and maintain a high level of professionalism in the relationship.

5.2. The faculty advisor must be an Academic Council member and a member of the Communication Department. Faculty with a courtesy appointment in the Communication Department may not be a student's primary advisor.

5.3. Students are assigned a temporary advisor upon admission to the department. By the end of the third quarter of the first year, the student should confirm in writing that they will remain with or change their advisor. Confirmation should be emailed to the Student Services Administrator, copying the temporary and new advisors.

5.4. Students may change their advisor for any reason at any time without permission from anyone other than the new advisor. If a student wishes to change their advisor after the first year, they must file a "Change of Advisor or Reading Committee Member" form with the Student Services Administrator. The Student Services Administrator will notify the Ph.D. Director and the previous advisor. A student may not sever their relationship with an advisor until they have a new advisor.

5.5. If a faculty member no longer wishes to have a student as an advisee, the faculty member should notify the student and the Ph.D. Director in writing of his or her decision and the reasons for this decision. The faculty member may step down for any reason, but will retain advisorial responsibilities (although the student will be considered not to have an advisor) until the student has a new advisor or is terminated from the Ph.D. program.

5.6. When a student loses her or his advisor because the advisor is no longer able to advise the student (e.g., the advisor leaves Stanford or is incapacitated), the faculty recognize that this unavoidable loss of an advisor puts a unique burden on the student. Therefore, if the student is post-candidacy, the department will permit the advisor who left or a faculty member from another department to be considered a Communication Department faculty member for the purposes of advising and dissertation related matters. If this is not possible, or if the student is pre-candidacy, the Graduate Director and other department faculty will provide every assistance in identifying and obtaining a new advisor.

5.7. It is the responsibility of the student to meet with the advisor at least once per quarter during the academic year to discuss academic standing and graduate degree progress. By the end of each academic quarter, all advisees must send an email to the Student Services Administrator, copying their advisors, confirming that they have met with their advisor and discussed all aspects of their degree progress.

Students are encouraged to communicate and meet frequently with their advisor. It is important to set expectations with your advisor and to revisit those expectations periodically. [VPGE](#) has a number of helpful advising resources, including an advising workshop, as part of their professional development programs.

## **6. Course Requirements**

6.1. Students must take the maximum allowed units each quarter. The goal of this requirement is to facilitate students' timely graduation from the Ph.D. program.

- a. Students are required to attain a total of 135 course units for graduation. Students may transfer up to 45 units of graduate courses towards the 135 units, pending departmental and University approval, by submitting the Graduate Residency Credit e-form in Axess. For

further information regarding residency credit, see the Transfer Work section of the *Stanford Bulletin*.

- b. First year students must register for and satisfactorily complete not less than 18 units per quarter during their first two quarters, and not less than 10 units during their third quarter. If, due to an incomplete, the units are not completed by the subsequent quarter, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.
- c. After their third quarter, students are required to satisfactorily complete 10 units in all academic quarters until receiving Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status. If, due to an incomplete, the units are not completed within one year, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.
- d. TGR is the status held by students who have completed all PhD program requirements except for the dissertation proposal meeting, oral exam and dissertation submission. For further information about TGR status see the Tuition, Fees, and Housing section of the *Stanford Bulletin*.

6.2. Students must pass the following courses by the end of their fifth academic quarter. If students have completed the same material at another university, they *may* receive a waiver at the discretion of the faculty. To receive a waiver, the student must receive permission from the student's advisor and the Graduate Director and must confirm approval via an email (copied to all parties) to the Student Services Administrator:

Communication 206 (B+ or higher)  
Communication 208 (B+ or higher)

If these courses are not offered during the first six academic quarters of the student's Ph.D. program, the courses need not be taken. If the courses are not offered during the first five quarters of the student's Ph.D. program, the material will not be on the qualifying exam.

6.3. Students must pass the following courses by the end of their fifth academic quarter. Students may *not* receive a waiver for these courses:

Communication 301 (S)  
Communication 311 (B+ or higher)  
Communication 314 (B+ or higher)  
Communication 317 (B+ or higher)  
Communication 318 (B+ or higher)

If the courses are not offered during the first five quarters of the student's Ph.D. program, the material will not be included in the qualifying exam.

6.4. Students must pass (B- or higher) Statistics 160 or an alternate approved methods course by the end of the first five academic quarters. If students have completed the same material at another university, they *may* receive a waiver at the discretion of the faculty. To receive a waiver, the student must receive permission from the student's advisor and the Graduate Director and must confirm approval via an email (copied to all parties) to the Student Services Administrator.

6.5. Students must pass (B- or higher) one advanced methods/statistics course by the end of the first five academic quarters. The courses must be approved for this requirement by the student's advisor and the PhDC. The list of courses approved by the PhDC will be disclosed to all Communication Ph.D. students annually at the beginning of Autumn Quarter. Students may petition the PhDC to include additional courses under this requirement by emailing a syllabus for the course in question to the Student Services Administrator.

6.6. Students must pass (B or higher) two 200-level courses and must pass (B+ or higher) two of the associated 300-level courses (a.k.a. students must pass two "sequences") in the department beyond the requirements listed under Sections 6.2 to 6.5 by the end of their fifth quarter in the Ph.D. program. With the permission of the instructor of the 200-level course, the student may take an independent study class in lieu of the seminar. This requirement serves in part to prepare students for the Qualifying Exam. Serving as a teaching assistant for a course that has both a 100-level and a 200-level number will be considered passing the course, although the teaching assistant should take the course before being a teaching assistant whenever possible. Additionally, whenever possible, the student should complete the 200-level course before its associated 300-level course.

6.7. Students must pass all three sequences, comprised of the 300-level courses (B+ or higher) and associated 200-level courses (B or higher) under Section 6.6, by the end of their ninth quarter. Whenever possible, the student should complete the 200-level course before the associated 300-level course.

6.8 All courses specified under Sections 6.2 to 6.8 must be taken for a letter grade if offered.

6.9. Failure to complete any of the courses listed under Sections 6.2 to 6.6 or failure to receive the minimum required grade will be considered a failure in the class, and will lead to the actions described in 6.11.

6.10. Students have the option of enrolling one or more times in Communication 399, Independent Study. If Independent Study is taken, the student must complete the course within one quarter of taking it and must receive a grade of B or higher.

6.11. If a student fails to receive the requisite grade for the courses described under Sections 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.10, or 6.11, the student will receive notification within one week, written by the instructor of the course, describing in detail the deficiency or deficiencies that led to the grade. The instructor of the course will determine the appropriate remediation, which must be completed within one quarter after the end of course. If the faculty member determines that the remediation is successfully completed, the faculty member will notify the Student Services Administrator and the course will be considered "passed." If the faculty member determines that the remediation is not successfully completed, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

6.12. If a student fails to receive the requisite grade for the statistics/methods course described under Section 6.4, the student must pass the same course again or an alternative statistics course with a grade of B- or higher within two quarters.

6.13. If a student fails to receive the requisite grade for the advanced methods course described under Sections 6.5, the student must pass an alternative methods course covered under Section 6.5 within two quarters, obtaining a grade of B- or higher.

6.14 The Office of Accessible Education (OAE) supports students with disabilities, providing a wide array of support services, academic accommodations, and programs. The department is fully committed to supporting students with disabilities and providing academic accommodations as recommended by OAE.

Students with academic accommodation should provide course instructors with a copy of the OAE letter at the start of each quarter; academic accommodation will not be granted in the absence of such a letter.

## **7. Qualifying Exams**

7.1. Ph.D. students are required to pass the Qualifying Exam. The Qualifying Exam is a take-home, open book and open notes examination. The GSC will decide on the time allowed for the exam, which is typically nine days. It may usually be requested from the Student Services Administrator at any time between the last day of the student's fifth academic quarter and any of the 5 subsequent business days. During the Qualifying Exam period, students will not be expected to perform any RA or TA tasks nor will they be asked to provide any services for a faculty member or the department.

7.2. The Graduate Director is responsible for assigning a member of the Academic Council and the department to set the timing, content, and format (e.g., number of questions, number of pages per answer) of the Qualifying Exam. If an error is discovered in the form or content of the Qualifying Exam, the students may contact the assigned member for clarification. If the Qualifying Exam is found to have an error, those students affected by the error will receive an additional 48 hours to complete the Exam.

7.3. The Qualifying Exam typically includes four questions known as 'Part A'. All students are expected to answer one compulsory question and two others from a choice of three. These questions will be grounded in the topics covered in the courses listed under Sections 6.2 and 6.3 (with the exception of Communication 301) i.e., Communication 206, Communication 208, Communication 311, Communication 314, Communication 317, and Communication 318. If the courses are not offered during the first five quarters of the student's Ph.D. program, the material will not be included in the qualifying exam.

7.4. The Qualifying Exam typically includes a set of questions known as 'Part B' from which students must select two. These questions will be grounded in the topics covered in the courses listed under Sections 6.6 and 6.7. All faculty members who have taught a course or seminar during the preceding five quarters must provide a question, even if the faculty member is on leave or sabbatical.

7.5. The Graduate Director will determine all procedures for grading the Qualifying Exam.

7.6. Each student will receive a grade of "High Pass," "Pass," "Low Pass," or "Fail" on the overall Qualifying Exam.

7.6.1. A student who received a grade of "High Pass," "Pass," or "Low Pass" will be notified in writing and will have passed the Qualifying Exam requirement. Students are required to speak with their advisor about their performance on the Qualifying Exam during the quarter in which they receive their evaluation. The advisor may encourage the student to discuss particular answers with the relevant faculty member.

7.6.2. A student who receives a grade of "Fail" on the Qualifying Exam will be notified in writing and will be informed of:

- a. The deficiency or deficiencies that led to this determination
- b. The remedial steps that must be taken to meet the requirement. The remediation may include any or all of the following: i) re-writing, at a satisfactory level, one or more answers that the student was deemed to have done poorly on; and/or ii) producing, at a satisfactory level, a writing assignment(s) or project(s) specified by the GSC.

This remediation must be completed by the end of the sixth week of the student's seventh academic quarter; the student will be funded during the student's seventh and eighth quarters.

The PhDC will determine whether the student successfully completed the remediation. If the student successfully performs the remedial action, the student will have been considered to have passed the Qualifying Exam requirement. If the student fails to improve sufficiently by the end of the student's sixth quarter, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination. If the student is terminated, the student is unlikely to receive funding past the eighth quarter.

## **8. Major and Minor Projects**

8.1. The Major Project and the Minor Project are research papers, primarily written by the student, that are considered to be of sufficient quality to be publishable in a respected journal (assuming, if need be, that journals would accept research papers with non-significant results). The projects may be grounded in any intellectual tradition. The papers need not be published, accepted, or submitted for publication.

8.2. Each student is required to complete either the Major Project or the Minor Project by the end of the student's eighth quarter. If the student fails to complete this requirement, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

8.3. Each student is required to complete both the Major Project and the Minor Project by the end of their eleventh academic quarter. A Ph.D. student who fails to complete this requirement by this time will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

8.4. Each student is required to have made significant progress on their Major Project or Minor Project by the end of the student's fifth quarter. This is necessary so that the faculty can evaluate the student's progress. The student's advisor will determine whether significant progress has been made. A Ph.D. student who fails to complete this requirement by the end of the student's fifth quarter will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

8.5. The topic of the Major Project and Minor Project and the activities performed in support of the projects (e.g., an experiment, a survey, archival research, theorizing) will be agreed upon in advance by the student and a Project Advisor. The Project Advisor must be a faculty member in the Communication Department and a member of the Academic Council.

8.6. The Project Advisor and another Academic Council member (not necessarily from the Communication Department), collectively called Project Readers, selected by the student and approved by the student's advisor, must notify the Student Services Administrator that the student has passed the project.

8.7. The Major Project is one in which the student meets the APA guideline for first authorship. The Major Project is meant to be an opportunity for the student to demonstrate that the student is able to successfully and *independently* perform all relevant aspects of a research project in collaboration with a faculty advisor. That is, the student must independently take the lead on developing the research questions, conducting the research, and writing the paper.

8.8. The Minor Project is one in which the student meets the APA guideline for (not necessarily first) authorship. The Minor Project is meant to be an opportunity for the student to demonstrate that the student has gained significant experience in all relevant aspects of a research project in collaboration with a faculty advisor. That is, the student must have a major role developing the research questions, conducting the research, and writing the paper.

8.9. The determination of whether a particular research project results in a Major Project or a Minor Project is made at the end of the project by the Project Readers. If a project that is intended as a Major Project becomes a Minor Project, it is the student's responsibility to produce another project that will qualify as a Major Project. Both Projects' Readers must agree that a project is a Major Project before it can receive that designation.

8.10. Each student will receive a grade of "Pass" or "Fail" on the Major Project and the Minor Project. Failure to complete the Major Project or Minor Project by the required time will be equivalent to receiving a grade of "Fail."

8.10.1. A student who received a grade of "Pass" will be notified in writing by the Project Readers and will have passed the Major Project or Minor Project requirement.

8.10.2. A student who receives a grade of "Fail" on the Major Project or Minor Project will be notified in writing by the Project Readers. Within one week of receiving the evaluation of "Fail," the student will be informed of:

a. The deficiency or deficiencies that led to this determination

b. The remedial steps that must be taken to meet the requirement. The remediation may include any or all of the following: i) improving the submitted research project, or ii) producing a new research project that meets the requirement. The remediation may be performed under the same or a different Project Advisor.

This remediation must be completed by the end of the quarter after the student was required to turn in the project. If the student fails to remediate the failure, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

## 9. Admission to Candidacy

9.1. The Department requires that Ph.D. students must apply for admission to candidacy, a University requirement, by the end of the first week of their sixth quarter.

9.2. To apply for candidacy, the student must submit the following:

- a. The Department of Communication Ph.D. Candidacy Eligibility Requirements Checklist form
- b. The University's Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree form
- c. A plan of study including a calendar of department and University milestones and a document detailing required coursework for their remaining quarters
- d. Support of the student's application for candidacy, in the form of a signature on the department candidacy form, by the student's advisor and second and third members of the reading committee

If the student cannot meet these requirements, the PhDC will evaluate the student for termination.

9.3. The student's application to candidacy will be reviewed by the Ph.D. faculty as a whole by the end of the eighth week of the student's sixth quarter.

The evaluation for candidacy is based on the following:

- a. Performance on the Qualifying Exam
- b. Performance on the progress of the Major Project and/or Minor Project
- c. Performance in the courses listed in Sections 6.2 through 6.8, 6.13, and 6.14
- d. The faculty's judgment of the ability of the student to meet the remaining requirements in order to receive the Ph.D. in a timely fashion

It is important to note that like many academic decisions, the decision of admission to candidacy is based on the *judgment* of the faculty. Admission to candidacy is not a right or a presumption; it is earned by the student.

9.4. The student will be assigned one of three statuses by the GSC: "Admitted to Candidacy," "Not Admitted for Candidacy" or "Extension of the Pre-Candidacy Period." The decision will be by majority vote. The student will be notified in writing.

9.4.1. If the student is evaluated as "Admitted to Candidacy," the student is admitted to candidacy.

9.4.2. If the student is granted an "Extension of the Pre-Candidacy Period" the student will be notified in writing of the concerns the faculty had. The student should provide a response to the Ph.D. faculty by the first week of their seventh quarter.

By the eighth week of the seventh quarter, the GSC will determine whether the student should be assigned a status of "Admitted to Candidacy" or "Not Admitted for Candidacy." The student will be notified in writing of the decision.

9.4.2.1. If the student is "Admitted to Candidacy," the student will be admitted to candidacy and no further action will occur.

9.4.2.2. If the student is "Not Approved for Candidacy," the student will be provided with the basis for the decision and the student will be terminated from the Ph.D. program. The student may appeal this decision to the GSC, but will not receive funding beyond the seventh quarter unless the appeal is successful. Students will be provided the option of receiving their master's degree if appropriate.

## **10. Area Examination**

10.1. Each student must pass an Area Examination by the end of the student's twelfth quarter.

10.2. To take the Area Examination, the student must form an "Area Exam Committee" (AEC) by the end of the student's eighth quarter. A normal AEC will consist of two Academic Council members from the Communication Department. With permission from the PhDC, the Area Exam Committee may consist of one faculty member from Communication and an Academic Council member from another department at Stanford.

10.3. The Area Exam will involve a one-week, take-home exam format. The exam will be a written exam consisting of 6500 to 9000 words (roughly 25-35 pages), not including references.

10.4. The precise question or questions to be answered will be determined by the AEC. The question or questions should allow students to demonstrate that they are capable of mastering a broad literature. In terms of style and scope, an area exam might be an exhaustive literature review on a particular subarea or present a new framework for organizing a literature. In some cases, the area exam might be integrated into an early draft of the introduction to one's dissertation. In others it might be a broader review of a topic, for example one that could inform a class syllabus. In the past, exceptional area exams have been published as stand-alone journal articles, for example in Communication Theory.

10.5. The Area Exam must be substantially different to a paper submitted to meet a course requirement or a project requirement and may not subsequently be used to meet a course requirement or project requirement. The Area Exam may be incorporated into the student's dissertation.

10.6. The Area Exam will be assigned a grade of "Pass" or "Fail" and the student will be notified in writing.

10.6.1. A student who receives a grade of "Pass" on the Area Exam will have met the Area Exam requirement.

10.6.2. A student who receives a grade of "Fail" on the Area Exam will be notified in writing. Within one week of receiving the evaluation of "Fail," the student will be informed of:

- a. The deficiency or deficiencies that led to this determination
- b. The remedial steps that must be taken to meet the requirement. The remediation will involve re-writing, at a satisfactory level, the Area Exam.

This remediation must be completed by the end of the ninth week of the subsequent quarter in which the student is notified of the failure. The Area Exam Committee will determine whether the student successfully completed the remediation. If the student successfully performs the remedial action, the student will have been considered to have passed the Area Exam requirement. If the student is unable to remediate the failure, the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

## **11. Dissertation Reading Committee**

11.1. The Reading Committee will consist of at least four members.

- One of the members must be the student's advisor.
- One of the members must be a faculty member in the Communication Department (not courtesy appointment) and member of the Academic Council.
- One of the members must be a faculty member or courtesy faculty member in the Communication Department and a member of the Academic Council.
- The fourth member may not be a faculty member in the Communication Department (although she or he may have a courtesy appointment) but must be a member of the Academic Council.

11.2. Any exceptions to Section 12.1 must be approved by the PhDC and the student's advisor.

11.3. The student is required to submit the names of the Reading Committee to the Student Services Administrator and the University via the Dissertation Reading Committee form at least one quarter prior to their dissertation proposal meeting.

## **12. Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR)**

12.1. Once a student has satisfactorily completed 135 units and passed the following requirements, they must apply for TGR status: Qualifying Exam, Major Project, Minor Project, Area Exam, course requirements, teaching requirements, and the submission of the Dissertation Reading Committee form.

12.2. When TGR status has been granted, the student must register for Communication 802 for all remaining quarters prior to graduation. Communication 802 carries a unit value of zero and a reduced tuition rate. In addition, students may register for up to three units of coursework or activity courses at no extra charge.

### **13. Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Meeting**

13.1. A dissertation proposal meeting cannot take place until the requirements outlined in Section 12.1 have been passed, except for the requirement to satisfactorily complete 135 units. Students are, however, encouraged to complete 135 units by this time.

13.2. The proposal meeting is based on a dissertation proposal. The dissertation proposal should describe the research plan for the dissertation. That is, the proposal should clearly specify the concepts and theories, literature(s), method(s) and data sources, and analysis strategy. Details of the format and content of the proposal and proposal meeting will be determined by the advisor and the student.

13.3. The proposal meeting must be attended by all members of the student's Dissertation Reading Committee (see Section 11).

13.4. The proposal meeting is not open to other faculty, students, or the public.

13.5. The key goal of the proposal meeting is to ensure that the student has a viable plan to complete their dissertation. The proposal meeting is not intended to be an evaluation of the student; the focus is on obtaining clarity on what will be expected of the student with respect to the dissertation.

13.6. It is expected that the proposal meeting will suggest necessary revisions to the student's dissertation plan. Subsequent to the proposal meeting, the student is responsible for revising the proposal and receiving approval from the reading committee.

13.7. The format and content of the proposal meeting will be determined by the dissertation advisor and the student.

13.8. The Reading Committee members must be given a minimum of five business days to read the proposal before the proposal meeting.

### **14. University Oral Examination (Final Public Orals), the Dissertation, and Graduation Quarter**

14.1. The final public orals, which fulfill the University Oral Examination requirement, will be based on a complete draft of the dissertation.

14.2. The University Oral Examination form must be submitted to the Student Services Administrator at least ten business days prior to the date of the oral exam.

14.3. The student is required to give the Reading Committee at least ten business days prior to the date of the oral exam to read the draft of the dissertation. The advisor must have approved the draft before the student may circulate it to the committee.

14.4. The Orals Committee consists of the Dissertation Reading Committee and an outside chair who is appointed by the department. See [Stanford Bulletin section](#).

While it is the Department's responsibility to secure the outside chair, many students choose to take on this responsibility themselves.

14.4.1. The chair must be a member of the Stanford Academic Council and may not have a full or joint appointment in the same department as the candidate or their advisor. A draft of the dissertation, or at least an abstract of the dissertation, must be provided to the orals committee chair no later than ten business days prior to the date of the oral exam.

14.4.2. If one or more members of the Reading Committee are unavailable, the member(s) may be replaced by a faculty member in the Department of Communication who is a member of the Academic Council, in accordance with the committee member rules described in Section 12.1.

14.5. The final public orals will have two parts.

14.5.1. The first part of the orals will be approximately one hour in length. Students and department faculty are urged to attend. This part of the orals begins with the student giving a 30-45-minute presentation of the student's dissertation. The Orals Committee may ask questions of clarification during the presentation. No other questions may be asked during the presentation. There will then be a period of questioning, controlled by the outside chair, in which the audience may ask questions.

14.5.2. The second part of the oral examination involves only the candidate and the Orals Committee. All other attendees of the first part of the orals must leave during the second part. At this time, the Orals Committee will ask questions of the candidate in accordance with University rules. See 'Graduate Degrees', [Degree-Specific Requirements](#) of the *Stanford Bulletin*.

14.6. After the Orals Committee has completed its questioning, the student must leave the room in order to give the committee time to deliberate. The committee has two roles at this point:

14.6.1. To vote, following procedures as specified by the University, whether the student has passed or failed the oral examination.

14.6.2. To determine what revisions are required before the dissertation will be acceptable to the dissertation committee. It will be the responsibility of the advisor to:

a. Clearly understand the requirements of the Reading Committee and to provide those requirements to the student within five business days of the orals.

b. Only accept the dissertation when the revisions meet the requirements of the Reading Committee. Given that students frequently have external deadlines to complete their dissertation (e.g., a job contingent on completion of the dissertation) and there is an assumption that students will be disseminating their results via publication, the Reading Committee is urged to distinguish between those revisions that are critical to the dissertation itself and those revisions that can wait until eventual publication.

14.7. Students are required to give the advisor at least ten business days to read the revised draft of the dissertation if revisions are needed, prior to asking the advisor to sign the final approval documents.

14.8. Other rules and procedures concerning the final public orals are detailed in University documents; it is the student's responsibility to familiarize themselves with these documents.

14.9. Students with absolute deadlines involving graduation (e.g., a job contingent on completion of the dissertation) should leave a minimum of four weeks between the time of the final public orals and the signing of the dissertation. Students should also consider the possibilities that: a) it will take significantly longer than four weeks to complete the revisions, b) the dissertation may not be approved, or c) that the student will fail the final public orals. Ph.D. degree students now have the option to submit their dissertation/thesis either online in electronic PDF format via Axess **OR** continue to submit the hard copies via an appointment with the Registrar's Office. All submissions must be completed by the quarterly deadline as listed in the Academic Calendar in order to be eligible to graduate in that quarter.

14.10. In planning the timing of degree completion, the student may wish to consider the option of a "Graduation Quarter". This is the final term in which a student defends and/or submits a dissertation or has a degree conferred. All other degree requirements, must have already been completed. Students must be registered in the Graduation Quarter by enrolling in Communication 802. Those who meet all the following conditions are eligible to be assessed a special tuition rate for the quarter in which they are receiving a degree:

- a. All course work, degree requirements, and residency requirements have been completed.
- b. The student has formally applied to graduate.
- c. The student has only to defend and/or submit the dissertation by the deadline for submission in the term designated as the graduation quarter. Or, if enrolled in a joint degree program, the student will complete all requirements for the joint degree by the end of the term designated as the graduation quarter.
- d. The student has filed all necessary forms regarding Graduation Quarter before the first day of the term chosen as the graduation quarter.

Students on graduation quarter are registered at Stanford and, therefore, have the rights and privileges of registered students. Only one graduation quarter may be requested. The cost of continued enrollment in any subsequent quarters reverts to the level that preceded Graduation Quarter.

## **15. Financial Support**

15.1. A student is guaranteed support as described in their offer of admission to the Ph.D. program if:

- a. They are in good academic standing
- b. They have passed or are making satisfactory progress in all teaching and research assistantships (see Sections 17 and 18)

15.2. A 50% RA or TA appointment requires the student to work in this role for twenty hours on average per week for the twelve-week duration of the quarter. Autumn Quarter is designated as October 1 through December 31, Winter Quarter is January 1 through March 31, Spring Quarter is April 1 through June 30, and Summer Quarter is July 1 through September 30. Note that per 21.2, summer funding is typically given for a period of only eight weeks during July 1 through August 31.

15.3. While teaching and research assistantships are meant to provide training for students, teaching and research assistantships are jobs with numerous responsibilities, defined by the faculty member responsible for the assistantship.

15.4. The faculty member responsible for a given assistantship has an obligation to immediately notify the student if the student is not performing well in the assignment. If the poor performance continues, the faculty member should notify the student's advisor, the Graduate Director, and the Student Services Administrator by the end of the quarter and inform the student, in writing, of the reasons for the failure. Because the quarter will have ended, there will be no means for remediation. A student who "fails" an assistantship will be referred to the PhDC with a recommendation that the student be placed on probation. The PhDC will also determine whether the student should or should not receive funding in subsequent quarters.

15.5. If a student fails two assistantships (teaching, research, or one of each), the student will be referred to the PhDC and will be at risk of termination.

## **16. Teaching Requirement**

Teaching is an integral part of the graduate academic program at Stanford. The Department of Communication offers all doctoral students a variety of teaching opportunities and professional preparation activities aimed at providing valuable professional experience and giving every advantage in the highly competitive job market.

16.1. All students are required to serve as a teaching assistant or instructor (hereafter described as "teacher") for a class offered by the Department of Communication under a 50% teaching assistantship for at least two quarters. For students on full fellowships, two quarters of 25%-time assistantships will fulfill the teaching requirement subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies. For all others, a 25%-time assistantship will be considered as half of a quarter. The department strongly encourages the teacher to be involved in lecture classes. When departmental resources do not permit the student to complete the two-quarter teaching requirement, the PhDC may consider 240 hours of work serving as a leader of an undergraduate research team as acceptable for one of the teaching quarters.

16.2. Because teaching assistantship appointments in Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters do not correspond exactly to the academic quarters, teaching assistants may be asked to complete their 240 hour responsibility before or after the start and end dates of that quarter.

16.3. Assignment to teaching assistantships is determined by the department.

16.4. At least two hours of the 20 hours per week should be set aside for scheduled office hours for students. In addition, teaching assistants must make themselves available for "by appointment" meetings with students.

16.5. Although students may meet the teaching requirement by being a successful teacher for the same course in two different quarters, it is preferable that the students teach two different courses. It is desirable, though not required, that at least one of the two required teaching experiences involve one of the core courses of the undergraduate major in communication: Communication 1 or 1B, Communication 106, or Communication 108.

16.6. When there is more than one TA for a given course, the instructor is required to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of labor.

16.7. If there is more than one teaching assistant for a course, the instructor must have weekly meetings with the teaching assistants. Even if there is only one teaching assistant for a course, the instructor should ensure that there is sufficient communication. This process is intended to eliminate inequities in responsibilities or failures in the teaching assistants' performance as well as to facilitate training.

16.8. TAs are expected to bring to the attention of the instructor any potential cases of Honor Code violation.

16.9. Stanford requires that all student instructors (TF, TA and CA) complete [Harassment Prevention Training for Non-Supervisory Employees, Academic Staff and Postdocs](#) prior to the first day of teaching. This training contains information that is not available in the required Title IX training such as the consensual relationships policy and workplace harassment from an instructor's point of view.

16.10. For additional details, see Section 15 and Section 6.6.

## **17. Research Assistantship**

17.1. Assignment to a research assistantship is determined by the department Chair, the Graduate Director, and the faculty member providing the funding.

17.2. The student is expected to clarify specific tasks and responsibilities with the faculty P.I. or advisor. The faculty member responsible for a research assistant is urged to meet at least twice a month with their research assistants. This process is intended to help eliminate failures in the research assistants' performance as well as to facilitate training.

17.3. RAs are responsible to acquire knowledge about required health and safety training and other safety issues.

17.4. RAs are expected to be familiar with reporting and other requirements per the funding organization, and with [Stanford policies on Academic Authorship](#).

17.5. For additional details, see Section 15.

17.6. Detailed information regarding University research policies and procedures can be found in the [Administrative Guide](#) and the [Research Policy Handbook](#).

## **18. Satisfactory Progress**

18.1. Each student's progress will be evaluated by the PhD faculty by the seventh week of the Spring Quarter annually.

18.1.1. If the student is deemed to be making "satisfactory progress," no further action is needed.

18.1.2. A student who is deemed not to be making "satisfactory progress" will be informed of:

- a. The deficiency or deficiencies that led to this determination
- b. The remedial steps that must be taken to meet the requirement

This remediation must be completed by the end of the ninth week of the subsequent quarter in which the student is notified of the "unsatisfactory progress." The PhDC will determine whether the student successfully completed the remediation. If the student successfully performs the remedial action, the student will once again be making satisfactory progress. If the student fails to remediate the failure, the student will be referred to the PhDC and may be at risk of termination.

## **19. Funding**

19.1. Students are asked to refer to their official letter of admission to confirm their specific graduate aid package.

19.2. Continued funding is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress.

19.3. Students taking a leave of absence should check with the Student Services Administrator whether they may defer funding to a future quarter.

19.4. Students are responsible for

- a. Understanding their funding package, including commitments and requirements
- b. Reviewing and paying their university bill
- c. Understanding policies and requirements attached to funding sources (e.g. Federal loans, NSF grants, etc.)
- d. Planning for funding needs beyond the department commitment
- e. Responding to requests from the Student Services Administrator for letters to donors

## **20. External Funding**

20.1. With approval by their advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies, students are encouraged to obtain external funding, as this will demonstrate external validation for their academic efforts and relieve the burden of support from the department. Students obtaining support from outside the department when eligible for departmental support will have their departmental support reduced by

the amount of the support. If the support is larger than the departmental support, the student may keep the difference.

20.2. "Prize money" (e.g., Nobel Prize, McArthur Genius Award) does not count against departmental support. That is, students may retain all of their prize money without a reduction in departmental support.

## **21. Summer Funding**

21.1. Summer funding is not guaranteed to students.

21.2. The typical Summer RA-ship is an eight-week appointment for 20 hours per week from July 1 to August 31. If the faculty member supporting the student over the Summer has external funds, the student may be funded up to 12 weeks (July 1 to September 30) at no more than 20 hours per week. 20-hour summer RAships, regardless of length of contract, include three units of tuition. The student is required to enroll in coursework selected in consultation with their advisor.

21.3. The provider of RA funding will work with the student to determine the weeks and hours in which the student will work.

21.4. During the weeks that the student receives funding, the student must be on campus or in a location necessary and approved for their research. Foreign students are responsible for ensuring that they are conforming to any travel and/or employment restrictions associated with their visas.

## **22. Leave of Absence**

22.1. A student who wishes to take a leave must receive approval from their advisor and the Graduate Director. If the advisor or Graduate Director does not approve the leave, the student may appeal to the PhDC. Final approval for all leaves approved by the student's department must be granted by the Stanford Registrar.

22.2. All departmental requirements are in abeyance while the student is on leave. When there is a time-limit to rectify a department requirement, the clock will start again when the student returns from the leave. However, students on leave may complete course work for which an 'Incomplete' grade was awarded in a prior term and are expected to comply with the maximum one-year time limit set by the University for resolving incompletes (<http://exploreddegrees.stanford.edu/academicpoliciesandstatements/#gradingtext>); a leave of absence does not stop the clock on the time limit for resolving incompletes. Further information regarding leaves of absence can be found in the "Graduate Degrees, General Requirements" section of the Bulletin at <http://exploreddegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees/#leavereinstatementtext>.

## **23. Termination Procedures**

23.1. All students are admitted to the Ph.D. program with the expectation that with sufficient effort and responsibility on the part of the student, every student will be able to complete all requirements of the Ph.D.

23.2. The faculty are committed to actively supporting the student's successful completion of the Ph.D. program.

23.3. When the faculty has determined that a student is not performing at an acceptable level, the faculty has a responsibility to promptly inform the student.

23.4. When the faculty has determined that a student will not be able to complete the requirements of the Ph.D. program, the faculty has a responsibility to terminate the student from the Ph.D. program.

23.5. All referrals to the PhDC are made by the Graduate Director.

23.6. When a student is evaluated or recommended for termination by the PhDC, the Committee may ask questions of the student and the student will have the right to:

- a. Provide a written statement
- b. Speak before the committee
- c. Ask questions of the committee
- d. Receive a written report of the results of the meeting

23.7. All termination decisions by the PhDC may be appealed to the GSC. When a student is evaluated for termination by the GSC, the Committee may ask questions of the student and the student will have the right to:

- a. Provide a written statement
- b. Speak before the committee
- c. Ask questions of the committee
- d. Receive a written report of the results of the meeting

23.8. All termination decisions by the GCS may not be appealed within the department, but may be appealed using the standard University procedures as detailed in the "Academic Policies and Statements" section of the *Stanford Bulletin*.

## **24. Stanford Honor Code**

The Department expects all Ph.D. students to abide by [Stanford's Honor Code and Fundamental Standard](#).

## 25. Forms

25.1. Forms for the following department milestones are available on the forms page of the [Communication Theory and Research Ph.D. website](#).

- PhD Candidacy Eligibility Requirements Checklist
- Major Project
- Minor Project
- Area Exam
- Dissertation Proposal Meeting

25.2. University forms are available in the eForms portal in [Axess](#).

25.3. Detailed information regarding dissertations and University policies and procedures can be found at <https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/dissertation-and-thesis-submission> .