

Institute of Communications Research Academic Handbook

Updated and Approved by the ICR Executive Committee May 2026

Summary of Updates, June 2026

- Added a chapter on general policies, including the use of generative AI in student research, preliminary and final exams, and dissertations as well as expectations surrounding residency and teaching appointments
- Added language pertaining to courtesy tuition waivers
- Changes as a result of the grad college handbook's move to a web format (rather than PDF): eliminated page number references and updated usage language to point readers toward the search bar

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HOW TO USE THE ICR HANDBOOK

This document outlines the policies and procedures governing graduate education in the Institute of Communications Research (ICR).

The Doctor of Philosophy in Communications & Media, like almost all graduate degrees at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, is overseen by the [Graduate College](#). Most ICR policies are derived from (and superseded by) Graduate College policy.

It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the [Graduate College Handbook](#) and consult it (rather than this document) when questions come up that are likely to apply to *any* graduate student or graduate program at Illinois. All ICR students and faculty should abide by and be familiar with the Graduate College requirements outlined in that document. This document is only intended as a guide to policies and procedures specific to the ICR. Throughout this handbook, you will find links to the Grad College Handbook home page. Given the frequency of updates, it's best to use the search interface in the top right of that page to find the most up-to-date information about the specific policy or procedure you are looking for.

Because the ICR Handbook is a day-to-day procedural governance document, any major changes to it are done in consultation with relevant ICR committees.

In case of questions, please contact the Graduate Program Assistant.

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Chapter 1

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

This chapter outlines the specific requirements for earning the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communications and Media at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

To receive their PhD, all students must:

- Complete a specified number of credit hours in University courses at the graduate level
- Maintain a GPA of at least 3.0
- Apply and be approved for PhD candidacy
- Write and successfully defend a Preliminary Examination
- Write and successfully defend an original Dissertation
- Deposit their Dissertation with the Graduate College

This chapter covers policies pertaining to the first two of the requirements listed above. The other four are detailed in Chapter 2.

1.1 Credit Hours and Coursework

The number of credit hours needed to earn the PhD in Communications and Media is determined by whether a student entered the program at "Stage I" (without a Graduate College-approved master's degree) or "Stage II" (with a Graduate College-Approved Master's Degree).

The tables on the subsequent page list the coursework requirements, as well as completion timelines, for both situations:

For students entering with only a **Bachelor's degree** in hand (Stage I):

Requirement	Completion Timeline	Credits
MDIA 571: Proseminar I	First Fall term	4
MDIA 571: Proseminar II	First Spring term	4
Course in Qualitative Research Methods	Year 1–3	4
Course in Quantitative Research Methods	Year 1–3	4
Elective Hours	End of Year 3	64
MDIA 599: Thesis Research (min/max applied toward degree; take as needed for enrollment purposes)	Year 4 and beyond	16
Total Hours		96

For students entering with a **Master's degree** in hand (Stage II):

Requirement	Completion Timeline	Credits
MDIA 571: Proseminar I	First Fall term	4
MDIA 572: Proseminar II	First Spring term	4
Course in Qualitative Research Methods	Year 1 or 2	4
Course in Quantitative Research Methods	Year 1 or 2	4
Elective Hours	End of Year 2	32
MDIA 599: Thesis Research (min/max applied toward degree; take as needed for enrollment purposes)	Year 3 and beyond	16
Total Hours		64

Whether students enter the ICR with a bachelor's or a master's degree in hand, the degree requirements pertaining to specific courses are the same; the only difference is the required number of elective credit hours. This amounts to an additional year of coursework for students entering at Stage I.

A good way for students to check their degree progress from the standpoint of credits and coursework requirements is the uAchieve degree audit system:

https://uachieve.apps.uillinois.edu/uachieve_uiuc

1.2 GPA and Academic Standing

ICR Students are required to maintain a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 to graduate.

ICR Students are also expected to maintain good academic standing as defined by the Graduate College handbook. This includes maintaining progress through the degree and not exceeding the time limits for completion of the preliminary examination and the course of study as a whole.

Chapter 2

DEGREE MILESTONES

This chapter outlines policies and procedures surrounding the most important milestones in an ICR student's progress through their PhD: application to candidacy (ATC), the preliminary examination, and the dissertation.

2.1 Application to Candidacy (ATC)

The ICR has an extremely flexible curriculum. Students are expected to tailor their coursework to the anticipated needs of their research, with respect not only to their specific dissertation topic but also to their broader identity as a scholar of communications and media. Students, in consultation with their advisor, should always select courses with the goals of their *research* at forefront of mind.

The Application for Advancement to Candidacy ("Application to Candidacy" or ATC) process serves the following purposes:

- 1) It asks students to *articulate* their personalized course of study and how it is preparing them to write about their anticipated dissertation topic.
- 2) It serves to *audit* students' coursework and verify that the program of study of all soon-to-be PhD candidates complies with the general requirements of the Graduate College.
- 3) It gives students *feedback* about their coursework, ensuring that they obtain not only required competencies for their dissertation but also a broad understanding of the issues, problems, and research that constitute the field of Communications and Media.
- 4) It fulfills (in part) the Graduate College's requirement that each unit offering a doctoral program have a formal system of *review and evaluation* of progress for enrolled students.

However, ATC is *not* a substitute for shorter-term evaluation processes, such as the annual review or semesterly meetings between students and their faculty advisor (see Chapter 3).

Another important thing to note about Application to Candidacy is that despite its name, successfully completing it does *not* make a student a "PhD Candidate." Rather, it simply certifies that they are ready to undertake the process that *will* earn them Candidacy: the Preliminary Examination.

ATC Preparation

While students are not required to submit an ATC form until they approach the end of their coursework, they should be actively thinking before then about how they will articulate their course of study and its relevance for their dissertation topic. This obviously necessitates having the beginnings of a topic by the time they undertake the ATC process.

Another important preparatory step students should take for ATC is to consult with their advisor about these matters—not only when it is time to submit the ATC form, but in semesterly meetings. In general, it is expected that a student has an advisor by the time they undertake the ATC process.

ATC Timeline and Process

All ICR students should submit a completed [ATC form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant during their final semester of coursework, or at any point that they have earned—or are registered for—all their required credit hours (*excluding* the 16 thesis research credits).

For stage II students making adequate progress, this will typically be the Spring semester of their *second* year.

For stage I students making adequate progress, this will typically be the Spring semester of their *third* year.

The DGS will send out a call for ATC submissions every Spring semester, with the submission deadline typically set for the campus-designated Reading Day. However, students do not need to wait for this call to submit a form; they may do so at any point it is appropriate given their progress through the program.

Completed forms should be signed by a student's faculty advisor and sent to the Graduate Program Assistant. At that point, they will be forwarded to the ICR's Graduate Program Committee for approval, feedback, or both. This process will be completed by the beginning of the subsequent term.

2.2 The Preliminary Exam

Preliminary exams (prelims) are mandated by the Graduate College for all PhDs awarded at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The passing of prelims marks the transition from PhD Student to PhD Candidate, certifying that the Candidate is fully prepared to write a dissertation, undertake professional research, and enter the job market.

Preparing for and defending the preliminary examination is an important milestone in an ICR student's career. Some elements of the prelims process are dictated by [rules](#) (p. 43–47) set forth by the Graduate College. Others have been decided collectively by ICR faculty through the years. Prelims is thus one of the more structured elements of the ICR curriculum, although substantial flexibility and deference has traditionally been given to the student, advisor, and the prelims committee as to the substantive content of the exam questions, dissertation proposal, and defense.

The Preliminary Exam serves the following purposes:

- 1) It certifies a student's readiness to undertake their dissertation research, marking their transition to the final stage (Stage III) of their PhD.
- 2) It encourages students to think deeply about their dissertations and to make significant progress planning their research and writing.
- 3) It provides an opportunity for students to receive extensive feedback from their faculty committee about all facets of their proposed dissertation research.

Prelims Components

In the ICR, students prepare two written components for an oral defense in front of their Preliminary Exam Committee:

- 1) Responses to a minimum of four questions written by the committee that assess the student's preparation to write an original dissertation in their chosen field(s)
- 2) A dissertation proposal of appropriate length and content

Prelims Prerequisites and Timeline

Students may take prelims if they have:

- A) Completed all coursework (*excluding* the 16 thesis research credits) and resolved any outstanding Incomplete (I) or Not Reported (NR) grades
- B) Completed and received approval of their Application to Candidacy
- C) Registered for the term in which the preliminary exam is scheduled to take place

Students who entered the ICR at Stage II should aim to take and pass prelims in their **third** year in the program. Stage II students who have not passed prelims by the end of the Summer after their fourth year are automatically placed on Academic Warning status.

Students who entered the ICR at Stage I should aim to take and pass prelims in their **fourth** year in the program. Stage I students who have not passed prelims by the end of the Summer after their fifth year are automatically placed on Academic Warning status.

2.3 A Step-by-Step Guide to the Prelims Process

Step One: Identify a preliminary exam committee

Students assemble their prelims committees in consultation with their advisor. The committee should include faculty members who are familiar with the student's work. Often this means faculty who the student has taken one or more courses with, but this is not required. In most cases, the members of the prelims committee go on to serve as an identical dissertation committee. However, the *prelims* committee and the *dissertation* committee are technically separate entities, and they need not be identical.

The composition of the committee is ultimately up to the student. It is usually advisable to choose a combination of members so that some examiners will cover broad fields, while others focus on more specific research areas. It is also worth considering the extent to which the members of the committee can attest to the student's professional and scholarly virtues as they enter the job market. However, the most important quality of a committee is that it is *constituted and carries out its duties in a timely manner*: within the span of a semester or two.

Step Two: Ensure the committee satisfies Graduate College requirements while considering ICR recommendations

All prelims committees in the ICR must satisfy the Graduate College's [membership requirements](#), the most important of which are:

Committees must include at least four voting members, at least three of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least two of whom must also be tenured at the Urbana-Champaign campus.

The chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. At the discretion of the DGS, a co-chair may be appointed. If appointed, a co-chair must meet all the requirements that apply to the chair.

If there are more than four voting members on the committee, at least half of the voting members must be members of the Graduate Faculty.

Essentially all tenure-track faculty in the ICR (and at the University) are members of the Graduate Faculty. Note that any members of the Graduate Faculty who have retired or resigned may be retained on the Graduate Faculty for up to five years at the request of departments. Additional membership requirements describing less common circumstances are available at the Graduate College's membership requirements link above.

Because ICR students generally complete a substantial amount of coursework outside the College of Media, the ICR *strongly recommends*, but does not *require*, that the prelims committee include at least one member with a faculty appointment of 0% or more outside the College. The ICR also *strongly recommends* that at least two members of the committee, as well as the committee chair, be ICR or ICR-affiliated faculty. Students who are considering committees that fall outside these recommendations should consult the DGS and their advisor for guidance and feedback. Ultimately, students are encouraged to let their decisions be guided by a spirit of interdisciplinarity.

Step Three: Approach potential committee members

Once students have ensured that the committee they have in mind meets requirements, they should set up a meeting with the individual faculty to ask a simple question—"Will you be on my prelims committee?"—and discuss their research project.

When approaching potential committee members from outside the ICR, consider sharing this document with them, as units can have differing approaches to prelims and they may have questions. You may also point them toward your advisor or the DGS.

Students have no reason to be nervous about asking a faculty member to serve on their prelims committee. Faculty are usually honored to be asked to participate, and the ICR has a long history of happy collaboration across campus. Above all, students are encouraged to be expedient and persistent in assembling their committees.

Step Four: Discuss your prelims question with each committee member

Typically, each member of a prelims committee writes a separate preliminary exam question. However, a committee can choose to write all four questions collaboratively if such an approach is deemed useful. The student should inform the committee of their desired format for each question (four- or twenty-four hours; see Step Six below) to ensure the questions are of an appropriate scope. It is the advisor's responsibility, in concert with the student, to "traffic control" this part of the prelims process by fashioning the areas in which the committee members will ask questions and seek to avoid overlap or conflict. All of this may (and ideally *should*) be done before the formal submission of a committee to the Graduate College by the student.

There are many ways in which faculty may go about fashioning questions, but the general rule is that students will not be completely surprised by their written questions. Some faculty may allow the student to come up with a question or shape it collaboratively. Others may ask the student to propose a reading list.

Whatever mutual arrangements are made with specific faculty members, the student should be able to prepare meaningfully for each exam question. To be clear, faculty members are not *required* to disclose the specific question to the student ahead of time. But at the very least, faculty should provide enough in the way of specific guidelines for their question (a reading list, for example) ahead of time that a student can reasonably be expected to deduce the general subject of the question and prepare a substantial answer.

Step Five: Formally request the committee

Once the committee has been formed and questions decided on, students should formally request the formation of their prelims committee by filling out the [Preliminary Exam Request \(PER\)](#) at the Graduate College's student portal. The Graduate College will then review the request to ensure that the committee meets requirements.

Important: Once the Graduate College approves and formally appoints a student's prelims committee, a three-month (technically 90-day) clock starts ticking. Students must pass their preliminary oral exam (Prelims defense) by the end of this period, or the committee is formally dissolved and must be re-appointed.

Step Six: The written exam

Scheduling

Once the committee is appointed, the Graduate Program Assistant will contact the student's advisor and the committee members to solicit all four questions in writing. The advisor and the Graduate Program Assistant should be copied on all relevant communications with committee members to avoid delays and ensure that the agreed-upon questions are actually submitted.

Once all four questions have been submitted, the Graduate Program Assistant will contact the student being examined to schedule the written portion of the exam. Students may choose to receive their exam questions at whatever frequency they choose within the 90-day committee appointment; they may write all four exams in a week, or they may space out each question by a few weeks. However, it is important to remember that the preliminary exam must both be written *and* defended within the 90 days. Whatever the pace of the writing, the faculty stresses that the written portion of prelims should not take longer than a semester; it is important to maintain momentum through the process.

Written Exam Procedure

For each question, students have the choice of a **four-hour** or **twenty-four hour** exam (both take-home), without prejudice.

Most students choose the twenty-four hour format, which allows more time and space for reflection but also carries larger expectations for depth and seriousness in the finished product (which is generally 20 pages or more and will typically include citations). Twenty-four hour exams can be taken Monday–Thursday only. Students may ask the Graduate Program Assistant to send them the exam (and thus start the 24-hour clock) at any point during the business day (9am–5pm) of their choosing.

The four-hour format typically results in a shorter answer (8–12 pages, often without citations) and may be taken Monday–Friday. It must both start and end during business hours.

The literal writing of the exam answer is expected to have taken place within the four-hour or twenty-four hour period of the exam. It is understood that students will have been generally aware of their questions ahead of time, will have thought through many aspects of them, and in some sense are "assembling" an answer rather than writing from scratch.

When the student is finished with their answer, they will submit it to the Graduate Program Assistant before the end of their allotted 4- or 24-hour time.

Step Seven: The Dissertation Proposal

The student's dissertation proposal will be taking shape concurrently with all the steps listed above, if not before. The dissertation proposal will also take shape through discussions with a student's advisor and committee members. The completed proposal must be distributed to the committee, along with the student's answers to the written exam, in preparation for the oral exam (see Step Eight below).

Proposals vary according to field and discipline. In the ICR, they have traditionally included the following elements:

- 1) The question posed by the researcher
- 2) A tentative thesis
- 3) A discussion of the literature to which the dissertation will contribute, and why that contribution will be important

- 4) A description of the research to be carried out
- 5) A discussion of the methodologies involved
- 6) A schema of the project that traditionally takes the shape of a chapter outline of the entire dissertation
- 7) A fairly extensive bibliography

Depending on the student's written questions, some of the work behind the dissertation proposal may already have been accomplished in the written answers. It is also not unusual that the proposal is revised and reshaped into the first chapter of the finished dissertation. However, the exact relationship between the written questions, dissertation proposal, and finished dissertation is up to the student and their advisor in consultation with their prelims and dissertation committees. In cases of disagreement, the student's advisor has the final say.

Students should take their dissertation proposal very seriously. While the goal of Prelims is ultimately for students to get feedback on their proposals, they should be thoroughly thought out before being distributed to the committee. A weak proposal is likely to result in a deferred decision of the prelims process until a more satisfactory one is produced.

Once a student has finished their proposal, they should consult with their advisor for approval and send it to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Step Eight: The Preliminary Oral Examination ("Prelims Defense")

Scheduling

With the four written answers completed, dissertation proposal approved, and all documents received, the Graduate Program Assistant is ready to schedule the Oral Defense. They will begin by distributing the written answers and proposal to all members of the student's Prelims committee and scheduling a date, time, and location for the defense. This should be done at least 3 weeks before the agreed-upon date, to give committee members sufficient time to read the material.

The Graduate Program Assistant, in consultation with the student's advisor, is responsible for ensuring that the room reserved for the defense has any equipment necessary for the defense. Both the Graduate College and ICR generally permit remote participation by candidates and faculty committee members—for both preliminary and final exam defenses—as long as all participants are able to effectively communicate via videoconference.

Prelims Oral Exam Procedure

The oral exam involves both the student's answers to the committee's written questions and the dissertation proposal. It typically lasts around two hours. ICR discourages food, beverages, or other distractions during the defense.

At the beginning of the defense, the committee chair will welcome the student and the committee to the proceedings. They will then ask the student to exit the room, remaining nearby but out of earshot.

The committee, led by the chair, will then spend several minutes planning the proceedings and sharing their thoughts about the written answers and proposal. Typically, the committee will also come to a consensus about whether the student's answers and proposal are ready to defend. The chair will then invite the student back into the room to begin the defense.

A typical structure is for each committee member to ask the student to address their specific written question, allowing time for conversation, elaboration, and follow-ups, for roughly the first hour. This customarily serves to open up areas of questioning that naturally transitions into broader discussion about the dissertation proposal. If a student's written answers are especially strong, the oral exam may give them cursory attention and concentrate on the proposal.

Every examiner is expected to have read all of the written material (including responses to other examiners' questions), but their specific approach to questioning is up to them. Some will focus specifically on written answers as a way of probing the limits of the student's knowledge. Others will ask more open-ended questions intended to generate ideas. No matter the character of the questioning, the student should be ready to engage with any tensions or ambiguities among their written answers, or between their answers and their proposal. The point is not for the student to tell individual examiners what they think they want to hear; it is for them to express their thinking intelligently and forcefully. Prelims expect students to take a stand.

Once questioning has clearly turned to the proposal, examiners will often seek to explore the significance of the proposed research to the field, to discuss the approach or conceptual framework, and sometimes to inquire into practical details of the research process. The ultimate goal is to certify that the proposed dissertation is *doable*, that the soon-to-be candidate is *qualified* to do it, and that when it is done it will be *meaningful*.

Students should take the proposal discussion very seriously and take notes on the committee's feedback and questioning for later use as they write their dissertation. The

committee chair should also plan to take notes on the committee's feedback and share them with the candidate.

Potential Outcomes of the Preliminary Oral Exam

The three possible outcomes of a preliminary exam are **pass**, **fail**, or **decision deferred**. The decision must be unanimous. The committee may vote at any point during the oral exam, but a decision about *when* to vote and the manner of revealing the outcome to the student should be agreed on when the committee plans proceedings at the beginning of the exam (when the student has left the room). Typically, the committee asks the student to leave the room again at the end of the defense while they vote on the outcome. In any case, the outcome should be revealed to the student at the conclusion of the defense.

An important step that the committee must not neglect is to notify the Graduate Program Assistant of the oral exam's outcome. The student's advisor is responsible for emailing this notification as soon as possible after the defense. Upon receiving this notification, the Graduate Program Assistant will send the committee members the Preliminary Exam Result form for their signature. Committee members should sign this paperwork with expediency. Once all members have signed, the Graduate Program Assistant will send it to the Graduate College.

In the event of a "pass," the newly-minted PhD Candidate is officially "ABD" and is free to proceed directly to the dissertation. The Preliminary Exam Committee is officially dissolved, but the candidate will likely (though not necessarily) continue to work with the same group as their dissertation committee.

In the event of a "decision deferred," the chair of the committee will author explicit written instructions as to what additional work will be required for successful completion. This will only rarely require another oral examination. Usually, it requires submission of supplementary written material regarding the written questions and/or dissertation proposal.

When the deferred outcome is reported to the Graduate College, 180-day clock starts ticking. According to the [Graduate College handbook](#):

- 1) The same committee must re-examine the student
- 2) The second exam must occur within 180 calendar days of the date of the first exam
- 3) The outcome of the second exam must be **pass** or **fail**

In the (extremely rare) case of a "fail," the committee is officially dissolved and the Prelims process ends. At the discretion of the DGS, and in consultation with the student's advisor, the student may be given the opportunity to take Prelims a maximum of one more time. However, the ICR is not required to do this. If a second exam is offered, a new Preliminary Examination committee (which may have the same membership as the first) must be formed and the process started over again. The outcome of this second exam must be **pass** or **fail**.

Prelims and Degree Progress

A "pass" outcome on the preliminary exam is valid with the Graduate College for **five years**. If more than five years elapse between the preliminary exam and the final exam (dissertation defense), students are required to demonstrate currency in the field by passing a second preliminary exam.

2.4 Dissertation Defense and Deposit

The dissertation is the culmination of a student's doctoral education and represents the candidate's unique contribution to the scholarly literature. A candidate's dissertation advisor is their primary source of guidance through the writing process.

Dissertation Defense Prerequisites and Timeline

A candidate may defend their completed dissertation if they have:

- A) Completed all coursework (*including* the 16 thesis research credits) and resolved any outstanding Incomplete (I) or Not Reported (NR) grades
- B) Passed their Preliminary Examination and had a "pass" result officially recorded at the Graduate College within the past five years
- C) Registered for the term in which the final exam (dissertation defense) is scheduled to take place

The defense timeline is defined by a candidate's expected graduation date, which the Graduate College defines thus:

Candidates who entered the ICR at Stage II should aim to defend and deposit their dissertations by the end of their **sixth** year in the program. Candidates who entered at Stage II and have not defended their dissertation by the end of the Summer after their sixth year are placed on Academic Warning status.

Candidates who entered the ICR at Stage I should aim to defend and deposit their dissertations by the end of their **seventh** year in the program. Candidates who entered at

Stage I and have not defended their dissertation by the end of the Summer after their seventh year are placed on Academic Warning status.

The final semester: Scheduling the Final Exam (Defense) and Graduation

A candidate's dissertation committee does not need to be formally submitted to the Graduate College until they are ready to schedule their Final Exam (this is the technical name for the dissertation defense).

The final exam committee submission process is similar to the process for prelims: the candidate submits a [Final Examination Request \(FER\)](#) at the Graduate Student Portal. The Graduate College must approve the committee before the Graduate Program Assistant can schedule the final exam.

Important: Be aware that the Graduate College sets specific and *separate* deadlines each semester (including Summers) for

- 1) applying to graduate
- 2) passing the final defense, and
- 3) depositing a successfully defended dissertation

These will be listed on the [academic calendar](#) as "**Apply to graduate via Self-Service,**" "**Last day to take final exam for doctoral degree,**" and "**Last day to complete deposit of doctoral dissertation,**" respectively. You may also contact the Graduate Program Assistant for these dates.

It is *crucial* to prepare for, and adhere to, these deadlines—they are inflexible and often earlier than might be assumed. For example, the Spring deadline to defend a dissertation for May graduation is typically in early *April*. Failing to anticipate these deadlines may result in students' graduation process being delayed an entire semester.

The process for scheduling the Final Exam is essentially identical to that of the Prelims defense. Once the student and advisor have agreed that the finalized dissertation draft is ready to defend, they will inform the Graduate Program Assistant of that fact and send them the dissertation. This communication should take place at least 3 weeks before the agreed-upon defense date (which must be no later than the Graduate College deadline), to give committee members sufficient time to read the material.

The Graduate Program Assistant, in consultation with the student's advisor, is responsible for ensuring that the room reserved for the Final Exam has any equipment necessary for the defense. The Graduate College currently mandates that the chair of the committee (typically the student's advisor) and the student be physically present and encourages all other

committee members to be so as well. In necessary circumstances, up to two members may attend remotely.

The Graduate College handbook states that the Final Oral Exam is to be "open to the academic community of the university." Once the Exam is scheduled, the Graduate Program Assistant will post it as an event on the publicly accessible ICR calendar on the College of Media website. However, the Final Committee's deliberation about the outcome of the defense is private.

Dissertation Oral Exam Procedure

The typical procedure for a dissertation defense essentially mirrors that of the preliminary oral exam described above. Candidates are asked to leave the room while the Final Exam committee, led by the chair, discusses whether the dissertation is ready to defend and plans the proceedings. Every examiner is expected to have read the candidate's entire dissertation and to have a definite answer to this question. The candidate's advisor then invites them to reenter the room.

If the candidate and advisor agree that it will be helpful for the committee, an overview by the candidate of the dissertation's approach and findings—lasting no more than ten minutes—may be presented. However, this is entirely optional.

A typical structure is for each committee member to ask the student to address their specific questions or concerns, allowing time for conversation, elaboration, and follow-ups, for roughly the first hour. The second hour is then often devoted to *prospective* discussion: next steps for any needed revisions before deposit, advice for revising the work into a book (if appropriate), and general discussion about its overall intervention and significance. Candidates should take notes on the committee's feedback and questioning for use in any future revisions. The committee chair should also plan to take notes on the committee's feedback. Committee members may also choose to share their notes with the candidate.

Typically, the committee asks the candidate to leave the room again at the end of the defense while they vote on the outcome. In any case, the outcome, including the need for any revisions, should be revealed to the candidate at the conclusion of the defense.

Potential Outcomes of the Final Oral Exam

The two possible outcomes of the final exam are **pass** or **fail**. Unlike the Preliminary Exam, the decision need not be unanimous:

-For a **pass**, any and all Director(s) of Research (designated on the FER, typically a student's advisor) must vote to pass the candidate, and no more than one of the remaining Committee

members may vote to fail. The Committee may indicate on the Final Exam Result form if revisions are required.

-A candidate will **fail** the Final Exam if a Director of Research votes to fail, or if two or more Committee members vote to fail.

In the event of a fail, the committee is officially dissolved and the Final Exam process ends. At the discretion of the DGS, and in consultation with the student's advisor, the student may be given the opportunity to take the Final Exam a maximum of one more time. However, the ICR is not required to do this. If a second exam is offered, a new Final Examination committee (which may have the same membership as the first) must be formed and the process started over again. The outcome of this second exam must be **pass** or **fail**.

An important step that the committee must not neglect is to notify the Graduate Program Assistant of the Final Exam's outcome. The student's advisor is responsible for emailing this notification as soon as possible after the defense. Upon receiving this notification, the Graduate Program Assistant will send the committee members the Thesis/Dissertation Approval form for their signature. Committee members should sign this paperwork with expediency. Once all members have signed, the Graduate Program Assistant will send it to the Graduate College.

Depositing

All newly-minted ICR PhDs should deposit their dissertation with the Graduate College promptly following a successful final exam. It is important to note that the dissertation must meet the formatting requirements set forth by the Graduate College, and it must be deposited by the semester deadline. The new PhD should communicate promptly with the Graduate Program Assistant to ensure a successful, on-time deposit. See the [Graduate College Handbook](#) for more information about depositing.

If a dissertation is defended but not deposited for three semesters (including the defense semester), a new final exam may need to be conducted.

2.5 Sample Degree Plans (Stage I, Stage II, and Illinois MA)

Finishing the PhD in a reasonable time should be a high priority for both students and their advisors. Of course, every student will trace a different path through their ICR PhD.

These sample degree plans offer a roadmap for students in three common situations: entering the ICR at Stage I, entering the ICR at Stage II, and entering the ICR after finishing a

master's degree at Illinois. Almost no student will follow any of these roadmaps exactly; they are merely intended as a guiding timeline through the program.

Each of these degree plans notes a **graduation deadline**: students who fail to meet this deadline are placed on academic warning by the Graduate College and must petition for more time.

For students entering with a **Bachelor's Degree** (Stage I)

Semester	Primary activity	Suggested Credits
Year 1 Fall	Coursework	12
Spring	Coursework	12-16
Summer	Think and read	0-4
Year 2 Fall	Coursework	12-16
Spring	Coursework	12
Summer	Begin germinating dissertation	0-4
Year 3 Fall	Coursework	12-16
Spring	Coursework and ATC	12-16
Summer	Begin writing proposal	0 or as needed
Year 4 Fall	Organize prelims committee Finish dissertation proposal	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Defend prelims Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer		0 or as needed
Year 5 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate (last semester to defend prelims before warning)	0 or as needed
Year 6 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate	0 or as needed
Year 7 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Defend dissertation by Final Exam deadline	0 (if defending)
Summer	Graduation deadline: 7 years from matriculation	

For students entering with a **Master's Degree** (Stage II)

Semester	Primary activity	Suggested Credits
Year 1 Fall	Coursework	12
Spring	Coursework	12
Summer	Think and read; begin germinating dissertation	0
Year 2 Fall	Coursework	12
Spring	Coursework and ATC	12
Summer	Begin writing proposal	0
Year 3 Fall	Organize prelims committee Finish dissertation proposal	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Defend prelims Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate	0 or as needed
Year 4 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate (last semester to defend prelims before warning)	0 or as needed
Year 5 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate	0 or as needed
Year 6 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Defend dissertation by Final Exam deadline	0 (if defending)
Summer	Graduation deadline: 6 years from matriculation	

For students who were admitted to an **Illinois Master's Degree** program and are continuing directly into the ICR PhD (Stage II)

Semester	Primary activity	Suggested Credits
Year 1 Fall	Coursework	12
Spring	Coursework	12
Summer	Think and read; begin germinating dissertation	0
Year 2 Fall	Coursework	12
Spring	Coursework and ATC	12
Summer	Begin writing proposal	0
Year 3 Fall	Organize prelims committee Finish dissertation proposal	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Defend prelims Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer		0 or as needed
Year 4 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate (last semester to defend prelims before warning, assuming a 2-year MA completed on time)	0 or as needed
Year 5 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Summer	Dissertate	0 or as needed
Year 6 Fall	Dissertate	8 (MDIA 599) or as needed
Spring	Defend dissertation by Final Exam deadline	0 (if defending)
Summer	Graduation deadline: 8 years from MA matriculation (6 years from PhD matriculation)	

Note: This timeline is now the same as Stage II students with non-Illinois Master's Degrees and applies to students starting the PhD as of AY2025–2026

Chapter 3

REGISTRATION AND OTHER SEMESTERLY REQUIREMENTS

This chapter outlines policies and procedures surrounding recurring practices that students are likely to need to do every semester (or at some other predictable rate). It includes information about how to register for courses and credits, the annual review process, and typical semester timelines and deadlines.

3.1 Registering for Courses and Credits

Every ICR student, unless they are on an approved academic leave of absence, **must** be registered (even if only for 0 credits) to be considered active in the program.

The Graduate College handbook provides guidelines on what constitutes [full-time enrollment](#). The Graduate College definition of full-time enrollment is particularly important for international students, as maintaining full-time enrollment status is required for F-1 or J-1 visa holders. As of Fall 2025, the Graduate College defines full-time enrollment as **8 hours per semester**; however, consult the Graduate College Handbook for the most up-to-date information about full-time enrollment. Visa students should additionally consult with ISSS for this definition. Policies from these campus entities [always](#) supersede this handbook.

Almost all Assistantships provided to ICR students are waiver-generating appointments, which just means that they come with a tuition waiver (see Chapter 4). Note that the technical definition of full-time enrollment for visa, loan, and other official purposes is not the same as the adequate courseload necessary to make progress toward the PhD at pace expected in the ICR, which is generally greater; see "While in Coursework" below for guidelines.

International students on visas should be particularly aware of the rules that apply to their full-time enrollment. All international students should consult [International Student and Scholar Services \(ISSS\)](#) every semester on questions related to their enrollment, as policies and requirements (regarding matters like maximum credit hours in online courses, for example) may change from semester to semester.

Courses Eligible for Graduate Credit

Courses numbered **500 and above** are typically open only to graduate students and will count for graduate credit. Courses numbered 400-499 **may** be available for graduate student credit, but it is up to the student to ensure that a 400-level course is appropriate for graduate students by consulting the course explorer or the instructor. While a 400-level course might or might not be available for graduate credit, a 500-level course almost always will be.

ICR students may take courses below the 400-level, but they will not count toward any degree requirements.

While in Coursework

In general, students still in coursework should register for at least **12 credits** per term to maintain good progress. Students may register for a maximum of 20 credits per term.

Note that students entering at Stage I need to average slightly more than 12 credits a term to complete their additional 32 credits of coursework across three years. They may do this in any combination convenient to them. One way of conceptualizing the Stage I credit load is this: such students should essentially **take 16 credits instead of 12** for any *two* of their six main semesters of coursework.

Students should always be mindful of exactly how many credit hours they have. The ICR's PhD coursework requirements assume a baseline of 4 credits per course. Students who at any point register for one or more 3-, 2-, or 1-credit courses should verify that they will not be some small number of credits short of coursework requirements once the time comes for degree milestones. Students in their second or third year whose ATC application process is approaching need to be especially mindful about making up any credit deficit to stay on track. Students' progress as recorded in the uAchieve degree audit system (https://uachieve.apps.uillinois.edu/uachieve_uiuc) should guide all decisions about credit hours.

All of these numbers assume the standard situation of a student who is working full-time toward their ICR PhD; any particular student's situation may vary. Students with atypical circumstances should always consult with their advisor or the DGS about their plan to maintain good progress while in coursework.

While out of Coursework

Students who have finished coursework and have a TA or RA appointment of at least 25% should register for a minimum of 8 hours, usually with some number of hours through MDIA 599 (Thesis Research). The link to apply for registration in MDIA 599 is here: <https://go.illinois.edu/GradIndependentStudy> (once approved, students will get an email that gives them permission to enroll).

The number of credits that students who do not hold a TA, RA, or other appointment of at least 25% (and thus are not receiving a tuition waivers) should register for depends on their specific situation. Students who need to be considered full-time for visa or other purposes should register for the relevant number of credits (typically 8—but verify your individual case with ISSS). Students depositing their dissertation may register for zero credits of MDIA 599. There are also other specific situations in which registering for zero credits might be appropriate, on a case-by-case basis.

Students who are at all unsure of how many credits to register for should reach out to their advisor, the DGS, the Graduate Program Assistant, or ISSS in the case of visa-specific questions.

Independent Study and Thesis Research Credit

ICR students are able to register for formal Independent Study (MDIA 590), in which they engage in a planned learning or research activity under the guidance of an ICR faculty member. In general, students should restrict Independent Study to their time in coursework unless it is absolutely necessary for progress on their dissertation project. The student and faculty member should come to an agreement about the overall time commitment that will be required in the Independent Study to determine the correct number of credit hours to be earned. The Federal definition of a credit hour is one contact hour plus two hours of out-of-class work by the student. Thus, a 4-credit graduate-level Independent Study would consist of roughly twelve hours of work (all-inclusive) a week during the term, made up of some combination of meeting time between student and faculty member, independent reading, writing, and research by the student, and any examination or assessment time.

ICR students whose ATC form has been approved may register for Thesis Research (MDIA 599).

To register for MDIA 590 or 599, visit this form: <https://go.illinois.edu/GradIndependentStudy>

Once this form is approved, students will get an email that gives them permission to enroll for the relevant course. Once the form has been approved and signed by the guiding faculty member, it will be routed for approval by the DGS. This approval must occur no later than the 10th day of the semester the independent study or thesis research is being conducted.

As of Academic Year 2025–2026, Graduate College policy requires students who register for MDIA 599 to be assigned an S/U grade at the end of the term by their advisor (or the faculty member whose number they registered under for the course). Faculty must assign Thesis students an "S" or "U" grade every semester. This replaces the previous DFR policy.

Registration for Students on Fellowships

Per the Graduate College's Fellowship Office, students need to be registered for every semester that they are on any waiver-generating fellowship. For ICR students, the most common of these are the Illinois Distinguished Fellowship, Equity Doctoral Fellowship, and Dissertation Completion Fellowship. For students who are on these and other yearlong fellowships (i.e. fellowships that cover both a Fall and Spring semester in an academic year), this registration requirement includes the Summer term that follows the Spring term of the fellowship. This requirement is satisfied by registering for a normal course, but it may also be satisfied by registering for zero credits. Students who need to register for zero credits to

satisfy the requirement may use MDIA 599 for this purpose, even if they are still in coursework and have not had an ATC form approved: <https://go.illinois.edu/GradIndependentStudy>

See this page for more details about fellowship registration requirements:
<https://grad.illinois.edu/funding/fellowships/fellowship-faq>

Students who receive an external (i.e. outside the University of Illinois) fellowship may be eligible for a courtesy tuition waiver, depending on the fellowship. The waiver office requires students to be registered for the relevant semester before considering such waivers. Students who are awarded an external fellowship of any kind should inform the DGS and Grad Program Assistant as early as possible to inquire about the possibility of a courtesy waiver.

Other Registration Options

The Graduate College has a number of [other registration mechanisms](#) for students who wish to finish their graduate degree but due to personal circumstances cannot enroll for one or more semesters. Students whose circumstances might be appropriate for these alternate options should consult the DGS or Graduate Program Assistant as soon as possible to discuss them.

Late Registration

Students who are not registered by the 10th day of classes are considered "absent without leave" and must go through a [petition process](#) for late registration. The Graduate College may charge a fee for late registration.

Students should make every effort to avoid late registration, as it creates unnecessary work for everyone involved and may incur fees. **This is particularly important for students on visas, as late registration may jeopardize visa status.**

3.2 Annual Review

The Graduate College requires all graduate programs, including the ICR, to conduct annual academic progress reviews of all graduate students enrolled in degree-seeking programs.

Near the end of each academic year (in April/May), the DGS will ask each student to complete an annual review form that chronicles their progress and accomplishments over the course of the year. The form is available [here](#).

Students need to complete the form and have their advisor sign it before submitting it to the Graduate Program Assistant. Signed annual reviews are due by 5pm on the last day of the Spring final examination period (typically mid-May).

3.3 Typical Semester Timelines

The following chart offers an outline of common deadlines, tasks, and checkups graduate students should be cognizant of throughout the Fall and Spring semesters. These are very approximate dates; consult the academic calendar or DGS announcements to determine the exact dates for the current semester.

Fall Date	Spring Date	To Do
Aug. 15	Jan. 15	Check course registration for accuracy and degree progress
Sep. 1	Feb. 1	Meet w/advisor to discuss semester goals
Oct. 15	Mar. 1	ICR Conference Participation Award Application
Nov. 1	Mar. 15	Dissertation Travel Grant Application
Nov. 1	N/A	Undergraduate Teaching Award for TAs Nomination
N/A	Apr. 1	Dissertation Completion Fellowship Application
Nov. 15	Apr. 15	Meet w/ Advisor for next semester's course registration
N/A	May 1	Complete and submit annual review form
Dec. 15	May 15	Final Grades due for Teaching Assistants

Chapter 4

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

4.1 Teaching and Research Assistantships

Incoming ICR students are currently guaranteed 5 years of funding. In practice, this comes through some combination of Assistantship and Fellowship support. Assistantships are either Teaching or Research Assistantships and are further defined by a percentage appointment defined according to the 40-hour work week.

The most common Assistantship held by ICR students is considered a 50% Assistantship: the student holding the Assistantship is expected to devote 20 hours a week to their Assistantship duties. Sometimes students hold one or more 25% appointments, with a work expectation of 10 hours per week.

Assistantship appointments are made twice a year, in mid-Fall (for Spring appointments) and mid-Spring (for Fall appointments). Summer appointments are uncommon. In advance of appointments, the DGS will solicit requests for appointment from all ICR students via an online form. Specific appointments are then determined jointly by the department Heads (Advertising, Journalism, and Media & Cinema Studies) in the College of Media and the DGS. Every effort is made to accommodate students' needs and preferences regarding specific appointments; however, appointment decisions are ultimately based on a variety of factors, including funding availability, student and faculty needs, curriculum, and enrollment demand.

Students who have exhausted their initial guarantee of funding may still receive an Assistantship appointment from the College of Media if there are positions available for which the student is qualified. However, such an appointment is not guaranteed and is contingent on adequate and timely progress through the degree. Students beyond their guaranteed funding period are encouraged to regularly check the Graduate College's [Assistantship Clearinghouse](#) for available opportunities across campus. Note that all students, regardless of their funding status or source, are expected to maintain adequate and timely progress through the degree. The DGS will assess every student's adequate and timely progress through the program through the annual review process, based on all relevant contextual factors and in close consultation with the student's advisor and the student themselves.

Appointments are processed by the College of Media Human Resources office. Students with administrative questions about their appointment should contact the Graduate Program Assistant and DGS. Students with questions about their work responsibilities or other course-specific matters should contact the instructor of record for the course in question.

4.2 Fellowships

Fellowships do not carry the same expectation of labor as Assistantships—they are intended as a release from teaching or non-thesis research responsibilities so that the Fellow can devote themselves to developing, researching, and writing their dissertation.

Some fellowships are awarded to students upon their admission to the ICR; these are generally offered in packages that cover 3 years of a student's 5-year funding guarantee. Other fellowships, such as the Graduate College Block Grant fellowship, are offered on a semester-by-semester basis depending on funding availability and other circumstances. In general, Block Grant fellowships are reserved for more advanced students nearing completion of their dissertation. Finally, the Graduate College awards some fellowships (such as the Dissertation Completion Fellowship) through a competitive process. Information about campus-level fellowships is available on the [Graduate College website](#).

The Graduate College also maintains an extensive [Fellowship Finder](#) database that is open for all students to use.

Students who are awarded fellowships of any kind should communicate that fact to the DGS, particularly when the assistantship appointment process rolls around and the DGS solicits information about students' plans. This both avoids unnecessary logistical complication and ensures adequate funding for as many ICR students as possible.

4.3 Travel Support

ICR students annually present their work at the most prominent scholarly conferences in Communication and Media Studies. The ICR is able to provide limited financial support for those students who have had their work peer-reviewed and accepted for presentation at a scholarly conference. The DGS will send out an announcement early every Fall and Spring semester with a deadline for travel funding requests, which can be made by filling out [this form](#) and emailing it to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Students may request funding only for conferences they have been accepted to and must provide proof of their acceptance (e.g. their official acceptance email or a conference program). No funding will be available if a student is only attending a conference or participating in a moderating/responding capacity; students must be presenting research that was competitively accepted or peer-reviewed for the conference. All applications should be submitted *before* conference travel. If a student is accepted to a conference *after* a semester's deadline for travel funding, but that conference will take place *before* the subsequent semester's funding deadline, they should apply for funding (using the same form) as soon as possible after their acceptance notification. They will then be considered for funding as part of the subsequent semester's funding batch.

Students who receive an ICR travel award are funded through reimbursement and should follow the [relevant guidelines](#) for documenting their expenses. The amount of funding varies

as a function of supply and demand. An important requirement that all students traveling internationally for conferences should budget for is travel insurance: <https://safetyabroad.illinois.edu/insurance/enroll/>—the typical amount for a conference lasting under two weeks is \$96. Students should account for this requirement for all international (i.e. outside the United States) travel; while ICR will cover the up-front cost of the insurance for conferences lasting under two weeks, that cost may factor into the overall amount of funding the Institute is able to provide for travel reimbursement. The International Safety and Security Office requires a CFOP number when graduate programs are paying for insurance on behalf of graduate students; you may contact the Graduate Program Coordinator for this number if you are travelling internationally.

Students may apply for funding for multiple conferences per year but are likely to receive less funding (or be denied funding) for subsequent requests the same academic year.

To receive reimbursement, a student must be registered in both the semester in which the application is submitted and the semester in which the conference takes place. Reimbursement for conferences taking place during the summer requires students to be registered the immediately subsequent fall. **No matter when a conference takes place, it is crucial that all receipts be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant within 60 days.**

4.4 Facilities and Offices

There are two designated commons spaces available to ICR students: Gregory Hall 411 and Armory 213.

Greg Hall 411 includes a refrigerator, kettle, lounge space, and conference table. Armory 213 includes cubicles for individual study, tables for group meetings, and furniture for lounging. Please contact the Graduate Program Assistant for key access to these spaces.

ICR students with teaching assistantships in College of Media classes are eligible for assignment to shared office spaces in Armory 235 A–H. Contact the Graduate Program Assistant for an office assignment.

ICR graduate students should consider these spaces a *professional* resource that is made available for them on campus. While they are encouraged to make the spaces their own (which includes keeping them reasonably clean and free of clutter), they are not personal spaces. Students should not sleep overnight in any common area or office and should not keep plants or animals in them.

4.5 Research Labs

College of Media faculty oversee a variety of research facilities intended to facilitate graduate student research. The capabilities of and available equipment in each lab often changes, so please contact the faculty overseeing each space for more specific information.

Lab	Location	Faculty PI/contact
Immersive and Future Media Lab	Armory 209	Christopher Ball
Illinois Lab for Computational Analytics	Armory 211	Margaret Ng
Technocultures and Qualitative Research Lab	Armory 221	Anita Chan, John Wirtz
Advertising Lab	Armory 222	Ewa Maslowska
Media Psychology Lab	Gregory Hall 043	Kevin Wise
Technology and Social Behavior Lab	Gregory Hall 043	Mike Yao
Media Production Lab	Gregory Hall 029, 036, and 041	Derek Long

Chapter 5

ACADEMIC ADVISING IN THE ICR

The advisor-advisee relationship is fundamental to the graduate experience, and the ICR is dedicated to the quality of that relationship. To that end, this section lays out the ICR's guidelines and policies surrounding the advisor-advisee relationship.

5.1 Selecting an Advisor

All students will be assigned a first-year advisor upon admission. For some, this relationship will continue throughout their time at the ICR and beyond. Others may find it beneficial to have a co-advisor or an advisor plus a director of research, particularly if the nature of their dissertation project calls for it. Research interests may also change to the point where a change of advisor might be warranted. Any of these situations is normal and perfectly acceptable.

All students' first-year advisors will be ICR faculty; however, a student's ultimate advisor need not be their first-year advisor. Students who wish to change their advisor should discuss the matter with their new prospective advisor, and after receiving their consent, may submit an [Advisor Change Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant. The Graduate Program Assistant will verify the change with the new requested advisor. Students wishing for their advisor to be non-ICR faculty must consult with the DGS before making any final decisions.

As important as a student's advisor is to their ICR journey, all students should consider the importance of having *multiple* mentors among the faculty as it pertains to both research and their professional development. This absolutely includes faculty with perspectives and expertise beyond the student's field of study.

5.2 Advisor Responsibilities

Advising and mentoring graduate students is the most important duty ICR faculty carry out. The ICR expects that faculty apply the highest standard of professionalism, integrity, and empathy to this duty.

Faculty are expected to be familiar with the policies and procedures outlined in this academic handbook. It is crucial that individual faculty follow the spirit and letter of both the wider guidelines in this handbook and the specific responsibilities listed below.

Faculty advisors are expected to bear the full responsibilities of advising when they are on academic leave or sabbatical.

The responsibilities of all faculty advisors include:

- Responding to communications and all written work with reasonable promptness; students should expect to receive at least an acknowledgement of the receipt of any sent inquiry, communication, or writing within 72 business hours.
- Regular meetings with students (at least twice a semester)
- Advice about specific courses to take each semester
- Timely assignment of grades for students in their MDIA 590 and 599 sections
- Specific, sustained guidance in selecting a dissertation topic and guidance through the Preliminary Exam and Final Exam
- Prompt reading of dissertation chapters and provision of critical feedback, either in person or in writing
- Professional mentoring, including advice about relevant funding opportunities, research resources, conferences, networking, and job talks
- Openness to diverse career choices, including those beyond academia
- Authorship of letters of recommendation for fellowships, awards, and job opportunities
- Advice on publishing beyond the dissertation: transitioning the thesis a book (if applicable), where to publish articles
- Clear communication with students about authorship credit on any collaborative publications; that credit should properly credit a student's work according to the norms of the relevant field of research
- Openness to students' seeking advice from other faculty members; recognition when problems go beyond the reach of their responsibilities and that students might require some form of outside assistance
- Awareness and recognition of changing professional practices, expectations, and norms within the field
- Respectful, honest, and intellectually challenging discourse with their advisee
- Reasonable discretion about communications with or on behalf of students. --

- Recognition when issues might need to be shared with the Director of Graduate Studies and clear communication with students about when information might need to be shared.
- Adherence to university and College ethical guidelines, including those concerning sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and discrimination
- Respect for students' privacy and private life
- Recognition of students' diverse backgrounds, needs, and goals
- Review and feedback of all advisee's annual review forms
- Reasonable familiarity with the ICR policies and procedures outlined in the Academic Handbook

Faculty advisors are *not* responsible for:

- Emotional or psychological counseling
- Meeting student deadlines when information/materials are not provided in a timely matter
- Providing information or advice when such provision would violate professional ethics

5.3 Advisee Responsibilities

The relationship between advisor and advisee is not an equal one when it comes to power. As a result, the burden of responsibility is on the advisor. However, advisees also have crucial responsibilities in fostering and maintaining a productive relationship.

The responsibilities of all ICR advisees include:

- Respectful, honest, and intellectually challenging discourse with their advisor
- Regular communication with their advisor to inform them of degree progress. Students *must* take an active role in initiating meetings and communication regarding both their research and their professional progress
- Giving their advisor sufficient notice (at least a month) about deadlines for letters of recommendation or other requests

- Clear communication about authorship credit standards and expectations on any collaborative publications
- Communicating with the advisor regarding personal problems *if* those problems may impede or hinder progress through the program.
- Respect for the advisor's privacy and private life.
- Adherence to university and College ethical guidelines, including those concerning sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and discrimination

Advisees are *not* responsible for:

- Performing any service for advisors beyond the regular requirements of coursework, the ATC process, preliminary exams, and the dissertation process *unless* it is part of a paid RA-ship or hourly appointment (always limited to appropriate work)

Chapter 6

GENERAL POLICIES

6.1 Policy regarding use of Generative AI

While in coursework, ICR expects that all its students will abide by all course-specific policies and instructor directions regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence. As a default, ICR expects that all its students' research and writing for both the preliminary exam and the final dissertation be substantively and responsibly human-reasoned and human-generated in ways that accord with the policies of campus and the Graduate College on academic and research integrity (see <https://research.illinois.edu/research-integrity-policy-and-procedures> and <https://grad.illinois.edu/document/handbook>)

The Institute recognizes that contemporary research in communications and media might explore or require the use of generative AI. If a student's research has a good faith interest in the use of generative AI, such use is acceptable if that student's committee (both for Prelims and the Final Exam) has been fully informed of the planned extent of its use and has agreed to that use according to a clearly defined set of parameters.

Students who wish to use generative AI in any way for the purpose of their preliminary exam or final dissertation must explicitly request that their advisor and committee allow and define such use. These requests should take place at the earliest possible moment, ideally when a student approaches potential committee members. If the committee unanimously agrees to allow the student to use generative AI in an explicitly defined way, it should state in writing the criteria under which that use is acceptable and send a statement to the student, all committee members, and the ICR Grad Program Assistant. This statement may be amended or revoked at any time by a student's advisor, in consultation with the student's committee. The statement will be valid for both the Preliminary Exam and Final Exam committees if the makeup of the committee does not change; if it does, any new committee members must also be made aware of the previously agreed-upon policy and provide their consent in writing to the rest of the committee and the Grad Program Assistant, or else the committee must draft and agree to a new policy.

If a student employs any generative artificial intelligence in the final dissertation, they must clearly indicate the extent of its use in the document, in accordance with the above-linked policies of campus and the Graduate College on academic and research integrity.

Student use of AI in preliminary exams or final dissertations without the permission and expressed written guidelines of their committee, or in any way that does not adhere to their committee's agreed-upon acceptable use policy, is grounds for a failing outcome on the exam.

6.2 Policy regarding residency and teaching appointments

In general, students are expected to maintain residency in the Champaign-Urbana area if they wish to be considered for teaching appointments in the College of Media. While individual courses *may* be able to accommodate remote teaching if a remote section has been approved for the course in question, such appointments are *not guaranteed* and are at the ultimate discretion of the hiring department, in consultation with the DGS.

Students who will not be maintaining residency in the Champaign-Urbana area for one or more semesters *must* communicate that fact to the DGS when the semesterly communications regarding teaching appointments go out.