Handbook for PhD Program in
Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication
Department of English
Thomas Harriot College of Arts & Sciences
2015-2016

East Carolina University is an equal opportunity institution and, in keeping with this policy, the University makes no distinction in the admission of students, or in any other of its activities, on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, or national origin.
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1 Current version: September 2015; Policy revisions related to advising, preliminary review, annual reviews, exams, and dissertation prospectus approved by Graduate Faculty, October 2013. Other revisions approved by Graduate Faculty, April 2011.
Overview

Program Mission
The PhD in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication program offers students the opportunity to combine theory and practice in the study of rhetoric, writing, and professional communication. Focusing on public and community rhetorics across genres and media, we provide future scholar-teachers with diverse, well-supported research and pedagogical experiences and foster professional development within intellectual and professional communities.

Students in the program have the opportunity to learn from accessible and supportive research faculty spanning the disciplines of rhetoric, composition, and professional/technical communication. Faculty hold leadership positions in the field’s major professional organizations and on editorial boards.

Areas of faculty and student research include the study of rhetoric, writing and communication in professional spaces, such as corporations, health care, science, and government, as well as school, digital, community, and public contexts. Other research areas include the history, theory, and pedagogy of writing and literacy practices.

In addition, you can take advantage of other East Carolina University faculty strengths, both within and outside of the English Department, through cooperative agreements with affiliate departments, elective courses, collaborative research, and your own dissertation research.

The remainder of this introductory information explains the admission process, financial support, ADA Compliance, and Notice of Nondiscrimination.

The East Carolina University Graduate Catalog offers further guidance about the Graduate School’s requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Admission
To be considered for admission to the program, you must provide the following:

- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended, including documentation of the successful completion of a master’s degree
- Scores on the Graduate Record Examination (taken within the past five years)
- Recent score on the TOEFL or IELTS for international students whose native language is not English (for current minimum scores, see the ECU Graduate School web site)
- Three letters of recommendation (at least two of which should be academic references)
• A curriculum vitae
• A Statement of Intent (i.e., a professional goal statement)
• Writing samples that demonstrate writing and research abilities

Once admitted, the DGS will review your transcript. Up to 6 hours of required courses can be waived if equivalent courses were taken during a student’s Master’s degree. This may increase PhD elective courses from 12 hours to 18 hours.

Financial Support

IMPORTANT: If you receive financial support from the English Department or another unit at East Carolina University, please review the documents offering that support carefully; they define satisfactory progress toward the degree. If you are granted a tuition waiver, it is essential that you read and understand the Tuition Waiver Guidelines, found in the Appendices. Your primary advisor, dissertation director, or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) can provide additional information to help you continue your financial support.

Each year the department makes a small number of awards for financial support in the form of assistantships and tuition waivers. These awards are based on scholarly achievement and promise. The department generally receives numerous applications for these limited resources. Thus, if you receive financial support, that support represents a considerable investment by the department in your career; in return, the Department expects that you will make a significant commitment to your studies.

Continued financial support depends on satisfactory

• Performance in completion of teaching, editing, and research duties associated with the assistantship
• Academic performance in a program of study
• Progress toward the completion of the degree

Being a full-time student and working more than the 20 to 25 hours required with English Department financial support (or that received from other sources) is not recommended.

Financial support renewals and new decisions are made annually. If offered a financial package for your first year, which normally includes a tuition waiver, assistantship stipend for 20 hours a week for work, and health insurance, the program is prepared to offer this financial support for four years given satisfactory performance in the doctoral program as judged by annual reviews. Students will be required to pay semester fees each semester they are enrolled. You may request additional support beyond the four years on a semester-by-semester basis for one additional year. Additional support is not guaranteed. Funded graduate students will be asked annually if they wish to renew
their financial support.

Current students who are not presently receiving, but wish to apply for, financial support should submit materials in support of their request. For students who previously applied and were not awarded an assistantship, these materials might consist of a revised and updated goals statement and/or new letters of recommendation. See the DGS.

For information about governmental financial aid, contact the ECU Office of Student Financial Aid.

**ADA Compliance**
East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 ((252) 737-1016 (Voice/TTY)).

**Notice of Nondiscrimination**
East Carolina University is committed to equality of opportunity and does not discriminate against applicants, students, employees, or visitors based on race/ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, political affiliation, genetic information or disability.

This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, readmission, access to, and treatment and employment in university programs and activities, including, but not limited to, academic admissions, financial aid, any services and employment.

Any act by a university employee or student of reprisal, interference, restraint, penalty, discrimination, coercion, retaliation, or harassment against an employee or student for using the applicable policies responsibly interferes with free expression and openness and violates university policy. Accordingly, members of the university community are prohibited from acts of reprisal and/or retaliation against those who file complaints, are involved as witnesses, or otherwise try to responsibly use university policies.
Policies and General Requirements

This section provides information and policies regarding residency and credit hour requirements, time for completion, progress milestones, and managing the workload, and incompletes.

Residency and Credit Hour Requirements
The Ph.D. degree requires satisfactory completion of at least 60 credit hours beyond the master’s degree as well as completion of a research skills requirement, comprehensive examinations, and completion and defense of a dissertation. The Graduate School requires you to complete 80% of the required degree credit for your program through enrollment in courses offered by ECU. Thus, you can complete up to 12 s. h. (20%) at another institution. All transferred courses, whether taken before being admitted or while working toward your degree, must be approved by the Graduate School. Normally, courses can transfer if the courses are graduate level, offered by a unit that grants a doctoral degree, and within the allowed length of time the semester that you complete your degree. See “Transfer Credits” in the ECU Graduate Catalog for the official policy concerning transfer credit. Contact the assistant to the DGS, who will help submit the transfer request.

It is important that you consult with your primary advisor/dissertation director, as well as the DGS, before you complete courses outside of ECU.

See “Time for Completion” about length of time courses can count toward your degree whether they are taken at ECU or another university.

Time for Completion
You must complete the degree requirements within seven years of your admission into the program. For example, if you began Fall 2013, you have until end of Summer 2020, not through the end of Fall 2020. With the endorsement of your committee, the Doctoral Program Steering Committee, and the department’s DGS, you may request one extension of not more than two semesters. See Appendices for Request for Extension form.

For guidelines concerning time limits about financial support, see “Financial Support” in this handbook and consult with the DGS and Office of Financial Aid if you have

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2 The ECU Graduate Catalog, which can be accessed from the ECU website, is the final authority in defining residency.

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questions.

If you earn 60 s. h. (the credit hours required for the Ph.D. Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication), but you have not completed all of the degree requirements (e.g. exams and/or dissertation), you must be continuously enrolled. You must register each semester, but not during summers, until you complete all degree requirements.

Consult with the DGS to determine whether you can receive credit for courses that have been completed 7 to 10 years before the semester that you graduate.

**Progress Milestones.** Once admitted, you should use the *Plan of Study* form (see Appendices) to help you plan your advancement through the Ph.D. program. These documents list requirements and accomplishments by which your progress will be evaluated through a typical full-time plan of study of eight semesters (four years). If you are completing your degree based on part-time study, you should consult your primary advisor, dissertation director, or the DGS. (See “Advising Procedures” section below.)

**Managing the Work Load**
First, managing course and work schedules, along with other professional activities, can often be difficult for both full-time and part-time doctoral students.

**Full-time Students.** In order to attain full-time status as a graduate student for most forms of financial aid, you must enroll in 9 s. h. during fall and spring semesters. If you have an assistantship, you will also be expected to commit at least 20 hours per week to your assistantship duties. Moreover, teaching one class, particularly the first time you teach it, often requires you to spend more than the allotted assistantship time of 10 hours per week for tasks related to teaching that class. Being a full-time student and working more than the 20 to 25 hours required with English Department financial support (or that received from other sources) is not recommended.

**Part-time Students.** While you are not required to enroll in a specified number of credit hours during fall and spring semesters, you must balance your course work with your work responsibilities, if you are employed. You also need to fulfill progress milestones in order for you to complete doctoral degree requirements according the amount of time allowed.

**Both Full-time and Part-time Students.** In addition, to prepare yourself to be competitive for the job market, you should complete professional development activities, such as presenting at conference and writing articles for publication, appropriate for your intended career. You can obtain additional information about professional activities from your primary advisor and the DGS.
Talk with your primary advisor, dissertation director, or the DGS about managing your work load, including courses and other responsibilities that you have.

**Incompletes.** In order for you to maintain good standing in the program, you must submit all assignments in all of your courses according to the instructions and deadlines provided by your instructor.

Incompletes should be requested only as a last resort. Typically, only medical or personal emergencies will constitute sufficient grounds for an instructor to grant you an incomplete in a course. Do not rely on incompletes as a way to manage your work schedule.

Do not assume that you will be given an incomplete if you do not submit projects at the end of the course. You must request an incomplete, and you should submit that request to your instructor as early as possible.

As part of your request for an incomplete, you must provide the following to your instructor:

1. A written document detailing your reasons for requesting the incomplete
2. A timeline that indicates the steps and dates by which you intend to complete the required coursework

**Procedures and Specific Requirements**

This section covers the advising process, course requirements, preliminary review, research skills requirement, comprehensive exam, and dissertation process.

**PhD Advising Procedures**

The Ph.D. advising process assists you in creating a schedule of courses, in preparing for your Comprehensive Examinations, and in completing the Dissertation. See Appendices for *Plan of Study* form. You should keep your Plan of Study form up-to-date and refer to it frequently to be sure you are on track.

Soon after admission to the program, the DGS will assign students a primary advisor who will work with the student to establish a plan of study through coursework and exams. The DGS will serve as the student’s secondary advisor through coursework.

**Primary Advisors** will
Advise students about coursework, professional activities, exam preparation and comprehensive exams committee selection.
Chair the advisee’s Preliminary Review (PR) Exam Committee.
Work with advisees on completing their annual reports for submission to the DGS. Consult with advisees on a dissertation director and committee.

The DGS, as secondary advisor, will
Appoint students’ primary advisors.
Consult with students about a change in primary advisor and committee selection for comprehensive exams.
Answer questions related to students’ Preliminary Review.
Meet with students annually to discuss annual reports.
Familiarize students with timelines, policies, and procedures.

If your primary advisor determines that you are not making satisfactory progress (e.g., continued pattern of incompletes, grades of C or F, or failure to complete required courses in a timely fashion), you and your primary advisor will meet with the DGS to determine a plan of action.

Course Requirements

1. Ten required courses (30 s. h.). You should complete these courses as soon as possible. When a required course is offered, if at all possible, register for it because normally courses are offered on an every third semester rotation.

   - ENGL 7600 Research Methods in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 7605 Discourse Analysis (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 7615 History and Theory of Rhetoric I (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 7620 History and Theory of Rhetoric II (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 7780 Theory of Professional Communication (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 8300 Seminar in Professional Development (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 8600 Seminar in Writing Studies and Pedagogy (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 8615 Seminar in Rhetorical Theory (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 8630 Seminar in Community and Cultural Rhetorics (3 s.h.)
   - ENGL 8780 Seminar in Professional Communication (3 s.h.)

2. Four elective courses in the English or affiliate departments (12 s. h.). These courses will be selected in consultation with your advisors. These electives may be chosen from graduate courses offered in the Department of English, from similar courses in other departments, or from any combination of these sources. In the spirit of this broad-based, interdisciplinary doctorate, you should consider English courses outside of your primary area(s) of emphasis as well as courses in other departments, according to what best prepares you for your dissertation research and career goals.

While we encourage you to take courses offered by the department, you may
complete ENGL 8100 Directed Reading (3 s. h.) and/or ENGL 8200 Cooperative Research Assignment (3 s. h.) as part of your electives. These courses should supplement your coursework and advance your research interests and career goals. See DGS for more information.

3. **ENGL 9000 Dissertation (18 s. h.).** Dissertation credits account for a minimum of 18 s. h. in order to allow sufficient time for original and independent research. The number of semester hours (18 s. h. or equivalent of six courses) indicates the amount of work that the dissertation involves; your dissertation research is to be a substantive endeavor. You may complete more than 18 s. h. of dissertation credit hours, but only 18 s. h. of dissertation credit hours count toward your degree.

Too many dissertation hours can affect some forms of financial aid.

**Special Conditions Applicable to Course Requirements.** You need to be aware of the following special conditions related to the course requirements:

- Since it is likely that this degree will attract students from a range of academic backgrounds, the DGS will evaluate each applicant’s academic history to ascertain if earlier work can be used to waive certain required courses. In the event that required courses are waived, students are then eligible to take an equivalent amount of elective credit hours rather than the required course(s).

- If you have been awarded an assistantship, you will be required to take ENGL 6625 Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice (3 s. h.) as a condition of your employment. ENGL 6625 counts as elective credits toward the degree. If you have completed a similar course and/or have previous post-secondary teaching experience, you may request a waiver for this course from the DGS.

- If you are a foreign national, you should be aware of the Immigration and Naturalization Service requirements that mandate 9 s. h. per term.

**Plan of Study.** You, along with your primary advisor and the DGS, should create a plan of study. Consult your other faculty especially exam committee members as needed and use the guidelines that follow as you create your plan of study:

- **Course Level:** Students complete 14 courses (42 s. h.) at the 6000-level and above; 5000-level courses cannot count toward the degree. Students should not complete more than six 6000-level courses; thus, over half of the courses taken should be 7000- and 8000-level courses.

- **Transfer Courses:** Students can transfer 4 courses (12 s. h.) into the program—that is 20% of our 60 s. h. degree program. Students should not, though, use
transferred courses for any of the required courses. In addition, transferred courses must be graduate-level courses and, unless approved by DGS, must be part of a doctoral program. Students who wish to take courses at other institutions with the intent to transfer credit from those courses must secure the approval of the DGS prior to enrolling in those courses.

**Preliminary Review Examination & Annual Reviews**

*Preliminary Review (PR)*

Upon completing 18 hours of coursework in the program, students are responsible for submitting a portfolio by the first day of classes of the semester directly following completion of 18 hours. Students will submit a portfolio including:

1. Updated Degree Sheet
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Two (2) academic/scholarly projects students have developed in their courses. Students should turn in the original, ungraded projects submitted in coursework.
4. A reflective essay (1500-3000 words) that
   - discusses the initial goals of the academic/scholarly projects, strengths and weaknesses, and potential revisions.
   - articulates a preliminary research agenda and its relationship to future coursework, research, and professional development.

Questions about the Preliminary Review should be directed to the DGS.

The committee for the PR will be made up of the student’s primary advisor, one other faculty member chosen by the student, and one faculty member chosen by the DGS (DGS). (This is in an effort to spread the work to all faculty.)

The committee evaluates the portfolio for the student’s ability to (1) make and sustain an academic argument; (2) choose and synthesize supporting sources and/or data; (3) rethink and discuss revision of work; and (4) express themselves in academically appropriate ways (organization, style, etc.). The committee passes or fails the portfolio and provides the results to the DGS and the student within 30 days of the date the portfolios are submitted. The DGS and the student’s primary advisor will meet with the student to review results within two weeks of receiving the results.

Students who do not successfully complete the preliminary review exam the first time
will have one opportunity to revise their portfolio, given the committee’s feedback, and re-submit the portfolio materials within 30 days of receiving the decision.

Failure to pass the preliminary review will result in dismissal from the program.

Annual Reports
Students are responsible for turning in an annual report to the DGS by the first day of classes each fall after successful completion of the Preliminary Review (PR) examination. Students will submit

1. A reflective letter (1250-2500 words) that documents the student’s work (coursework, teaching, professional development, and research) and its relationship to future coursework, research, and professional development activities.

2. Curriculum Vitae

Questions about the Annual Report should be directed to the student’s Primary Advisor. The DGS will meet individually with the PhD students in the fall to review their annual reports.

Focused Research/Research Skills Requirement

Option 1: Language Proficiency

You may present evidence of mastery of a foreign language equivalent to third-year undergraduate facility. This can be done

- By demonstrating native language proficiency (for those who speak English as a second language) via a mechanism approved by the Doctoral Program Steering Committee.

- By passing an examination (approved by the Doctoral Program Steering Committee) geared to third-year language proficiency

Ideally, you should present evidence of the foreign language requirement’s completion to the DGS for approval by the Doctoral Program Steering Committee as soon as possible and before you submit your dissertation proposal.
Option 2: New Media Application

You may choose to present evidence of mastery of computer and new media applications beyond knowledge of word processing, spread sheets, projection applications (e.g., PowerPoint), and other common applications and software. This evidence would include programming languages such as

- ActionScript
- JavaScript
- MySQL
- PHP
- CSS/XHTML
- Ruby
- ActionScript 2 or 3

If you choose this option, you must submit a multimodal and interactive new media project that demonstrates competency in one of the allowed programming languages. You should submit a statement describing the applications or programs used and level of expertise. You should also be prepared to demonstrate facility before members of the Doctoral Program Steering Committee, who shall have final say whether the option has been satisfied. You should submit evidence of the requirement’s completion to the DGS as soon as possible and before you submit your dissertation proposal.

Option 3: Statistical Methods

You may select a research option that involves demonstrating proficiency in quantitative research design or mastery of statistical methods through one of the following mechanisms:

Mechanism 1: Demonstrate that you successfully completed one of the following selections within the past five years:

- Selection 1: One graduate-level course in statistics with a grade of B or higher (courses completed at the master's level may count for this requirement)
- Selection 2: Two undergraduate-level courses in quantitative research design and statistics with a grade of B or higher in both

Mechanism 2: Provide evidence to members of the Graduate Steering Committee that you have designed and completed a project that uses statistical methods to analyze previously published research or to conduct your own original research.
You should submit evidence of the requirement’s completion to the DGS as soon as possible and before you submit your dissertation proposal.

**Option 4: Combined Approaches**

You may address the research skills requirement through a combination of the three above options. To do so, you must submit a formal proposal for this approach to the DGS for approval by the Doctoral Program Steering Committee. The proposal must indicate how you will combine these options to address a research objective in a way that one of the options, by itself could not. This option must be approved as soon as possible and before you submit your dissertation proposal.

**Comprehensive Examinations**

Three exams and a journal-ready article or bibliographic essay make up your comprehensive exams. These exams provide students with opportunities to illustrate their breadth and depth of knowledge developed in their coursework. All of the exams are designed to assess a student’s readiness to complete his or her dissertation research project.

In consultation with your primary advisor and the DGS, students will choose a chair for their comprehensive exams. In consultation with their comprehensive exams committee chair, students will choose the other members of the exam committee. (See timeline and appendices for the form that needs to be completed at this stage.) A student’s exam committee may or may not serve as the student’s dissertation committee.

**Journal-Ready Article or Bibliographic Essay (Manuscript-Ready Submission)**

In consultation with their exam committee, students will complete an article or essay that is judged ready to be submitted to a referred journal. Students will include a memo with information on the targeted journal and any publication guidelines. After successfully completing this part of the exam, the student is expected to submit the article.

**Phd Core Exam**

This exam will assess the student’s breadth of knowledge from the core areas of rhetoric, writing, and professional communication. Students will sit for this exam and answer two (2) questions out of four (4) questions during a four-hour period. The reading list should include works from the core areas of the PhD: rhetorical theory and history; writing studies and pedagogy; and professional communication theory and practice.

**Specialization Exam**

This take-home exam will assess the student’s developing area of specialization and its relationship to the rest of the field. Students will have seven (7) calendar days from the
time they receive their exam questions to complete this exam. The exam will consist of four (4) questions where students will pick two (2) to answer. Each response will be a 2,000-2,500 word essay that includes in-text citations and a related references section that includes a list of at least 10-12 sources for each essay.

**Oral Comprehensive Exam**

After successfully passing the core and specialization exams, the student will meet with her or his exam committee and respond to questions related to the student’s exam answers and reading lists. Students should be prepared to discuss the process used to complete the parts of the comprehensive exams as well as the arguments they made in any part of their written work. Committee members will ask a series of questions before excusing the student to confer about the results of the oral portion of the exam. Feedback from all parts of the comprehensive exams will be delivered to the student at that time and reported to the DGS.

**Guidelines for Creating Reading Lists for Comprehensive Exams**

**Journal-Ready Article or Bibliographic Essay**

The works cited or references page of the article/essay will serve as the reading list for this part of the exam.

In consultation with their committee, students will compile separate reading lists for the Core Exam and Specialization Exam and submit them to their exam committees for approval. The committee will use the reading lists to compile the exam questions.

**PhD Core Exam**

The reading list for the PhD Core Exam should include approximately 20 works, to be approved by your exam committee, balanced between the areas that make up the core. The reading list should be accompanied by a 500-1000 word statement/rationale and guiding questions for how you understand and position yourself within the core areas of study. Readings from core coursework are allowed and encouraged.

**Specialization Exam**

The reading list for the Specialization Exam will include approximately 30-40 works, to be approved by your exam committee, that inform your area of specialization and its relationship to the rest of the field. Your reading list should be accompanied by a 500-1000 word statement/rationale and guiding questions that define your area of specialization and its relationship to the rest of the field.

**Note:** Reading lists should include books, chapters, excerpts, and journal articles applicable to how the students understand the relationships between the core areas and their area of specialization. There may be some overlap between the lists. Committee members will consider this when approving reading lists.
Scheduling and Timing of the Comprehensive Exams

Students should plan to complete their comprehensive exams by the end of their 6th semester (or 10th semester for part-time students) in the program. The reading lists for the exams need to be approved by the student’s exam committee by the mid-point of the semester prior to a student taking their exams. The journal article proposal and/or draft should also be received by the exam committee in the semester prior to submission.

Students should work with their committees to schedule their comprehensive exam no later than two weeks before the end of the semester. After determining a date and time, the student will ask the Graduate Administrative Assistant to schedule a room. A room, with a desktop or laptop computer, will be provided for you to complete the PhD Core Exam. The article will be sent to the exam committee on the day the PhD Core Exam is scheduled. At the completion of the PhD Core exam, the student will be given the Specialization Exam. Students will have 7 calendar days from the time they submit the PhD Core exam to complete the Specialization Exam. After hearing from the exam committee, students will schedule the oral comprehensive exam for a date that is to occur 2 weeks and no more than 6 weeks after the completion of the specialization exam.

The exam committee evaluates the Journal-Ready Article or Bibliographic Essay according to the publication guidelines of the journal and whether the article is ready to be sent to the selected journal.

The exam committee evaluates parts 2 and 3 of the exam for the students’ abilities to (1) make and sustain an academic argument; (2) choose and synthesize supporting sources; (3) recognize, analyze, and discuss issues/trends/conversations in the field; (4) express themselves in academically appropriate ways (organization, style, etc.); and (5) articulate the relationship between their area of specialization and other conversations in the field.

If a student fails any part of the comprehensive exam, the student will be allowed to re-take one exam, one time. If a student fails more than one part, the student will meet with his or her primary advisor and the DGS to determine a course of action, which may include dismissal from the program.

Dissertation Process

This section covers the dissertation committee formation, dissertation prospectus and defense, dissertation, and the dissertation defense.

Dissertation Committee Formation
After the student has completed all coursework and successfully passed the
comprehensive exams, the student should form a dissertation committee and select one faculty member as director. Dissertation committees consist of four members: three from the English Department and one additional member. The fourth member of the dissertation committee can be a graduate faculty member from the ENGL department who is outside the core areas; a graduate faculty member external to the ENGL department at ECU; or a graduate faculty member external to ECU. All four committee members must have Graduate Faculty or Associate Graduate Faculty membership and at least three members must be ECU faculty.

**External Thesis and Dissertation Committee Members.** Individuals external to ECU with demonstrated expertise in the area of study in a thesis or dissertation may serve on, but not chair a thesis or dissertation committee. The external member should have a terminal degree in an appropriate discipline or extensive professional experience. This appointment must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. The procedure for appointing a person to serve in this role will require approval by the Graduate Program Director and the unit graduate faculty members serving on the thesis or dissertation committee. The Graduate Program Director will submit a letter of request to the Dean of the Graduate School outlining the person’s credentials (academic CV or resume) as related to the specific thesis or dissertation.

**Adjunct Faculty serving as Chair of a Dissertation Committee.** For an adjunct faculty member to serve as chair, that faculty member must have already been serving as dissertation committee before becoming adjunct faculty. The student should have completed the comprehensive examinations and preferably have an approved prospectus filed, or at least have a near final prospectus completed. The adjunct faculty should arrange for one of the committee members from the English Department to serve as a co-chair in order to facilitate submission of paper work.

Once a committee is formed, the student should file the **Dissertation Committee Form** with the DGS.

**Dissertation Prospectus Guidelines**

The length and format of the prospectus may vary considerably and should be determined in consultation with your committee. In consultation with the dissertation director (and committee as needed), the student will submit to her or his dissertation committee a dissertation prospectus draft that includes a plan of work for the dissertation and a working bibliography. Within 30 days of the committee receiving the prospectus draft, a prospectus defense date will be scheduled.

In this prospectus, you should consider the following questions:
• What thesis, hypothesis, or research question do you intend to explore?

• How do you plan to develop your thesis, test your hypothesis, or answer your research question?

• What research methods will you use?

• What data will you collect?

• How will you analyze the data collected?

• What is currently known about this thesis, hypothesis, or research question? [Your prospectus should include a literature review or a working bibliography that the committee considers to be sufficiently comprehensive.]

• Of what consequence is your proposed research? What is the significance of your proposed research? What will it add to the body of literature in your field?

• What schedule will you follow to ensure timely completion of the dissertation?

**Prospectus Defense**

The prospectus defense will include 2 (two) parts: 1.) a presentation and question/answer session where other faculty and students may attend and ask questions and 2.) a closed portion with the committee. After the presentation, the committee determines whether the prospectus and plan of work for the dissertation are acceptable and what revisions (if any) are needed.

If the work is acceptable, the student is considered ABD (All But Dissertation) and has achieved candidacy. If more than light revision is required to the prospectus, the decision constitutes a conditional pass, and the student may revise the prospectus in the form and by a date agreed on with the committee but no later than 30 days from the date of the defense. If the prospectus is unacceptable, the decision constitutes a failure and the student will have **one** opportunity to complete the prospectus process again by the end of the following semester. In no event should the student **complete** more than 18 s.h. of dissertation hours before completing a successful dissertation prospectus presentation/defense.

The committee chair will provide the DGS with a report of the outcome of the defense and a copy of the prospectus.
The prospectus, accompanied by the Dissertation Prospectus Presentation/ Defense Cover Sheet (see Appendices) signed by all committee members, should be delivered to the DGS.

Dissertation Research & Writing

Following the approval of your dissertation prospectus and submission to the DGS, your dissertation director has the responsibility for guiding you through the research and writing of the dissertation, but you should consult regularly with all members of your committee throughout the dissertation process. It might, though, be a good idea for you to ask committee members whether they wish to be consulted about any drafts of chapters that you produce or whether they wish to receive chapters after you, in consultation with your committee chair, have a near final version. You should submit individual dissertation chapters to your committee members for review and approval before you submit the completed dissertation. If and when your committee considers your dissertation to be defensible, you must defend the dissertation publicly. At that time, your committee may ask for additional revisions of the dissertation. Every member of your committee must approve and sign the dissertation signature page before you may submit it to the Graduate School for approval. Students submit dissertations electronically to the Graduate School. Be aware of semester due dates, format, and other requirements for the dissertation by going to the Graduate School’s “Theses and Dissertation” webpage.

Reminders

- If needed, obtain IRB approval.

- If you change your research design significantly from what was approved in your prospectus, you should meet with your full dissertation committee to discuss changes and have them approve the changes.

- Be aware of format and other requirements for the dissertation by going to the Graduate School website. Using the website index, you can access information related to your dissertation, such as a checklist for preparation and completion of dissertation, required electronic format (Electronic Theses and Ph.D. Dissertations or ETDs), elements of dissertations (manuals of style and pagination), and FAQs.

- **Your committee must receive a final draft of your dissertation at least 3 weeks before your scheduled defense.** Your committee members may require that you submit your dissertation draft more than 3 weeks before your defense, especially if your committee decides upon a procedure where you work with your
dissertation director to produce a near-final draft of your completed dissertation which you then distribute to committee members. A committee member has the right to delay the defense while revisions are made.

Dissertation Defense
When your committee considers your dissertation to be defensible, you must defend the dissertation publicly.

1. Contact the Graduate Administrative Assistant to the DGS to schedule the defense (time and place) as well as information needed for paperwork (such as dissertation title and names of committee members). You will need to submit the Graduate Studies Schedule Form before a room may be reserved.
   i. Your defense can be scheduled any time that school is in session, but you should schedule the defense at least two weeks before the graduate school semester deadline for submission.
   ii. Coordinate with the members of your dissertation committee.

2. The defense is a public event. The administrative assistant will place details about your defense on ECU Announce seven days prior, as well as have an email announcement distributed to English Department faculty and students.

3. Your defense will be approximately an hour and a half.

4. Your dissertation defense will be organized as follows. When preparing for your defense, also consult the Dissertation Defense Evaluation form in Appendices.

   ▪ An overview presentation that provides the context and scholarly conversation surrounding the issues explored within the dissertation. Remember that your dissertation is a project that you should be very proud of having completed, and that you will have some persons attending your defense who have no prior knowledge of your research.

      ✓ The context or scholarly conversation surrounding the issues explored in the research completed
      ✓ Methodologies/Methods
      ✓ Results/Implications/Conclusions

   ▪ The committee members and public participate in asking you
questions.

- The committee continues to ask additional questions without the public present. Revisions needed and any other matters are be addressed.

- With you present, the committee assesses the defense of the dissertation and the dissertation itself. Your committee will collaboratively evaluate the defense and dissertation. See Dissertation Defense Evaluation form in Appendices.

- Presentation of results: Committee speaks with candidate about their assessment of the dissertation and defense.

- During the time you meet with your committee following your public defense, your committee may ask for additional revisions of the dissertation. Every member of your committee must approve and sign your dissertation signature page before you may submit your dissertation to the Graduate School for approval. Be sure to take the signature page to your defense should committee members be willing to sign the page pending your revising as they indicate.

- Following a successful defense, revise dissertation as needed before submitting to the Graduate School for approval. Refer to the Graduate School website and/or the Graduate School Administrative Assistant for deadlines.