



**Handbook for PhD Program in
Rhetoric, Writing, & Professional Communication**

Department of English
Thomas Harriot College of Arts & Sciences

2022–2023

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PhD Program in Rhetoric, Writing, & Professional Communication Handbook
Department of English, East Carolina University¹

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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, the student can take advantage of other East Carolina University faculty strengths, both within and outside of the English Department (also referred to here as the Department), through cooperative agreements with affiliate departments, elective courses, collaborative research, and their 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 PhD degree.

Admission

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

- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended, including documentation of the successful completion of a master's degree
- Recent score on an approved language proficiency test for international students whose native language is not English (for current minimum scores, consult 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 PhD Coordinator and the DGS (the Director of Graduate Studies) will review the student's 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 9 hours to 15 hours.

Financial Support

IMPORTANT: If the student receives financial support from the English Department or another unit at East Carolina University, they will please review the documents offering that support carefully as these documents define satisfactory progress toward the degree. The student's primary advisor, dissertation director, the PhD Coordinator, or the DGS can provide additional information to help the student continue financial support.

Each year the Department makes a small number of awards for financial support in the form of assistantships and tuition remissions (amounts for assistantships are competitive nationally with similar programs in our field and are subject to fluctuation from year-to-year). These awards are based on scholarly achievement and promise. The Department generally receives numerous applications for these limited resources. Thus, if the student receives financial support, that support represents a considerable investment by the Department in their career; in return, the Department expects that the student will make a significant commitment to their 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 a financial package is offered for a student's first year (which normally includes a tuition remission, assistantship stipend for 20-to-25 hours a week for work, and health insurance) the Department will also offer this financial support for four years. This support is contingent upon satisfactory performance in the doctoral program as judged by annual reviews. Students will be required to pay semester fees each semester they are enrolled. The student 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.

If awarded, students can receive out-of-state tuition remission for up to two semesters, after which they can only receive in-state tuition remission unless an exception is approved by the department and the Graduate School. Out-of-state students should begin

completing residency acts necessary to establish in-state residency immediately upon relocating to North Carolina. (The two-semester time limit on out-of-state tuition support does not apply to international students with visa types that cannot establish North Carolina residency for tuition purposes.) For more information and instructions on requesting residency reclassification, refer to the ECU Graduate School's webpage on graduate student residency.

Summer funding is often available but not guaranteed. Students should consult closely with their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator early in the spring semester before the summer term in which the student wishes to receive funding to try to secure funding.

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 (consult the DGS with questions).

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).

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, managing the workload, and incompletes.

Residency and Credit Hour Requirements²

The Ph.D. degree requires satisfactory completion of at least 60 credit hours beyond the master's degree as well as completion of comprehensive examinations and defense of a dissertation. The Graduate School requires the student to complete 80% of the required degree credit for their program through enrollment in courses offered by ECU. Thus, the student can complete up to 12 s.h. (20%) at another institution. All transferred courses, whether taken before being admitted or while the student is working toward their degree, must be approved by the Graduate School. Typically, courses can transfer if the courses are graduate level, offered by a unit that grants a doctoral degree, and are taken/completed within the allowed length of time in which the student completes their degree. Consult "Transfer Credits" and "Time Limits for Completing Graduate Programs" 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 the student consult with their primary advisor/dissertation director, the PhD Coordinator, and the DGS before the student completes courses outside of ECU.

Consult "Time for Completion" about the length of time courses can count toward a student's degree whether they are taken at ECU or another university.

Time for Completion

The student must complete the degree requirements within seven academic years of their admission into the program. For example, if the student began Fall 2013, the student has until end of Summer 2020, not through the end of Fall 2020. With the endorsement of their committee, the Doctoral Program Committee, and the Department's DGS, the student may request **one** extension of not more than one academic year.³ Consult the Department's website under "graduate forms" for *Request for Extension* form.

For guidelines or questions concerning time limits about financial support, consult "Financial Support" in this handbook and consult with the DGS and Office of Financial Aid if the student has questions.

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

³ The ECU Graduate Catalog, which can be accessed from the ECU website, is final authority.

If the student earns 60 s.h. (the credit hours required for the Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication), but the student has not completed all of the degree requirements (e.g., exams and/or dissertation), the student **must** be continuously enrolled. The student must register each semester, but not during summers, until the student completes all degree requirements.

The student should consult with the PhD Coordinator and the DGS to determine whether they can receive credit for courses that have been completed 7 to 10 years before the semester that they graduate.

Progress Milestones. Once admitted, the student should use the *Plan of Study* form (consult the Department’s website under “graduate forms”) to help them plan their advancement through the Ph.D. program. These documents list requirements and accomplishments by which their progress will be evaluated through a typical full-time plan of study of eight semesters (four years). If the student is completing their degree based on part-time study, they should consult their primary advisor, dissertation director, or the PhD Coordinator to ensure successful progress to degree (consult “Advising Procedures” section below).

Managing the Workload

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, the student must enroll in 9 s.h. during fall and spring semesters. If the student has an assistantship, the student will also be expected to commit at least 20 hours per week to their assistantship duties. Moreover, teaching one class, particularly the first time the student teaches it, often requires the student 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 hours (or 25, if additional five hours are offered and taken) required with English Department financial support (or that received from other sources) is not recommended.

Part-time Students. While students are not required to enroll in a specified number of credit hours during fall and spring semesters, students must balance their course work with work responsibilities, if they are employed. Students also need to fulfill progress milestones in order to complete doctoral degree requirements within the time limits.

Both Full-time and Part-time Students. In addition, to prepare to be competitive for the job market, students should complete professional development activities, such as presenting at conferences and writing articles for publication, appropriate for their intended career. Students can obtain additional information about professional activities from their primary advisor, the PhD Coordinator, and the DGS.

TIP: While not required, the PhD faculty, PhD Coordinator, and the DGS strongly suggest students participate (beginning in the student's third year and into the student's fourth year – and fifth year if applicable) in the program's PhD Jobs group that meets periodically throughout the academic year. Consult the PhD Coordinator for more information on the Jobs Group.

The student should meet with their primary advisor, dissertation director, the PhD Coordinator, or the DGS about managing workload, including courses and other responsibilities that the student has.

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

Incompletes should be requested only **as a last resort**. Typically, only medical or personal emergencies after 75% of the coursework is completed will constitute sufficient grounds for an instructor to grant an incomplete in a course.

Do not rely on incompletes will be given if projects are not submitted at the end of the course. Students must **request** an incomplete from their instructor as soon as an emergency occurs.

As part of the request for an incomplete, the following must be provided to the instructor:

1. A written document detailing reasons for requesting the incomplete.
2. A timeline that indicates the steps and dates by which the student intends to complete the required coursework. (Note that failure to meet the deadline for completion of an incomplete or an incomplete that overlaps into a following semester may result in poor progress toward degree and termination of assistantship.)

Procedures and Specific Requirements

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

PhD Orientation & Ongoing Professional Development

New PhD students will attend an orientation before the fall semester begins hosted by the PhD Coordinator and Director of Graduate Studies. During this orientation students will:

- get familiar with campus and the main people they need to know
- meet PhD faculty and cohort members
- learn about the degree program and course offerings
- fill out their degree worksheet

- design a slide summarizing their research interests to be presented at convocation
- meet with their assigned advisor

Beyond orientation, students should plan to remain engaged in professional development opportunities offered by the program. Generally, this will include a mid-semester event and/or check-in and an end-of-semester event and/or check-in.

The program requires 3 s.h. of English 8300: Seminar in Professional Development. One credit will be earned in the first fall and one in the first spring as part of a course that meets regularly. The third credit may be earned via participation in Jobs Group or a Directed Reading and should be arranged in consultation with the students' advisor and the PhD Coordinator in the student's third year.

PhD Advising Procedures

The Ph.D. advising process assists in creating a schedule of courses, in preparing for comprehensive examinations, and in completing the dissertation. Consult the Department's website under "graduate forms" for *Plan of Study* form. Students should keep their *Plan of Study* form up-to-date and refer to it frequently to be sure they are on track.

Soon after admission to the program, the PhD Coordinator will assign the student a primary advisor who will work with them to establish a plan of study through coursework and exams. The PhD Coordinator 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 PhD Coordinator.
- Consult with advisees on a dissertation director and committee.

The PhD Coordinator, 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 the primary advisor determines that a student is 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), the student and primary advisor will meet with the PhD Coordinator to determine a plan of action.

Course Requirements

1. **Ten required courses (30 s.h.).** Students 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. **Three elective courses in the English or affiliate departments (9 s.h.).** These courses will be selected in consultation with the student's advisor. 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, students should consider English courses outside of their primary area(s) of emphasis as well as courses in other departments, according to what best prepares the student for dissertation research and career goals.

While we encourage students to take courses offered by the Department, it may be possible to complete ENGL 8100 Directed Reading (3 s.h.) and/or ENGL 8200 Cooperative Research Assignment (3 s.h.) as part of required electives. These courses should supplement their coursework and advance their research interests and career goals. Consult PhD Coordinator or the DGS for more information.

3. **ENGL 9000 Dissertation (21 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; dissertation research is to be a substantive endeavor. Students may complete more than 18 s.h. of dissertation credit hours, but only 18 s.h. of dissertation credit hours count toward the degree.

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

In the event students receive an Unsatisfactory (U) evaluation in ENGL 9000 credits in one semester, the student will meet with their primary advisor and the DGS to agree on a written plan to avoid further unsatisfactory work. This meeting will take place prior to or by the end of the first week of the following semester. Additionally, a mid-semester progress meeting with both primary advisor and the DGS should occur by the end of Advising Week (as specified by the University calendar). In the event of an Unsatisfactory (U) in ENGL 9000 credits a second semester, the student will be placed on academic probation. Three semesters of Unsatisfactory (U) work on the student's transcript may result in the student's dismissal from the program.

Special Conditions Applicable to Course Requirements. Students 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 PhD Coordinator and 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 a student has been awarded an assistantship, they will be required to take ENGL 6625 Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice (3 s.h.) as a condition of employment. ENGL 6625 counts as elective credits toward the degree. If a student has completed a similar course and/or has previous post-secondary teaching experience, they may request a waiver for this course from the PhD Coordinator and the DGS.
- If a student is a foreign national, they should be aware of the Immigration and Naturalization Service requirements that mandate 9 s.h. per term.

Plan of Study. The student, along with their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator, should create a plan of study. Consult other faculty, especially exam committee members, as needed and use the guidelines that follow to create a plan of study:

- **Course Level:** Students complete 13 courses (39 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 may not, though, use transferred courses for any of the required courses. In addition, transferred courses must be graduate-level courses and, unless approved by PhD Coordinator and the 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 PhD Coordinator and the DGS prior to enrolling in those courses (consult the timeline and the Department's website under "graduate forms" for the form that needs to be completed at this stage).

Preliminary Review Examination & Annual Reports

Preliminary Review (PR)

Students are responsible for submitting a portfolio to the PhD Coordinator and the student's PR committee by the first day of classes of the semester directly following completion of 18 s.h. that count toward the degree. Students will submit a portfolio including:

1. Updated ***Plan of Study*** form under "graduate forms" on the Department's website.
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 PhD Coordinator.

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 PhD Coordinator. The PhD Coordinator will coordinate with and inform the student of their PR Committee by the end of the semester in which the student completes 18 s.h.

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 PhD Coordinator and the student within two weeks of the date the portfolios are submitted. The student's primary advisor then sets up a meeting with the student and the PhD Coordinator to review results within two weeks of the student receiving the PR Committee's feedback/decision.

Students who do not successfully complete the PR the first time will have one

opportunity to revise their portfolio, given the committee's feedback, and re-submit the portfolio materials. A student may choose to submit the revised materials anytime after their meeting with their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator and before the second day of the following semester (excluding summer). Students should review the practical affordances of various timelines with the PhD Coordinator. The student's revised portfolio will be reviewed by the Doctoral Program Committee (DPC) and given a pass or fail. The student's advisor will consult with the DPC if requested; if the advisor is a member of DPC, they do not need to recuse themselves from deliberations or voting. The PhD Coordinator will provide this decision to the student within two weeks of receiving the student's revised portfolio.

Failure to pass the preliminary review after the revision as decided by the DPC will result in the student's dismissal from the program effective at the conclusion of the semester of the failed revision attempt.

Annual Reports

Students are responsible for turning in an annual report to the PhD Coordinator 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 PhD Coordinator will meet individually with the PhD students the first few weeks of the fall semester to review their annual reports.

Comprehensive Examinations

Three exams and a journal-ready article or bibliographic essay make up the 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 their dissertation research project.

In consultation with their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator, 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. (Consult the timeline and the Department's website under "graduate forms" 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 refereed 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 their 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 PhD Coordinator and 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 their 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 the student understands and positions themselves 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 their exam committee, that inform the area of specialization and its relationship to the rest of the field. The reading list should be accompanied by a 500–1000-word statement/rationale and guiding questions that define their 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 understands 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 exams 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 the student to complete the PhD core exam. The article will be sent to the exam committee on the day of the PhD core exam. At the completion of the PhD core exam, the student will be given the specialization exam. Students will have seven 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 two weeks and no more than six 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 student's 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 their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator 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's PhD faculty 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 Dissertation Committee Members. Individuals external to ECU with demonstrated expertise in the area of study in a 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 DGS and the unit graduate faculty members serving on the thesis or dissertation committee. The DGS 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.

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

Dissertation Prospectus Guidelines

The length and format of the prospectus may vary considerably and should be determined in consultation with the student's committee. In consultation with the dissertation director (and committee as needed), the student will submit to their 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, the student should consider the following questions:

- What thesis, hypothesis, or research question does the student intend to explore?

- How does the student plan to develop their thesis, test their hypothesis, or answer their research question?
- What research methods will the student use?
- What data will the student collect?
- How will the student analyze the data collected?
- What is currently known about this thesis, hypothesis, or research question? (The prospectus should include a literature review or a working bibliography that the committee considers to be sufficiently comprehensive.)
- Of what consequence is their proposed research? What is the significance of their proposed research? What will it add to the body of literature in their field?
- What schedule will the student follow to ensure timely completion of the dissertation?

Prospectus Defense

The prospectus defense will include 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 PhD Coordinator 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** (consult the Department's website under "graduate forms") signed by all committee members, should be delivered to the PhD Coordinator.

Dissertation Research & Writing

Following the approval of the dissertation prospectus and submission to the PhD Coordinator, the dissertation director has the responsibility for guiding the student

through the research and writing of the dissertation, but the student should consult regularly with all members of their committee throughout the dissertation process. It might be a good idea for the student to ask committee members whether they wish to be consulted about any drafts of chapters that the student produces or whether they wish to receive chapters after the student, in consultation with their committee chair, have a near final version. The student should submit individual dissertation chapters to their committee members for review and approval before the student submits the completed dissertation. If and when their committee considers their dissertation to be defensible, the student must defend the dissertation publicly. At that time, their committee may ask for additional revisions of the dissertation. Every member of their committee must approve and sign the dissertation signature page before the student 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 accessing to the Graduate School's "Theses and Dissertation" webpage.

Reminders

- If needed, obtain IRB approval.
- If the student changes their research design significantly from what was approved in their prospectus, the student should meet with their full dissertation committee to discuss changes and have them approve the changes.
- Be aware of format and other requirements for the dissertation by accessing the Graduate School website. Using the website index, the student can access information related to their 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.
- **The committee must receive a final draft of the dissertation at least three weeks before the scheduled defense.** The committee members may require that the student submits their dissertation draft more than three weeks before their defense, especially if the committee decides upon a procedure where the student works with their dissertation director to produce a near-final draft of their completed dissertation that the student then distributes to committee members. A committee member has the right to delay the defense while revisions are made.

Dissertation Defense

When their committee considers their dissertation to be defensible, the student must defend the dissertation publicly.

1. Contact the Graduate Administrative Assistant to the DGS to schedule the defense (time and place) as well as to provide information needed for

paperwork (such as dissertation title, abstract, and names of committee members). The student will need to submit the **Graduate Studies Schedule Form** before a room may be reserved. The defense can be scheduled any time that school is in session, but the student should schedule the defense at least two weeks before the Graduate School's semester deadline for submission. Coordinate with the members of the dissertation committee.

2. The defense is a public event. The administrative assistant will place details about the defense on ECU Announce seven days prior, as well as have an email announcement distributed to English Department faculty and students.
3. The defense will be approximately an hour and a half.
4. The dissertation defense will be organized as follows. When preparing for the defense, also consult the *Dissertation Defense Evaluation* form on the Department's website under "graduate forms."
 - An overview presentation that provides the context and scholarly conversation surrounding the issues explored within the dissertation. Remember that the dissertation is a project that the student should be very proud of having completed, and that the student will have some people attending the defense who may have no prior knowledge of the student's 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 the student questions.
 - The committee continues to ask additional questions without the public present and addresses revisions needed and any other matters that the student needs to address.
 - With the student present, the committee assesses the defense of the dissertation and the dissertation itself. The committee will **collaboratively** evaluate the defense and dissertation. Consult *Dissertation Defense Evaluation* form under "graduate forms" on the Department's website.
 - Presentation of results: Committee meets with candidate about their assessment of the dissertation and defense.

- During the time the student meets with their committee following their public defense, their committee may ask for additional revisions of the dissertation. Every member of the committee must approve and sign the dissertation signature page before the student may submit their dissertation to the Graduate School for approval. The student must be sure to take the signature page to the defense should committee members be willing to sign the page pending the revising as they indicate.
- Following a successful defense, the student will revise the 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.
- Additionally, if the student needed IRB approval for the dissertation research, they must close out the IRB case through the appropriate steps.

Post RWPC PhD

We encourage the student, after the completion of the degree to keep in touch with the Department to share jobs, successes, publications, and so on so that the Department may publicize and update these in Department materials.