



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

Department of English
Thomas Harriot College of Arts & Sciences

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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 enables students to integrate theoretical and practical perspectives while studying rhetoric, writing, and professional communication. The program emphasizes public and community rhetoric across a variety of genres and media, providing aspiring scholar-teachers with a wide range of research and pedagogical opportunities, as well as support for their professional growth 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 detailed document that summarizes a student's academic history, qualifications and accomplishments)
- 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 must carefully review the documents offering that support 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 maintain 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, it normally includes a tuition remission, assistantship stipend for 20 –to 25 hours per week for work, and health insurance. A funding package includes eight Fall or Spring semesters of enrollment, contingent upon satisfactory performance in the doctoral program as determined in annual reviews. Students may be eligible for one or more additional semesters of support, contingent on available funds, if requested by the student; this additional support is not guaranteed. Students will be required to pay semester fees each semester they are enrolled. 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. Thereafter, students 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 do not permit them to 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 is not guaranteed. Students should consult their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator early in the spring semester before the summer term in which the student wishes to receive summer funding.

Current students who are not presently receiving, but wish to apply for, financial support should submit the graduate assistantship application each semester.

For information about federal 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 109 Mendenhall (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, services, and employment.

University policy strictly prohibits any form of harassment, coercion, interference, restraint, penalty, discrimination, or retaliation against an employee or student who responsibly exercises the applicable policies. Such actions would obstruct free expression and openness and violate the university's commitment to creating a safe and supportive community. Therefore, members of the university community must refrain from engaging in any acts of reprisal and/or retaliation against individuals who file complaints, act 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 passing comprehensive exams and defending a dissertation. Students must complete 80% of the program's required credit hours by enrolling in ECU courses. This means that they may complete up to 12 semester hours (20%) at another institution, subject to approval by the Graduate School. To be considered for approval, transferred courses must be at the graduate level, offered by an institution that grants doctoral degrees, and completed within the allowed period for degree completion. For more information on transfer credits and time limits, please consult the ECU Graduate Catalog under "Transfer Credits" and "Time Limits for Completing Graduate Programs." To request approval for transfer credits, the student may contact the assistant to the DGS for assistance.

The student should consult with their primary advisor/dissertation director, the PhD Coordinator, and the DGS before completing courses outside of ECU.

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 financial support time limits, consult "Financial Support" in this handbook and consult with the DGS and Office of Financial Aid about any questions.

After completing the 60 s.h. of coursework required for the Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication, the student must be continuously enrolled while completing the other degree requirements (e.g., exams and dissertation) To maintain continuous enrollment, the student must register during each fall and spring semester. Enrollment during summer terms is not required to maintain continuous enrollment.

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.

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. This document outlines the requirements and accomplishments that will be used to evaluate their advancement on a standard full-time schedule of eight semesters (four years). Students pursuing part-time study should consult their primary advisor, dissertation director, or the PhD Coordinator to ensure steady progress towards degree completion (refer to the “Advising Procedures” section below).

Managing the Workload

Both full-time and part-time doctoral students might find it difficult to manage course and work schedules along with other professional activities.

Full-time Students. To be considered a full-time graduate student and qualify for most forms of financial aid, students must maintain a minimum enrollment of 9 s.h. during each fall and spring semester.

Part-time Students. Aside from the minimum credit requirements for part-time students to receive financial aid (if applicable), there is no required number of credit hours for fall and spring semesters. Students should balance their course load with any employment or personal obligations they may have. All students, including part-time students, are expected to meet progress milestones completing the doctoral degree requirements within the allotted time.

Both Full-time and Part-time Students. To prepare to be competitive for the job market, students **are expected to** 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: Students are encouraged to join the program’s PhD Jobs group during their third and fourth years (and fifth year if applicable) to increase their chances of finding employment after graduation. Although participation is not mandatory, interested students can inquire about the Jobs Group with the PhD Coordinator.

Incompletes. 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**. Instructors generally consider granting an incomplete in a course only for medical or personal emergencies that arise after the student has completed 75% of the coursework.

Students should not assume that incompletes will be granted simply because they are unable to submit projects at the end of the course. If an emergency arises, students must promptly request an incomplete from their instructor.

As part of the request for an incomplete, students must provide the following information 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. (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.)

PhD Teaching Sequencing and Support

Students pursuing the PhD in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication will receive support in their growth as educators and receive significant guidance as they assume new teaching roles and responsibilities. As they gain experience, they will be encouraged to explore various pedagogical approaches and teach a variety of courses to develop their own teaching philosophies and styles.

The following represents a general goal for teaching sequencing rather than a guarantee; the department assigns teaching based on many factors that are not always predictable. Our aim is the following:

In their first year, PhD GTAs who meet accreditation requirements will have the opportunity to teach ENGL 1100/2201 as the instructor of record, while receiving support through orientation, teaching circles, and weekly meetings. Moreover, incoming PhD students will be assigned an advisor who can assist them with teaching as well as program plans. To qualify for teaching, GTAs must have completed 18 s.h. of English graduate coursework at any accredited institution, including ENGL 6625: Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice (or an equivalent course). First-year GTAs who do not meet accreditation requirements will need to complete the necessary coursework and will be assigned duties that support their pedagogical learning before they can become an instructor-of-record.

After one year of teaching experience in Writing Foundations, GTAs will have the opportunity to rank course preferences in alignment with their backgrounds and interests. Assignment to a preferred course is not guaranteed. GTAs will receive support via orientation and monthly teaching circles and/or check-ins with an assigned supervisor. Experienced teachers assigned to teach ENGL 1100 or 2201 are welcome to attend

weekly support meetings.

The department strives to maintain transparency regarding teaching assignments. Students should discuss their teaching interests and goals with their support network (including their advisors, the PhD Coordinator, and the DGS). Questions about teaching assignments should be referred to the DGS. Ultimately, the Director of Graduate Studies in English assigns assistantships based on the needs of the department.

Procedures and Specific Requirements

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

PhD Orientation and 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 are expected 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 student's advisor and the PhD Coordinator in the student's third year.

PhD Advising Procedures

The Ph.D. advising process assists students in creating their schedule of courses, in preparing for comprehensive examinations, and in completing the dissertation. To create a Plan of Study, students may refer to the Department's website under "Graduate Forms." It is recommended that students keep their Plan of Study form up –to date and refer to it

regularly to ensure they are making progress toward their degree requirements.

Soon after admission to the program, the PhD Coordinator will assign each 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

In case a student is not meeting the expected progress standards, the primary advisor will meet with the student and the PhD Coordinator to establish a plan of action. Failure to meet expected progress standards could be due to several factors, including frequently having incompletes, receiving low grades, and failing to complete required courses in a timely manner.

Course Requirements

1. **Ten required courses (30 s.h.).** Students should complete these courses as early as possible in their program. Courses are typically offered in a rotation every third semester; students are advised to register for the course as soon as it becomes available.

- 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.).** The selection of elective courses should be made in consultation with the student's advisor. These courses can be selected from among the graduate courses offered in the Department of English or those offered in other departments. To prepare for dissertation research and career goals, students are encouraged to consider English courses outside their primary areas of interest as well as courses in other departments, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the program.

Students are encouraged to take courses offered by the Department. In exceptional cases, 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 the student's coursework and advance their research interests and career goals. Consult with the PhD Coordinator or the DGS to discuss directed reading and cooperative research opportunities.

3. **ENGL 9000 Dissertation (21 s.h.).** A minimum of 18 semester hours of dissertation credits are required to provide ample time for independent and original research. The number of credits (equivalent to six courses or 18 s.h.) indicates the level of effort and engagement required in the dissertation research. While students have the option to take additional credits, only 18 s.h. of dissertation credit will be counted toward the degree.

Exceeding the limit of 18 semester hours of dissertation credit may have an impact on certain types of financial assistance.

In the event students receive an Unsatisfactory (U) evaluation in ENGL 9000 credits, the student must meet with their primary advisor and the DGS to develop 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 DGS should occur by the end of Advising Week (as specified in the ECU Academic Calendar). In the event of an Unsatisfactory (U) in ENGL 9000 credits in 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 course requirements:

- As this program may attract students with diverse academic backgrounds, the PhD Coordinator and the DGS will review each applicant's academic history to determine if previous coursework can be used to exempt certain required courses. If courses are exempted, students may use the equivalent credit hours toward

elective courses instead of the waived requirement(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 an elective course toward the degree. If a student has completed a similar course and/or has previous post-secondary teaching experience, they may request a waiver of 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 a minimum of 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. The student may also consult other faculty, especially exam committee members, as needed. the following guidelines **will help the student to** create a plan of study:

- **Course Level:** Students must 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 may transfer up to 12 semester hours (equivalent to four courses) into the program, which is the equivalent of 20% of the 60 semester-hour degree program. However, transferred courses cannot be used to fulfill any of the required courses. Additionally, the transferred courses must be at the graduate level offered by an institution that grants doctoral degrees, unless approved by both the PhD Coordinator and the DGS. Students who plan to take courses at other institutions and wish to transfer credit must first obtain approval from the PhD Coordinator and the DGS. They can find the necessary form on the Department's website under "Graduate Forms" and consult the timeline for more information.

Preliminary Review & Annual Reports

Preliminary Review (PR)

Students are responsible for submitting a portfolio to the PhD Coordinator and the student's Preliminary Review (PR) Committee by the first day of classes of the semester directly following completion of 18 s.h. of degree coursework. 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 PR Committee will consist of three faculty members, including the primary advisor, a faculty member selected by the student, and another faculty member selected by the PhD Coordinator. Once the student completes 18 s.h., the PhD Coordinator will inform students of their PR Committee and coordinate with them.

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, using the committee's feedback, and re-submit the portfolio materials. The deadline for submission of the revised portfolio is the second day of the following semester (excluding summer), and the student should discuss possible timelines with the PhD Coordinator. The revised portfolio will be evaluated by the Doctoral Program Committee, and the student will receive a pass or fail decision from the PhD Coordinator within two weeks of submitting their revised portfolio. The student's advisor may consult with the DPC. If the advisor is also a member of the DPC, the advisor may participate in deliberations and voting.

Failure to pass the preliminary review after the revision (as determined by the Doctoral Program Committee) 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).

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 each PhD student during the first few weeks of the fall semester to review their annual reports.

Comprehensive Examinations

The comprehensive examinations consist of two essay-style examinations and the submission of either a journal-ready article or a bibliographic essay. The comprehensive exams include three elements: the Core Exam, the Specialization Exam, and the submission of either a publish-ready article or bibliographic essay. Through these exams, students can demonstrate the extent and depth of knowledge they have gained from their coursework. The comprehensive exams serve as preparation for the dissertation project and also evaluate students’ readiness to undertake it.

In consultation with their primary advisor and the PhD Coordinator, students will choose a PhD faculty member to chair their comprehensive exams. In consultation with their comprehensive exams committee chair, students will choose two other members of the PhD faculty to serve on 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 also serve as the student’s dissertation committee.

Suggested timeline for full-time PhD students

Fall 1	Coursework
Spring 1	Coursework
Summer 1	Begin work on core list
Fall 2	Coursework / form exam committee
Spring 2	Coursework / Turn in reading lists and article draft
Summer 2	Read for exams
Fall 3	Comprehensive Exams
Spring 3	Prospectus defense / write two dissertation chapters

Students should plan to complete their comprehensive exams before accumulating 57 semester hours (generally, this means by the end of their 6th semester for full-time

Summer 3	Request letters of recommendation / write dissertation
Fall 4	Dissertation and job market
Spring 4	Interviews and defense

students or 10th semester for part-time students) in the program. Students who will not meet this benchmark must request an extension in writing.

Students should submit reading lists with rationale drafts to their committee no later than the mid-point of the semester prior to sitting for exams. The journal article proposal and/or draft also should be received by the exam committee in the semester prior to the student sitting for exams.

Students should work with their committees to schedule their comprehensive exams so that they will conclude no later than two weeks before the last day of regular classes. The student is responsible for forwarding their publish-ready article to the full exam committee, the Graduate Administrative Assistant, and the PhD Coordinator ahead of the scheduled core exam. At the completion of the core exam, the student will be given the specialization exam. Students will hear from the exam committee within two weeks of submitting the specialization exam, and the student will then work to schedule the exam review meeting for a date that is to occur two to 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 determines whether the article is ready to be sent to the selected journal.

The student's core and specialization exams are evaluated by the exam committee, which assesses the student's proficiency in (1) developing and maintaining an academic argument, (2) selecting and integrating supporting sources, (3) identifying and analyzing key issues, trends, and discussions in the field, (4) communicating ideas in a manner appropriate for the academic context, and (5) demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between their area of specialization and other relevant topics 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 discuss courses of action, which may include dismissal from the program.

Journal-Ready Article (or Bibliographic Essay)

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.

Core Exam

The core exam is intended to provide space for doctoral students to synthesize key readings from their coursework, particularly their 8000-level seminars, and to address meaningful questions about the intersections among rhetoric, writing, and professional communication. This exam provides useful practice that helps students both to situate their own research in the broader field and to answer questions about the field and their research during academic job interviews.

This take-home exam will assess the student's breadth of knowledge from the core areas of rhetoric, writing, and professional communication. In consultation with their committee, students will compile a reading list for the core exam. The reading list should include approximately 20 works balanced between the core areas of the PhD: rhetorical theory and history; writing studies and pedagogy; and professional communication theory and practice. 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. The committee will use the reading lists to create the exam questions.

Students will have one (1) calendar day from the time they receive their exam questions to complete this exam. This exam will consist of four (4) questions and students will pick two (2) to answer. Each response will be an essay (recommended 1,000-2,000 words) that includes in-text citations and a related references section and that includes a list of at least 5-6 sources for each essay.

Specialization Exam

The specialization exam is intended to provide space for doctoral students to articulate their particular interests in the fields of rhetoric, writing, and professional communication. As students begin to express their intended area of expertise, they should define the boundaries of that area, identify significant questions about the relevant disciplines, and demonstrate a thorough understanding of existing conversations. This exam provides useful practice in narrowing and articulating a research agenda and is often used as a guide for the dissertation prospectus (and the dissertation itself).

This take-home exam will assess the student's developing area of specialization and its relationship to the rest of the field. In consultation with their committee, students will compile a reading list for the specialization exam. The reading list should include approximately 30–40 works 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 the student's area of specialization and its relationship to the rest of the field. The committee will use the reading lists to create the exam questions.

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 and 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.

Note: The core and specialization reading lists should include books, chapters, excerpts, and journal articles applicable to how the student 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.

Exam Review Meeting

After successfully passing the core and specialization exams, the student will meet with their exam committee and respond to questions related to the exam answers, rationales, 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 students' progress and what will follow. Feedback from all parts of the comprehensive exams will be delivered to the student at the Exam Review Meeting and reported to the PhD Coordinator and the DGS.

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. An expert in the field of study of a dissertation who is not affiliated with ECU may be appointed to a thesis or dissertation committee, but they may not serve as a chair. The external member should have either a terminal degree in a relevant field or extensive professional experience. To appoint an external member, the DGS and the unit graduate faculty members on the committee must approve the appointment. 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 differ based on the student's committee's recommendations. The student, in consultation with the dissertation director and committee (if required), will provide a draft of the dissertation prospectus to their dissertation committee. This draft should include a dissertation work plan and a preliminary bibliography. The committee must schedule a prospectus defense date within 30 days of receiving the prospectus draft.

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 public 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 deemed 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

Upon approval of the dissertation prospectus and submission to the PhD Coordinator, the dissertation director takes on the responsibility of guiding the student through the research and writing of the dissertation. However, the student is expected to regularly consult 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. Once the 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 intends to make significant changes to their research, they must consult their full dissertation committee and obtain approval for the changes.
- The Graduate School website contains important information regarding the format and other requirements for the dissertation. By referring to the website index, students can access various resources related to their dissertation, such as a checklist for preparing and completing their dissertation, guidelines for electronic submission (Electronic Theses and Ph.D. Dissertation or EDTs), and instructions on elements of dissertations including style manuals and pagination. Additionally, the website includes frequently asked questions that may be helpful to students.

- **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: the committee meets with the candidate to discuss the committee’s assessment of the dissertation and defense.
- During the time the student meets with their committee following their public defense, the committee may request 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 bring the signature page to the defense should committee members be prepared to sign the page (pending any indicated revisions).
- Following a successful defense, the student will revise the dissertation as needed before submitting it 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 to conduct the dissertation research, they must close out the IRB case by taking 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.