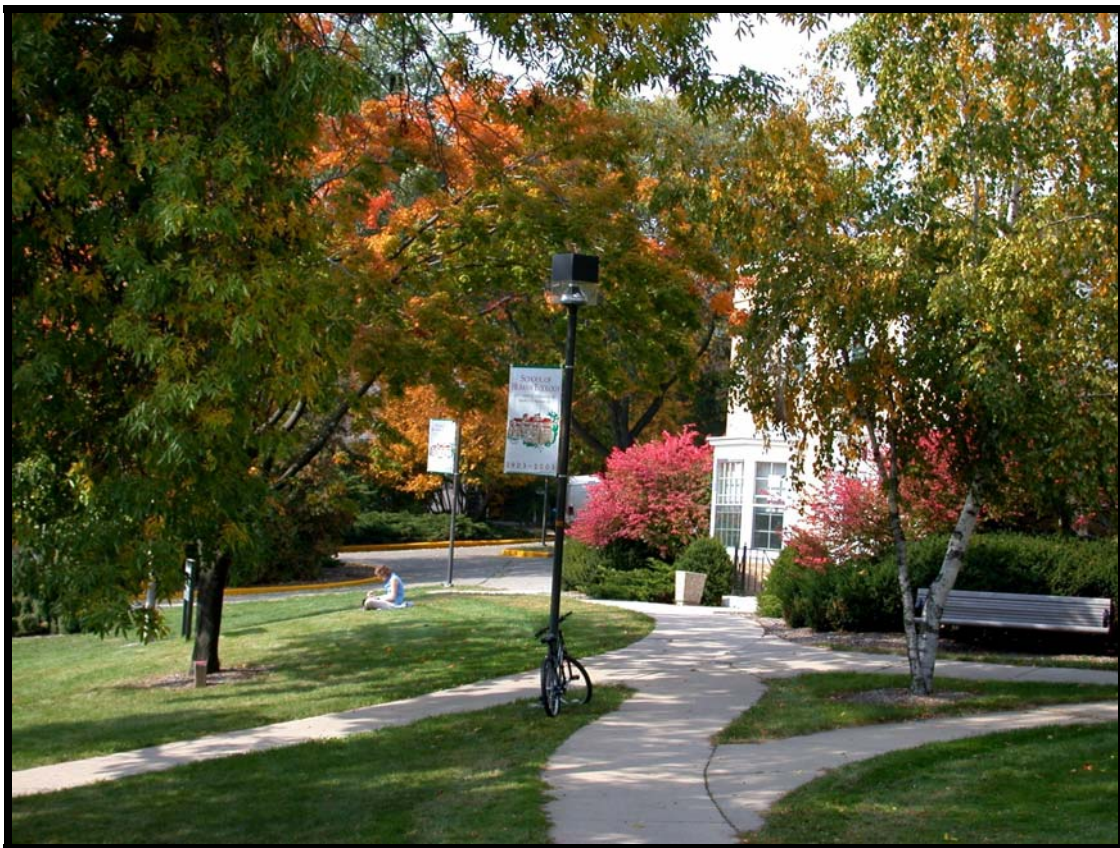


University of Wisconsin—Madison
Human Ecology: Human Development & Family Studies

Handbook for Graduate Study
Policies and Procedures for Students and Faculty



June 2008 -- Version 8.2

This handbook was prepared by Linda Roberts and Jane Weier and is based on our previous Handbook, policies and procedures as recorded in individual documents and meeting minutes, and descriptions of current “norms” in the department. In addition, the handbook has been improved and edited with input from a number of faculty and students and this feedback has been an invaluable part of the process. The handbook will grow and change over time, please send corrections or suggestions to the Administrative Assistant as they occur to you.



UW-HDFS Handbook for Graduate Study Policies and Procedures for Students and Faculty

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Welcome!

Welcome to the UW-Madison Graduate Program in Human Ecology: Human Development and Family Studies. We're glad you're here, and hope this handbook will help you successfully navigate your graduate career here.

Even if you've attended UW-Madison as an undergraduate, graduate school represents a whole new world. If you're arriving here from another part of the U.S.—or from another country—you'll have the new geographic and cultural environment to get used to in addition to the campus. We are here to help you in any way we can with the transition. We recommend the following website as a starting point: <http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/gradstdntlife/index.html>. The Guide not only contains information that will orient you to your new life on this campus, but has great resources to help you later in your journey here, for example, tips for finding jobs, dissertator support, workshops, etc. Visit it often and explore it deeply!

We want to include as many of the relevant policies and forms in this printed handbook as we can, but you should always be able to find these forms and an online version of the material in this Handbook on our [department Website](#). We will try to keep the online Handbook as updated as possible. We suggest you read the Handbook cover to cover when you first arrive, and then refer to it regularly as you move through the program.

In an effort to keep pace with changing policies in the Graduate School, we will refer you to the UW Graduate School website whenever possible—they have final authority on many aspects of your graduate work. You will want to bookmark the [Graduate School Website for Academic Policies & Procedures](#)—it will be an invaluable source of information for you—everything from policy for members of your committee to Continuous Enrollment Requirement, Credit Load, Deadlines, Dissertator, Incompletes, Warrants... everything from A to Z (see the index!).

As you start your graduate school journey, the focus on policies and procedures in this Handbook could make you lose sight of the overall purpose of your work in our department. We thought it important to start this HDFS Graduate Student Handbook at the end--with how we hope you will be prepared when you leave our department with your degree in hand. The overall mission of the HDFS department is to “improve quality of life by discovering, integrating, applying, and disseminating knowledge about human development, families, and their larger social contexts.” We believe that all the time and effort it takes to become a graduate of our department will help you personally, and will prepare you to use your degree to make a difference in your area of study. Regardless of whether HDFS graduates pursue careers in academic or applied settings, we hope they will leave prepared for a life of scholarship and service.

We all know how it feels to be new to a community-- it can be confusing and overwhelming. And this Handbook won't answer all of your questions. If you have questions about the program and you can't find the answer here, be sure to ask! There are four people you should immediately think of to ask: your advisor, the Department Administrator, the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee, or the Chair of the Department. They are all willing to help you navigate the program and support your professional development. And we were reminded by a student to tell you that other graduate students can be one of your best resources for help and support! They share your vantage point on the program and can supplement the perspective you receive from faculty and administrators.

We have organized this handbook for the first-time user—that is, we begin with background information and then move chronologically, beginning with your first official steps, through to the completion of the Master’s Thesis and Doctoral Degree. If you are looking for specific information, see the [Table of Contents](#) to help you navigate the Handbook.

Good luck on your graduate career at Madison!

Introductions: Who We Are

The Department & School

Human Development and Family Studies is one of three concentrations within the Human Ecology Graduate Major. The other two are “Consumer Behavior & Family Economics” (within the Consumer Science department) and “Design Studies” (within the Design Studies department). The SoHE Graduate School Council oversees the entire Human Ecology graduate major.

Currently the department has 13 tenure-track faculty and a handful of additional adjunct faculty who have “joint appointments” (their main department is another department on campus but they can serve on and “chair” graduate student committees). We also hire several lecturers throughout the academic year (including some of our own doctoral students). The Department Chair changes every 2-3 years. There is one department administrator with a part-time student hourly assistant. Department staff meetings occur at least monthly.

We also have standing committees, including the Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC), which focuses on undergraduate issues such as courses, checklists, admissions, etc. and the Graduate Program Committee (GPC), which focuses on graduate admissions, recruitment, financial aid decisions, merit review, courses, requirements, etc. A graduate student representative, elected by the Graduate Student Organization, serves on the GPC to represent student interests.

HDFS is one department within the School of Human Ecology (one of the 13 schools and colleges within the UW—Madison). And there are also standing committees at the School level. Most important with respect to graduate students is the SoHE Graduate School Council, headed by the Associate Dean of Graduate Education and Research. This committee also has a graduate student representative.

Find out more information about the School of Human Ecology at: <http://sohe.wisc.edu> and the department at <http://sohe.wisc.edu/departments/hdfs>

Finding and using space and facilities

You will want to familiarize yourself with the physical facilities in the department and school. When you arrive on campus, stop by the main departmental office and introduce yourself to our department administrator. She can show you where things are located, including your mailbox, graduate student lounge, faculty offices, and display cases of photographs of faculty and current graduate students. Bring your smile, so that she can take your photo to add.

The department bulletin board behind the mailboxes has information about Graduate School deadlines, fellowships and job opportunities, as well as classes and volunteer opportunities. Be sure to check it frequently. There is a student lounge in the basement of the HDFS building where you can

meet other students, use the computers (one with SPSS), use a phone, or have lunch. The entire HDFS Building is equipped with wireless internet capability.

Unfortunately, there are no facilities for printing or copying within the HDFS building. There are several campus copy machines located within walking distance of the HDFS building. Van Hise Hall the Social Science Building and the Social Work library right across the street have copy machines that are available to students, as does 106 Taylor Hall.

If you need a room to hold a meeting in, the Department Administrator can set you up in Room 101 if it is available, or you can find alternate meeting spaces through in the SoHE building. If you have an assistantship you will be assigned office space. Some students choose to use a reserved library carrel as their work space on campus, contact [Memorial Library](#) for availability guidelines.

Departmental Funding

For a General Introduction to Funding and a variety of funding sources, fellowships, scholarships, travel and research awards and more, visit "[Graduate Funding](#)" on the [School of Human Ecology's website](#).

A number of teaching assistantships (TA's) and occasionally some project assistantships (PA's) are available directly through the department. A distinction is made between the departmentally administered PA's and PA's administered by individual faculty members, usually grant funded. Faculty make their own decisions about hiring project assistantships for their research work since specific skills are often required to perform these jobs. The department, however, makes hiring decisions with respect to TA's and departmental PA's.

The department has an official statement on the criteria for hiring TA's and PA's which is updated as necessary and posted on the Graduate Student Bulletin Board and the website. The results of the annual Graduate Student [Merit Process](#) are used for making decisions on awarding TA's and department controlled PA's, scholarships and other awards. In certain situations, (for example, when there are not enough assistantships available to fund deserving students) preference will be given to students who have not had multiple years of previous funding. The policy is as follows:

“To maximize the number of students we support, preference, where possible, will be given to MS students who have received no more than 2 years of departmental-controlled support and doctoral students who have received no more than 3 years (6 semesters post-masters) of departmental-controlled support. This policy applies to departmental teaching and project assistantships.” (Accepted HDFS Faculty Meeting March 2004).

To be eligible for any financial aid from the department, you must participate in the yearly Merit Review process and meet certain requirements. For example, you must be making “satisfactory progress towards your degree” and you must be enrolled “full-time” during the semester you receive an assistantship. See the [Merit Process document](#) for more information.

The Graduate Student Organization

The current HDFS Graduate Student Organization (GSO) was recognized as an official UW-Madison student organization in September 2000. The group brings a formal graduate student voice to the department.

The following outlines the purpose and goals of the GSO:

- Establish a unified graduate student voice and select representatives to serve on departmental committees.
- Create a support system and sense of community among HDFS graduate students.
- Improve communication between HDFS faculty and graduate students.
- Provide support and ease the transition for incoming graduate students.
- Aid the department in recruiting and retaining dedicated and diverse students.
- Advocate for graduate student interests and well-being.

Since its inception, members of the GSO have worked to advocate for students' needs and voice their opinions on departmental policies, procedures, and customs. Elected students represent the GSO at departmental faculty meetings and at the Graduate Program Committee (GPC) meetings. The GSO assists in the search and interview process for new faculty members. Each year, the GSO organizes a service project in which students in the Department and the School can participate. In past years, students have organized a book drive for a reading program at a local correctional facility, volunteered at the Special Olympics, and helped garden at an assisted living facility for local seniors. The GSO has also organized and sponsored colloquiums on topics relevant to HDFS students and faculty. Finally, the GSO has created a social support system for new and current graduate students. The GSO sponsors a number of social activities during the school year, from ice-cream socials to Halloween parties.

All graduate students in the department are automatically considered members of the GSO, although participation in GSO activities is of course voluntary and varies greatly. Students are also invited to attend the informal GSO meetings, usually held once a month on campus. Co-Chairs are selected in January and serve for two academic semesters. Any active graduate student has the opportunity to be elected as a GSO Co-Chair or represent the GSO at faculty and GPC meetings. These roles are considered important leadership positions within the Department and relevant to graduate student professional development. The Graduate Program Chair usually serves as the faculty sponsor of the organization.

First Things First: Orientation, Advising and Registration

Wisconsin Welcome & Orientation

“Wisconsin Welcome” occurs the week before classes begin. All students with appointments (assistantships) should arrive on campus and meet with their supervisor during this week. There are also important orientations for graduate students at the Graduate School, at the School of Human Ecology and HDFS Department. Libraries and other facilities on campus give tours and hold informational workshops. You should receive invitations to these events in late summer.

Address/Email/& MyUW

DoIT (Division of Information Technology) offers a full range of computer and internet support services for UW students, staff, and faculty. It includes internet access, email, MyUW portal, and web space. For more information, visit DoIT at 1219 West Dayton Street or at:

DoIT Main page: <http://www.doit.wisc.edu/>

Getting started: <http://www.doit.wisc.edu/students/index.asp>

All students have a responsibility to keep the university informed of their current address. To update your address, use your MyUW account. The “Mailing Address” is your address in the Madison area; your “HOME address” is your most permanent address. For some students, they will be the same; for others the “home” address may be out of state or even in another country. If you leave your “mailing address” blank, the university will use your “home address” by default.

The HDFS department administrator keeps an updated email distribution list and directory of all registered graduate students. She obtains this list by doing a query against the computer system mailing address—*so the email address you enter online will be the one she uses*. Email is an easy way for the department to contact all graduate students about opportunities in the department, policy changes, and other information—you will be expected to check your email frequently.

Your Advisor

The Graduate School requires that every student have an advisor. You were assigned an advisor when you were admitted into the program. The admissions committee showed your application to the faculty members you asked for (if they were accepting new students) and to the faculty they felt shared your interests. The advisor you were assigned to is one who agreed to accept and mentor you in the program. Your advisor will help you determine your course schedule, as well as serve as the Chair of your thesis committee(s). While working on your thesis or dissertation, you will also sign up to take research and thesis credits (HDFS 990) with this advisor.

You and your advisor share responsibility for working out the best plan of action for your graduate work here, working within the department’s stipulated requirements. Your advisor is there to assist you in all aspects of the planning of your graduate program, from help in selecting appropriate courses, introducing you to campus resources, suggesting other faculty you may want to get to know and invite to your committee, reviewing and guiding the development of a research plan and so on. The advisor is also responsible for monitoring your performance and providing you with appropriate feedback.

You should plan to meet with your advisor several times during each semester. Don’t wait for your advisor to contact you, make an appointment whenever you need advice or guidance. A useful first meeting may involve establishing a plan for the two of you to work together—for example, you may want to decide whether to schedule regular meetings or whether you will be expected to initiate meetings.

Changing an advisor

Faculty understand that the interests of students may change and changing advisors is encouraged when it supports the individual development of graduate students. Many students do end up changing advisors. However, the advisor you are initially assigned to is the only faculty member who has made a commitment to working with you and supervising you. If you want to switch to a new advisor, it is your responsibility to find someone who has openings and is willing to work with you. You should talk to both your current advisor and the faculty member you wish to become your new advisor to get their mutual consent before making the official change. Graduate students should cordially work with their original advisor to make these switches whenever possible. If you need help on how to make the switch graciously and comfortably, ask your new advisor or the GPC chair to help facilitate these changes.

To make the change official, **you need to inform the department administrator** and the change needs to be recorded in the university student record computer system. The **“Advisor and Committee Form”** (see appendix or website) should be used for this purpose. It needs to be signed by you and both your current and new advisor and returned to the Department Administrator.

Degree Committees

MS students form a Master’s Committee while PhD students form two committees over the course of their tenure here, a Prelim Committee and a Dissertation Committee. Committees have the responsibility of overseeing your progress in the department with respect to a range of hurdles or “benchmarks” including the completion of your coursework, your development of a research proposal, your oral defense of your research and, for PhD students, the defense of the preliminary examinations.

In consultation with your advisor, you select the other faculty members to invite to your committees. Although it is recommended that you form a committee as early in your graduate career as possible, in practice, it is usually easier to invite members to a committee after you have become better acquainted with faculty through classes and once you have settled on a specific research topic. In selecting committee members, do not expect that all of the faculty members will have a specific expertise in your chosen research topic—we are a small department and our faculty expect to serve on committees where their own research may not be directly relevant to yours.

When you determine the membership of your Committee (Master’s, Prelim or Doctoral), you should complete the “[Graduate Student Advisor and Committee Form](#)” (see appendix or website) and submit it to the departmental administrator. If a circumstance arises that requires changing the membership of a committee, the decision should be discussed with your advisor, the relevant parties should be informed, and the change should be noted in the department’s official records by completing a new “Graduate Student Advisor and Committee Form.” Give this form to the HDFS department administrator.

Master’s Committee

Your thesis committee will serve to guide you in the process of developing your research thesis and they will evaluate your work. They also will review your checklist and verify that that you have completed all course requirements, and ultimately they are the ones who will sign your degree warrant. In addition to your advisor, the HDFS Master’s Thesis Committee includes at least 2 other faculty

members; 2 of the 3 persons on the committee must be HDFS faculty members (including joint appointments).

Prelim Committee

PhD students are required to form a Prelim Committee, which is responsible for preparing your preliminary examination (within the department guidelines) and evaluating your written and oral performance. Further, the committee is responsible for reviewing your coursework and making sure that all degree requirements have been met. The committee consists of your advisor and 2 other members of the HDFS faculty.

Dissertation Committee

Your dissertation committee (also referred to as the “Final Oral Examination Committee” by the Graduate School) will serve to guide you in the process of developing your research thesis and they will evaluate your work at both the proposal stage and the final defense. They are the ones who will sign your degree warrant and welcome you as a Doctor of Philosophy. In addition to your advisor, the HDFS Dissertation Committee includes 4 other “current graduate UW-Madison faculty members.” In this 5 person committee, at least 3, and not more than 4 must be HDFS faculty members; the Graduate School requires that at least one of the 5 members be a faculty member from outside your major field. Note that the Graduate School considers a faculty member from another SoHE department (e.g., Consumer Science; Design Studies) to be “outside” of your major field. Further, a faculty member who holds a joint appointment in HDFS but has their primary home in another department may serve as either an “outside” member or as one of the HDFS members.

It is common for students to ask all three members of their Prelim Committee to continue on their dissertation committee and then to ask 2 additional UW-faculty to their committee. Circumstances can arise that require a change of committee membership between the proposal and defense stages, but in general this is discouraged unless you are changing topics from your prelim focus. **If you do change the membership of your committee, you should complete a new “Advisor and Committee Form” and inform all parties.**

The Graduate School must approve degree committees (Master’s and Doctoral committees) and this occurs when the Graduate School issues you the warrant (see below). For details on Graduate School requirements on the composition of your committees refer to [Committees \(Doctoral/Master's\)](#) and [Final Oral Examination Committee](#).

Your Curriculum

Overview of Required Courses

During a typical semester, most full time graduate students take three courses, for three credits each, for a semester total of nine credits. There are four courses required for all graduate students in HDFS, regardless of whether they are in the Masters or PhD program: (1) HDFS 664: Pro-Seminar, (2) HDFS 865 Family Theory, (3) HDFS 725: Theories and Issues in Human Development, and (4) IS 793 Research Methods. All of these courses are offered by our department at least once a year. (If you have taken similar, graduate-level courses at another university, you may not need to re-take these courses; see Course Substitution process below.) Every graduate student needs to take the Pro-Seminar in their first semester as it provides an introduction and orientation to the program. Importantly you will meet

and learn about the scholarly interests of our faculty and get acquainted with the other members of your cohort.

In addition to the required courses offered within the department, one intermediate statistics course is required for the Masters degree and additionally, one advanced statistics course is required for the PhD. HDFS 766 “Professional Development Seminar” (PDS) offered during the Spring semester features presentations by faculty and graduate students on their current research and outreach as well as various professional development topics. All students are invited to attend PDS sessions whether they are registered for credit or not and it is a course we hope students will take for credit repeatedly. HDFS also offers colloquium talks over the course of the academic year that may or may not be offered as official Professional Development Seminar sessions. *The department strongly encourages you to attend department-sponsored talks as a core component of your professional development.*

The rest of the credits for the degree are earned through a combination of courses, research credit, and independent study. PhD students must take at least 10 credits in a “[minor](#)” to establish breadth (see more below). The Checklists (see below) provide details on requirements and a convenient form for planning and documenting your progress:

MS & PhD Checklists: <http://www.sohe.wisc.edu/departments/hdfs/> (click on “Graduate Program”, then pull-down “H. Current Student Info & Forms”).

Selecting and Registering for Classes

New graduate students register starting in July. Once you have informed the UW of your intent to enroll, the Graduate School will send you an ID number and information on how and when to register for courses. If possible, communicate with your advisor prior to registering. Using a copy of the appropriate check sheet (MS, PhD, or MS/PhD) and the online timetable, you can determine together what courses to register for. Plan out a course schedule for your first semester, but also begin to plan for the rest of your coursework.

The Timetable may be found in print (from the Registrar’s office) and on-line (<http://registrar.wisc.edu/timetable>). Course descriptions can be found in [The Graduate School Catalog](#), also online. Each semester, a flyer is prepared with course descriptions for the current offerings in our department and a wide variety of syllabi are available for review online.

HDFS course description flyer:

http://www.sohe.wisc.edu/hdfs/undergrad/current_Course_Description.htm

Sample HDFS Course Syllabi: http://www.sohe.wisc.edu/hdfs/undergrad/course_syllabi.htm

If English is not your native language, you may want to take an English course during your first year.

Most students take 865 *Family Theories* during their first semester in the program, and many take 725 *Theories and Issues of Human Development* during their second semester. The latter is cross-listed with Educational Psychology and it is often taught by the Educational Psychology department in the fall semester.

You can access Web Enrollment through the “My UW-Madison” portal (<http://my.wisc.edu>). Although many graduate classes do not fill early, registering early is very important. Your registration

is what establishes your continuance in the program and it is essential for such things as loan deferment, immigration, receiving a scholarship check and so on.

Independent Study (HDFS 699, 999) and Research and Thesis (HDFS 990) require instructor permissions entered into the system each semester before you can register. To enroll, give the instructor your name and UW student ID number, and they will see that you are authorized to register—note that you still need to go through the registration process yourself once they have entered the permission. If you have problems getting into a course, call or email the department or the instructor of the course to inquire whether there is in fact room in the course and how you can register.

Any student who has a PA or TA during the academic year may take summer classes without paying tuition. **Registration for summer courses, including Independent Study or Research and Thesis, is encouraged.** Indeed, if you expect to do any work with your advisor over the summer, course registration should reflect this work commitment.

Graduate Certificate Programs

While you are a graduate student in HDFS you are also eligible to obtain a variety of graduate certificates. These certificates can help you establish specific credentials that enhance your professional standing and build important skills and/or areas of expertise. A list of certificate programs may be found here: <http://www.wisc.edu/grad/catalog/degrees.html#cert>

Charting Your Progress and Completing Requirements

The HDFS Checklists

The HDFS Checklist is your “snapshot” guide to the requirements in the department. It specifies the credits and courses you need for the MS ([MS Degree Requirements Checklist](#)) or the PhD Degree ([PhD Degree Requirements Checklist](#)). If you are in the MS program and plan to continue on in the PhD program, you should use the [MS/PhD Checklist](#) to optimize a smooth transition. Rather than repeating the information contained in the Checklists here, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the requirements by studying them as laid out in the appropriate Checklist for your degree.

Your checklist is your guide, your worksheet, and ultimately a departmental record. Your completed and signed Checklist becomes an official record documenting your completion of departmental and Graduate School requirements. A 3-person faculty committee (your Master’s or Prelim committee) reviews your coursework and signs the Checklist indicating that you have completed the necessary coursework and are ready for the next hurdle—in the case of the MS student you are ready to defend your thesis and in the case of the PhD student you are ready to start work on preparing for your preliminary exam. *Checklists must be completed, signed and on file with the department for the Departmental Administrator to order your “warrant” that is necessary for the defense of a masters’ thesis, dissertation, or prelim.*

It is recommended that your committee meet to discuss the Checklist and “sign off” during a face to face meeting. In the case of the MS student, the thesis proposal meeting is often a convenient time to do this; in the case of the PhD student, it is often done at the time of the initial, organizational meeting to discuss the parameters of your Preliminary Exam (see below). However, it is highly recommended that your committee meet prior to these customary “final hour” time periods to discuss

your coursework and plans, and this is particularly important if you or your advisor has any questions or concerns about the potential acceptability of the courses you plan to take or use on your Checklist. Any substitutions to the requirements as specified on the Checklist require approval (see below).

Course Substitutions

In certain circumstances, a student can request that a similar course they have taken (or want to take) be substituted for a required course using the [Request Form for Course Substitutions](#). The student's committee (Master's or Prelim), or in the event a committee is not yet formed, the student's advisor and 2 members of GPC, will review the substitute course and determine whether the substitution is approved. The committee (or student) may also request input from other HDFS faculty—for example, the faculty member who teaches the required course, a faculty member who has expertise on statistics courses in other departments or the Chair of GPC who may have experience with other requests.

A syllabus may be requested to accompany the form. If a course from another University is being substituted, documentation that the student took the course (a transcript) must be in the student's file. (Previous coursework is generally part of the student's application materials, so it is likely that this documentation already exists in the file; if not, it should be included with the form). Approved forms are passed to the GPC Chair, a copy is given to the student, and one goes in the Departmental student's file. Only approved course substitutions should appear on the student's completed Checklist.

When are course substitutions possible?

Course substitutions can be requested only when a substitute course meets the objectives of the requirement. For example, if you took a graduate level "Family Theory" class at another university it would be appropriate to request a course substitution for the HDFS 865: Family Theory requirement. Other courses covering the "family" that do not focus explicitly on theory (e.g., Family Relationships, Families in Context, Stress and the Family, etc.) would not be seen as fulfilling the requirement, nor would theory classes that do not focus on the family (Dynamic Systems Theory, Group Theory, Community Theory, etc.). Similar standards are applied to the requirements that you have a Research Methods course and a Theories of Human Development course.

No substitutions are possible for the Proseminar and Professional Development Seminars since a primary objective of these two courses is professional socialization within our department. *Similarly, if the Checklist specifies an "HDFS" content course, content courses from other universities or departments cannot be substituted.* Any course cross-listed or designated as "meets with" in HDFS automatically counts as an HDFS course.

Methods and Statistics. A range of courses are suggested on the Checklists for fulfilling methods and statistics requirements, however, the list of "approved" courses may not be complete. If you find another course on campus similar to those listed, you can request a course substitution and the course will be evaluated for equivalency. (This process will allow us to gradually enlarge the list of accepted courses on the Checklist.) It is important to request this evaluation and get approval prior to taking the course.

Graduate Courses from other Universities. In general, if you want to use a graduate level course that does not appear on your UW transcript to meet a requirement (elective, minor, stats, methods, etc.) you should complete a course substitution form. However, in addition to determining whether your

courses can be used to fulfill course requirements, you need to fulfill the Graduate School's [minimum credit requirements](#)—for MS students 16 credits must be UW graduate credits, for PhD students, 32.

Timeline to Degree Completion

The timeline for degree completion varies considerably from student to student. Part-time students generally take longer than full-time students. There are many legitimate reasons that students take longer than is typical to complete their degree. Our job, however, is to make sure that delays in progress are not based on poor planning, avoidance, being “stuck,” or experiencing other problems that we could potentially help with. One key here is to keep in close contact with your advisor. Schedule regular meetings—your advisor may seem busy, but it is his/her job to make time for you! A second key is to read this Handbook cover to cover and the Graduate School's website link to link. Know the requirements and plan accordingly. Develop a long-range schedule for yourself.

Satisfactory Progress

To encourage timely completion of degrees and to help establish guidelines for awarding merit based financial awards, the faculty has adopted an official policy on the definition of satisfactory progress toward degree completion:

"The faculty of the Human Development and Family Studies graduate program define satisfactory progress toward the completion of the M.S. degree as the completion of required coursework and the thesis proposal in two years (4 semesters) of full-time study and defense of the thesis within three years (6 semesters) of full-time study. Satisfactory progress toward the completion of the Ph.D. degree is defined as the completion of required course work and the preliminary examination in three years (6 semesters) of full time study and defense of the dissertation within six years (12 semesters of full-time) study. Grades of *incomplete* that are not resolved before the end of the ensuing semester are, by definition, unsatisfactory progress." (Policy approved at the May 22, 2000 faculty meeting).

Note that for students who transition from the MS to the PhD, their “clock” for satisfactory progress starts over at the time they enter the PhD program. For part time students, years/semesters are calculated on the basis of credit hours rather than semesters or years in the program.

The Graduate School also specifies criteria for [“satisfactory progress.”](#) The requirements include maintaining a 3.0 GPA.

Full-Time Enrollment

"Full-time" study is defined by the School of Human Ecology as being enrolled for a minimum of 8 credits per semester until, in the case of Ph.D. students, the preliminary examination is passed. Post-preliminary examination students (“Dissertators”) must enroll for at least 3 credits, but no more than 3 are required for full-time status.

Monitoring of Student Progress

The department keeps an updated list of student progress towards the degree, including the passing of “hurdles” such as proposal and defense meetings, achieving dissertator status and so on. Deficiencies such as incompletes are also kept track of. This list is monitored by both the Department

Administrator and the Graduate Program Chair and annually a review is conducted (often in conjunction with the annual student merit review process, see below) to inform advisors of any deficiencies or a lack of satisfactory progress for their advisees. The advisor is asked to communicate any issues that arise during the process of this monitoring to the advisee and take steps to help the student rectify any problems—if you do not hear from your advisor in Jan or Feb, this is an appropriate time to check-in with him/her and make sure that your records are indicating “satisfactory progress.” Further, you may want to “look ahead” and determine when your “deadline” is for finishing a given hurdle to maintain your satisfactory progress status.

In addition to annual monitoring of student progress toward degree completion, the annual student merit review process is used to determine eligibility for department and school scholarships, fellowships and assistantships.

Annual Graduate Student Merit Review Process

Acknowledgements: These procedures are based in part on the procedures developed by the Child Development and Family Studies Department at Purdue University.

Purpose and Goals

The Graduate Student Annual Merit Process will determine a priority score for graduate students that can be used by the Graduate Program Committee (GPC) and the Chair for the purposes of departmental funding decisions (departmental TAs & PAs, departmental scholarships, etc.).

In addition to this primary purpose, the Graduate Student Annual Merit Process is designed with the following goals in mind:

- The process will help communicate to students the range of types of accomplishments and learning/professional development experiences that are valued by the department.
- The review by non-advisor faculty of students' materials will increase faculty awareness of our student body and increase the sense of departmental community as well as the potential for "networking" within our department.
- The reflection that students will be asked to engage in will encourage students to be deliberate, strategic and goal-oriented in their activities.
- The process of self-report of accomplishments and the regular updates to the vita will be good preparation for professional performance reviews in future career settings.
- The priority scores will facilitate recognition of students with exemplary progress and accomplishments through awards, letters of recognition and other reward structures the department hopes to develop in the future.

Student Participation in Merit Process

Students are not required to participate in Graduate Student Annual Merit Process unless they are interested in receiving a departmental TA , departmental PA, or departmental scholarship. Any student who wants to be considered for these types of funding must participate in the Graduate Student Annual

Merit Process. However, we encourage all students to participate in the Merit Review process as it represents an annual “check up” and a good exercise in professional development.

To be considered eligible for funding, a student must be making “satisfactory progress” or make a successful “appeal” to explain their particular circumstances.

Satisfactory Progress Appeals Process. If a student anticipates clearing a problem prior to the end of the Spring semester or has special circumstances that should be taken into consideration that would reclassify them as making satisfactory progress, the student may request their satisfactory progress status be reconsidered by notifying their advisor **PRIOR TO DEADLINE FOR FIRST SUBMISSION OF THEIR MATERIALS TO THEIR ADVISOR.** The faculty advisor is responsible for submitting and explaining the request to have the student’s satisfactory progress status re-considered by the HDFG Graduate Program Committee by the appeals deadline.

Students not interested in departmental funding. Students who are not interested in funding or awards are still encouraged to meet with their advisor, complete the Graduate Student Annual Merit Report Form and update their vitae, but they may elect not to participate in the merit review process. They will receive the benefits of advisement and goal-setting but they will not receive a priority score for funding, nor will other faculty learn about the student’s work.

Prior to the deadline for reports, advisors who have not received reports from their students should verify that this is the student’s preference. Advisors should check in with each of their advisees and use the opportunity to mentor their students who are not participating in the Graduate Student Annual Merit Process about maintaining a current vita and effectively presenting their professional experiences.

Criteria for Merit Priority Scores

Merit is based on a consideration of the following criteria:

1. Academic Excellence in the areas on the Graduate Student Annual Merit Report Form.
 - a) Successful and Timely Completion of Academic “hurdles” such as prelims, coursework, proposal meetings, etc. Progress toward degree completion is noted, taking into account type of scholarship and professional goals, as well as special considerations mentioned in Part D on the Annual Merit Review Form.
 - b) Professional Accomplishments & Products in Research, Teaching, Outreach/Practice, Service, and Learning (e.g., writing scholarly papers, written reports, developing manuals and newsletters, writing a theory piece, giving talks, poster presentations, organizing outreach activities such as in-services, workshops, program design and implementation, participating on a community board or departmental committee, completing internships, disseminating research, etc.)
 - c) Interim or products-in-process in Research, Teaching, Outreach/Practice, Service, and Learning
2. Merit will be evaluated in the context of:
 - a) student progress and accomplishments should be considered holistically across the five areas listed above,

- b) the student's status in the program (MS vs PHD, dissertator vs not, part-time vs full-time, year in program) should be considered,
- c) student progress and accomplishments should be assessed in relation to both program hurdles as well as the student's own educational, academic, career, and timetable goals.

Procedures for Review and Assignment of Priority Scores

Step One: Merit Report Form & Vita

1. Students complete an updated vita and an Annual Merit Report Form.
2. The Annual Merit Report Form and updated vita are to be submitted to the student's major advisor by the designated initial submission date.

Step Two: Advisor-Student Meeting

1. The Department Administrator will prepare a file of HDFS Departmental Summary Of Student Information that will be available for faculty reviewers (See Annual Review: Monitoring Rate of Student Progress approved May 22, 2000). This data base will provide data on each student's cumulative GPA, accomplishment of major benchmarks (date passed prelims, proposal approved, etc), semesters elapsed since entering degree program, major advisor, and so on.
2. Each faculty member will have access to the file with the HDFS Departmental Summary of Student Information prior to the submission of student materials. Faculty should review the data relevant to each of their own advisees carefully and inform the Department Administrator of any suspected inaccuracies.
3. Advisors will review their own students' self-report materials (annual report form and vita) and his or her progress as documented on the HDFS Departmental Summary of Student Information. Advisors will provide feedback to the student on their vita and the documentation of their accomplishments. This task should be seen by advisors as an opportunity for mentoring each of their advisees with respect to professional development, specifically:
 - a) development of an effective vita,
 - b) development of presentation skills related to documentation of professional experiences and accomplishments. (This advising task is often not addressed until the student is ready to "go on the job market". This annual reflective review process should be invaluable to both the student and the faculty-letter-writer at the time the student seeks employment or other professional experiences),
 - c) Advisors are encouraged to also use this opportunity to review student progress and goals in 1:1 meetings with advisees around wider objectives than the narrow goals delineated here,
 - d) The Advisor will sign the cover sheet indicating approval of the materials.

Step Three: Submission of Signed Forms to Departmental Office

1. One copy of the materials and cover sheet must be submitted by the student to the Department Administrator by the designated final submission date.
2. Department Administrator will organize materials and GPC Chair will develop faculty teams for reviewing each student.

Step Four: Faculty Review Process

1. The materials of each student who elects to participate in the merit process will be reviewed by three randomly chosen faculty members, not including the student's advisor. Each faculty member will review the assigned students' materials and rank order all of the students they are assigned. In addition to the material submitted by the student, faculty will have access to the Departmental Summary of Student Information data base and the student's transcript.
2. Faculty members are advised to use the merit criteria listed above when ranking students.
3. A database will be created including all reviewed students and each faculty score. The ratings will be averaged across faculty reviewers to create an initial quantitative priority score for each student—better ratings are indicated by lower numbers (e.g., if student X receives ratings of 5, 6, and 2 from 3 faculty reviewers while student Y receives ratings of 1, 2 and 1, student Y will have a better priority score of 1.33 as compared to 4.33 for student X). A sample “mock-up” of the output for this process is available on the HDFS website, see Graduate Student Merit: Sample Output Table for Determining Priority Scores.
4. The full faculty will meet to discuss students who received ratings that are highly discrepant or inconsistent across faculty raters as well as "tie" priority scores and to finalize a set of priority scores that can be used as advisory for funding and award decisions.
5. There will be no expectation that all students are discussed in this full faculty meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to correct any inconsistencies or questions that arise from the quantitative prioritizing procedure.

Final Outcome

The priority scores are kept only by the Department Administrator and the Graduate Program Chair and are used only to determine priorities for funding and scholarships, where such a list is needed. The priority scores are not seen as indicators of a student's status in the department or as an important reflection of the overall quality of a student's work. Rather, the process provides a snapshot of one year's progress and accomplishments and aids in future planning and professional development.

Students are not given feedback on their priority score—this process is completed for the purpose of making what can be very difficult decisions about funding—the process is NOT designed to give the student information about how they are doing relative to peers. Students are encouraged to talk to their advisors about their progress and accomplishments rather than comparing themselves with other students.

The Master's Thesis

To carry out your thesis project, you will work hand-in-hand with your advisor, and closely with your Committee. Your advisor may suggest you read the “[Guidelines for Proposals: Quantitative Research](#)” or “[Guidelines for Proposals: Qualitative Research](#)” to help you structure your proposal writing—or your advisor may suggest an alternate structure for you. Work with your advisor to create a format the works best for your thesis. At the suggestion of your advisor, you may wish to share drafts of your proposal or a section of your proposal with other committee members, especially if they have expertise in the content or methods. In most cases, however, your advisor will provide most of the feedback for your proposal revisions. You may need to write several drafts before the advisor considers it ready for your committee to read.

The Proposal Meeting

When you and your advisor feel ready, schedule a formal proposal meeting. Advance scheduling is useful because it is often difficult to find available dates on short notice. Scheduling in the summer can be particularly difficult, many faculty are actually on 9 month appointments and have limited or no availability in the summer. It is customary to give your committee at least two weeks to read your proposal before the scheduled meeting.

If your committee has not already met to review your coursework and made sure that you are on track for graduation upon completion of your thesis, a review and signing of your Checklist should be completed in conjunction with a review of the research proposal.

You should bring a copy of the “[Proposal Approval Form](#)” to your meeting. When your committee approves and signs off on your research plans, turn the form into the departmental office. If your committee has suggested changes in your research protocol make sure to submit these changes to your [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) before proceeding, or if you have not yet submitted a protocol, do so now! Before beginning data collection, you must have a Human subjects Approval Form submitted and approved, or exempted. Learn more about the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) here: <http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/research/hr/index.html>

After your meeting, expect to make corrections and provide the committee with an update of any crucial changes in your research plan.

Graduate School Policies and Deadlines

As you approach the completion of your thesis work, it is time to review the Graduate School policies and make sure you are on track for graduation. Advance planning is required. For example, you need to be registered for at least 2 credits during the semester you plan to graduate—if you expect to graduate in the summer, you must be registered for 2 summer credits. Make sure you have maintained a GPA of at least 3.0 and have no incompletes before proceeding to your final orals!

See the Graduate School website: “[Expecting your Masters Degree—Procedures to Help](#)” for deadlines and policies on completing your master’s degree.
<http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/mdegree.html>

MS Checklist Completion and Warrant Request

At least 3 weeks prior to your oral defense meeting, you must contact the departmental administrator to order your Final Defense Warrant. *You must have a completed and signed MS Checklist on file to order your Warrant.* If your committee did not review and sign the MS Checklist at your proposal meeting, you will need to obtain the signatures of all three of your committee members prior to ordering your warrant.

Each semester, the department administrator emails graduate students to find out who plans to graduate during the current semester, and to notify students of the deadlines to order warrants and ask for information about attending the graduation ceremony held in December and May. If you plan to graduate in August (Summer), you have the option of attending the previous May or following December ceremony, since there is no summer ceremony. For more information on commencement visit: <http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/commence/index.htm>

If you plan to continue on in the PhD program let your advisor know and discuss plans for your advisement in the PhD program. At the time you request the Warrant, you should also begin the process of “applying” to the doctoral program (see below, Transitioning to the PhD Program).

Oral Defense Meeting

When you and your advisor feel you have a satisfactory draft of your thesis, you should set up a meeting of your committee for your “Oral Defense” meeting. It is your responsibility to schedule this meeting and arrange for a room. In addition to the warrant, you should bring to the defense a copy of the “[Degree Completion Form](#)” to be signed and submitted to the departmental office for department records.

At this meeting, you’ll present your research and defend your findings. It’s similar to the proposal meeting, but now focuses on the actual conduct of the study, the results, and your discussion of your findings. Your committee will ask questions about your thesis report, and the questions can cover any part of it. The questions will critique the thesis in the same way that editors and reviewers critique journal article submissions, and your reply to the committee should be much like a good reply to a journal editor: you should defend and explain your research to the committee when possible (for example, if they have misinterpreted something you wrote, or if you disagree with the committee member); but you should be able to admit weaknesses in your thesis when they are identified, and modify your position as necessary. This is one of the tests of a scholar: to be able to both defend your position and change your position, and to have the good judgment to know when to do each. Even though defending the thesis is your responsibility, your committee will help you as needed. They will be happy to restate questions, and may even suggest possible answers. Sometimes they will argue with each other about the best answer, and then ask you to join in the argument! Even though they ask very difficult questions, they are committed to your success. When they identify weaknesses (and they always do), they will make recommendations to make your final, revised thesis the best it can be.

At the end of the defense hearing, you will be asked to step outside the meeting room so that the committee can meet briefly in private to settle on a set of recommended and/or required changes and decide whether or not you have passed. When you return to the room you will learn the results of this brief meeting. You may need to do some additional work, so you may need an additional meeting before your committee members will sign the warrant. Or they may only request some minor changes and sign at the meeting. It is common that your advisor does not sign until all of the

requested changes have been made. It is highly unusual to have your thesis accepted with no changes at all.

To officially complete your MS degree, the Warrant must be signed by all members of your committee. It is your responsibility to see that the Warrant is ordered (through our department administrator), brought to the meeting and processed by the Graduate School. After you walk the signed Warrant to the Graduate School office (217 Graduate School), they document your official graduation.

If you plan to continue from the MS to the PhD program, you should initiate the application process and let your advisor know before your meeting that you need the “[Transition for MS to PhD Recommendation Form](#)” completed at your final defense meeting. This form will also be completed while you are briefly out of the room, and your advisor will forward it to the departmental administrator.

The Final Bound Thesis

Although the department does not require that you deposit your Master’s Thesis with the Graduate School to be placed in Memorial Library you may choose to do this. For information about submitting your thesis, see the Graduate School website: “Masters Thesis Guidelines”:
<http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/mguide.html>

The department does, however, require that you provide the department with a bound copy of your thesis. This should be the final, fully approved version. You should also provide your advisor and committee members with a copy of your final, fully corrected thesis.

Transitioning from the HDFS Master’s Program to the PhD program

Transitioning to doctoral level work from our Master’s program is generally an easy and smooth process. You will find that you have already completed many of the requirements on the PhD checklist and should be well on your way to a Doctorate in HDFS!

You do not need to reapply to the Graduate School and you do not need to go through our regular departmental admissions process. You do, however, need to complete a [Doctoral Program Transition Application](#), be recommended for the program by your Masters Committee, have a willing advisor, and be approved by the GPC Chair and/or Committee.

The first step is for you to think about the type of dissertation work you want to do and who would be an appropriate advisor for you. Many students continue with the same advisor they had in the MS program while other students transition to a new advisor. In either event, to enter the PhD program you need to have a willing advisor; if you want your M.S. advisor to continue as your PhD advisor, ask, it is not automatic. The willing advisor needs to sign your [Doctoral Program Transition Application](#), indicating his/her willingness to supervise your doctoral work. (Remember that you can change advisors once you are in the program, but just as in the case of your entry to the MS program you cannot count on being able to change advisors—with entry to the program, an advisor needs to make a commitment to work with you.)

You also need to have a 3 person committee (usually the same as your 3 person Master’s Thesis Committee) make a recommendation to the Graduate Program Committee on your transition to the PhD. The “[Transition from MS to PhD Recommendation Form](#)” is usually completed at the time of your final

defense. Your advisor will collect the signatures of the 3 person committee and give the form to the departmental administrator to put in your file.

The [Doctoral Program Transition Application](#) is available from the departmental office or online and is simple to complete. In addition to filling out some general questions, you will need to verify that you have a completed and signed [MS Checklist](#) on file and a signed [MS Degree completion form](#). The GPC Chair will then act on your application for transition to the PhD, and send you a letter to let you know that you have approval to continue.

You should begin the application process as you are in the final stages of preparing your thesis. The process is expedited if the recommendation form can be completed at the time of your final thesis defense. You must complete the process prior to the semester you want to begin PhD work.

The PhD Minor

The Graduate School requires that you take a minimum of 10 credits in a minor area of study. **The purpose of the Minor is to add breadth to your PhD Major**, thus it is important that the Minor is not in the same substantive area as your PhD work. For example, if your thesis examines couple relationships, it would not be appropriate to declare your minor to be “Close Relationships.” Cross-listed courses are permitted if they are distinct from the major area of study.

See the Graduate School website for additional detailed information on Minors:

<http://www.wisc.edu/grad/guidelines/gloss.html#minors>

Two Options for the Minor

Option A (external): Requires a minimum of 10 credits in a single department or program area. Selection of this option requires the approval of the minor department/sponsor/program and following the specific requirements of the minor department/sponsor/program (many require more than 10 credits). A list of approved external minors can be found in the Graduate Catalog:

<http://www.wisc.edu/grad/education/acadpolicy/guidelines.html#126> HDFS participates in the joint administration of an Option A minor that is often of interest to our students, the Prevention and Intervention Science Minor. For more information see:

<http://www.wisc.edu/grad/catalog/letsci/interven.html>

Option B (distributed): Requires a minimum of 10 credits in one or more departments and can include course work in the major department. Selection of this option requires the approval of the major department. This approval is generally granted through your 3 person prelim committee.

The Graduate School's minimum course requirements for the minor include:

- An average GPA of 3.00 on all minor course work.
- Course work must be graduate level (the equivalent of UW-Madison courses 300 level or above; no audits or pass/fail).
- Maximum 3 credits of independent study (e.g., 699, 799, 899, 999).
- Research and thesis cannot be used to satisfy the minor (e.g., 790, 890, 990).
- No more than 5 credits of course work completed more than five years prior to admission to the Ph.D.; course work taken ten years ago or more may not be used.

Declaring your Minor and Completing Your PhD Coursework

You determine your minor with the help of your advisor and take all your coursework, including minor coursework, prior to taking your Preliminary Examination. At the time you are preparing for your Preliminary Examination you should have a meeting with your Prelim Committee and review your PhD Checksheet making sure you have completed the Minor and all Coursework. If you have selected Option B, you should provide an official name for your minor. It can be a significant “selling point” on your CV to have a minor that accurately reflects an expertise of yours (e.g, “Qualitative Methods” or “Family and Community Development”) so take time to find an appropriate title if you are choosing Option B.

When you are ready to complete your Prelims and order the Prelim Warrant, you must fill out a form declaring the minor option, and submit the form with a copy of your PhD checklist, showing all courses you’ve taken, including the courses for your minor. (See the HDFS document/form “Instructions to Obtain the Prelim Warrant”).

The Preliminary Exam

The Prelim Examination is designed individually by the student’s 3 person Prelim Committee (see Committees above for description). Your committee writes and evaluates the exam.

All your coursework must be completed before your prelims can be taken. The Graduate School also requires you have no incompletes. You must obtain a Prelim Warrant at least 3 weeks before you defend your prelims. This is done by submitting the “Instructions to Obtain the Prelim Warrant” HDFS document/form. After submission, the department administrator will request your warrant from the Graduate School. This warrant is signed by your committee at your prelim defense, and when brought to the Graduate School (Room 217), it grants you dissertator status.

Department Policies on the Prelim Examination (last approved by the faculty 12/01/03)

PURPOSE

The doctoral preliminary examination is designed to assess the student's knowledge and competencies in the core areas of the field of Human Development and Family Studies. The aim is to insure that, before beginning independent PhD. research, the student has mastered the substantive content and analytic methods of the field.

CONTENT OF THE PRELIM EXAM

1. All prelim exams must cover the areas of human development, family studies, theory, substantive knowledge, and research methods.
2. Some questions should be broadly integrative, spanning the field of HDFS, while other questions may be tailored to the student's specific scholarly interests.
3. There will be approximately 3-5 questions; each question will have a suggested maximum length, with a total exam length maximum of no more than 100 pages. The usual time limit for the take-home examination will be no more than 28 days, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

PROCEDURE FOR SETTING AND EVALUATING THE PRELIM EXAM

1. The entire 3-person advisory committee must approve all questions.

2. All committee members must evaluate all answers.
3. Evaluation Criteria: In addition to a general command of the relevant literature, the student should be able to synthesize concepts and facts across the domains of method, theory, research, and demonstrate the ability to apply these concepts and facts. Skills germane to passing a doctoral preliminary examination include conceptual reasoning, critical thinking, technical writing and organizing. Likely areas of evaluation include writing ability, depth of coverage, breadth of coverage, level of organization, and degree of conceptual insight.
4. With the approval of the prelim committee, under special circumstances (e.g., English as a second language, a documented disability), a student may use a copy editor. The Copy editor must be from outside the field. If copy editing is approved, a student may turn in the written prelim on time and then be granted additional time for copy editing before the committee reads the prelim.
5. A meeting of the committee and student will follow the completion of the written exam. This will serve as an oral exam and feedback session. Its purposes are (a) to clarify possible shortcomings in the written exam, and (b) to initiate indepth discussions to move the student's thinking forward. The oral meeting will take place no sooner than 2 weeks after the written exam is due.
6. Each member of the Advisory Committee will give written feedback to the Committee Chair at least three days prior to the oral meeting. At a minimum, this feedback will indicate that the member has passed, failed, or is undecided on each answer. The chair may communicate the committee consensus on each answer to the student prior to the meeting, making clear if any answer has yet to be clearly passed by any Committee member. The chair may also use the feedback to decide to cancel the oral meeting if re-examination is indicated.
7. A student is allowed at least one re-examination of each part of the exam that is failed. The committee has the option to terminate the student from the program following the second failure of the exam. Under normal circumstances, the time limit for re-examination is one year.
8. All prelim questions will be kept on file in the department office, and will be available to all faculty and students. Answers will be kept in the advisor's file for the student.

If you'd like to see past prelim questions, there is a folder you can check-out from the main departmental office. However, prelim answers are not available. Most faculty are on 9-month appointments and they are not required to read/write prelims during the summer months, so be sure to check with your committee about the timing of your exam to be sure it fits with their schedules as well as yours.

Dissertator Status

To achieve dissertator status, you must have completed the major and minor coursework, passed the prelim exam, and deposited the Prelim Exam Warrant at the Graduate School. There are some financial benefits for dissertators related to tuition; dissertators are considered full-time by taking only 3 credits.

Useful information can be found on the Graduate School website under "Completing Your Degree": <http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/index.html> and "Graduate School Academic Guidelines Index": <http://www.wisc.edu/grad/education/acadpolicy/guidelinesindex.html> such as:

- Dissertator FAQs: <http://www.wisc.edu/grad/education/acadpolicy/guidelines.html#56>
- Continuous Enrollment Requirement:
<http://www.wisc.edu/grad/education/acadpolicy/guidelines.html#36>
- Ph.D. Dissertation Preparation Guidelines:
<http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/pguide.html>
- The 3 D's: Deadlines, Defending, and Depositing:
<http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/ddd.html>

Leave of Absence/Continuous Registration after Prelims

It is important to realize that you must be continuously registered as a dissertator each fall and spring semester until the completion of your degree. If you do not maintain continuous enrollment once you are a dissertator, you will be assessed a degree completion fee equal to twelve times the current per-credit rate in effect at the time you bring your dissertation to the Graduate School for final review. (See Continuous Enrollment Requirement

<http://www.wisc.edu/grad/education/acadpolicy/guidelines.html#36>)

Also realize that you have a clock running from the time you gain dissertator status to the time to submit your dissertation. The Graduate School requires that you complete and defend your dissertation within five years after passing your preliminary examination (or you may be required to take another prelim exam). Under special circumstances, an extension (appeal) may be requested of the Graduate School by your advisor. See: <http://www.wisc.edu/grad/education/acadpolicy/guidelines.html#140>

The Dissertation

Having completed research at the MS level you should have a fairly good idea how to begin your dissertation work. Preparing a quality dissertation proposal takes time, hard work, patience, and perseverance! Support and encouragement from your advisor, your committee, and fellow students will make the process more bearable. You may also want to find other resources to support your dissertation work—suggested resources are available here:

<http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/gspd/skills.html#dissertationhelp> For example, a dissertator support group composed of fellow dissertators is available on campus through the University Health Services. http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/display_story.jsp?id=111&cat_id=36, as are other supportive resources.

Your advisor may suggest you read the “[Guidelines for Proposals: Quantitative Research](#)” or “[Guidelines for Proposals: Qualitative Research](#)” to help you structure your proposal writing—or your advisor may suggest an alternate structure for you. Work with your advisor to create a format the works best for your thesis. At the suggestion of your advisor, you may wish to share drafts of your proposal or a section of your proposal with your other Dissertation Committee members (see above for committee composition), especially if they have expertise in the content or methods. In most cases, however, your advisor will provide most of the feedback for your proposal revisions. You will probably need to write several drafts before the advisor considers it ready for your committee to read and for you to schedule your proposal meeting.

The Proposal Meeting

In scheduling your proposal meeting, you should plan far enough in advance to accommodate everyone’s schedule, and be sure to give your committee at least two weeks to read your proposal before the meeting. The “[Proposal Approval Form](#)” should be taken to the meeting, signed by your committee, and submitted to the departmental office.

After your meeting, expect to make corrections and provide the committee with an update of any crucial changes in your research plan. Before beginning data collection, be sure to get your Human subjects Approval Form submitted and approved to the appropriate campus IRB. See Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) <http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/research/hr/index.html> Any research using human subjects must have IRB review before it can be conducted.

The next steps are up to you—conduct your study! This process varies from student to student, so there are no “rules”. Just make sure you stick with it, and find ways to motivate yourself if you are feeling frustrated or overwhelmed—and keep in touch with your advisor! Most students feel that this process requires a lot of self-direction, high level organizational skills, perseverance and discipline, but the joy of discovery and completion is not to be missed!

The Dissertation Defense

When you and your advisor feel you have a satisfactory draft of your complete dissertation, you should set up a meeting of your committee for your “Oral Defense” meeting. At this meeting, you’ll present your research and defend your findings. It’s similar to the proposal meeting, but now focuses on the actual conduct of the study, the results, and your discussion of your findings. You should consult with your advisor about what to expect, and how to prepare for the defense. In some departments other students attend the oral defense meeting, although this has not been customary in HDFS.

Although there are variations in how the defense is conducted, typically you will be asked to make a brief presentation of your study to the committee. Sometimes questions begin before the presentation is finished, other times they begin once the formal presentation is completed. Your committee will ask questions about your dissertation work, and the questions can cover any part of it. The questions will critique the dissertation in the same way that editors and reviewers critique journal article submissions, and your reply to the committee should be much like a good reply to a journal editor: you should defend and explain your research to the committee when possible (for example, if they have miss-interpreted something you wrote, or if you disagree with the committee member); but you should be able to admit weaknesses in your thesis when they are identified, and modify your position as necessary. This is one of the tests of a scholar: to be able to both defend your position and change your position, and to have the good judgment to know when to do each. Even though defending the thesis is your responsibility, your committee will help you as needed. They will be happy to restate questions, and may even suggest possible answers. Sometimes they will argue with each other about the best answer, and then ask you to join in the argument! Even though they ask very difficult questions, they are committed to your success. When they identify weaknesses (and they always do), they will make recommendations to make your final, revised thesis the best it can be.

At the end of the defense hearing, you will be asked to step outside the meeting room so that the committee can meet briefly in private to settle on a set of recommended and/or required changes and decide whether or not you have passed. When you return to the room you will learn the results of this brief meeting. You may need to do some additional work, so you may need an additional meeting before your committee members will sign the warrant. Or they may only request some minor changes and sign at the meeting. It is common that your advisor does not sign until all of the requested changes have been made. It is highly unusual to have your thesis accepted with no changes at all.

After passing your final oral—Celebrate! Then go through the finishing steps outlined below.

For more information, see the Graduate School website publications under “Completing Your Degree”—PhD: <http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/index.html>

Paperwork and Final Steps

Prior to your defense meeting, you must contact the departmental office to order your Final Defense Warrant. This important form, which must be ordered at least 3 weeks before your meeting, is signed by your committee at or after your final defense meeting. All members of the examination committee must sign the dissertation warrant. Your advisor may withhold her or his signature until all required revisions to the dissertation have been completed to her or his satisfaction. The advisor also must sign the signature page and the UMI abstract page of the dissertation.

You need an appointment with the Graduate School to submit your forms. Call the Graduate School PhD Office in Bascom Hall (262-3011) to set up your appointment. After you deliver your signed forms to the Graduate School office (217 Graduate School), they officially indicate your graduation.

The department has an HDFS “Degree Completion Form” you will also need to have signed by your committee—this form should also be brought to your defense. The signed form is submitted to the department.

Each semester, the department administrator will email graduate students to find out who plans to graduate during the current semester, and to notify students of the deadlines to order warrants and ask for information about attending the graduation ceremony held in December and May. If you plan to graduate in August (Summer), you have the option of attending the previous May or following December ceremony, since there is no summer ceremony.

The Final Bound Thesis

Although the department does not require that you deposit your Dissertation with the Graduate School to be placed in Memorial Library you may choose to do this. For information about depositing your thesis, see <http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/ddd.html>

The department does, however, require that you provide the department with a bound copy of your dissertation. This should be the final, fully approved version. You should also provide your advisor with a copy of your final, fully corrected dissertation. Other dissertation committee members also may wish to have a copy of the approved dissertation, but students may wish to check with these faculty members before incurring the expense of additional copies.

Students should leave their forwarding address and pertinent information with the Department Administrator at the time they submit their dissertation to the Department.

Commencement

So you’ve made it! Some students choose to “walk” in the graduation ceremony, others choose to skip the pomp and circumstance. Even if you are not finishing until August, you may choose to “walk” in the May ceremony. Students who wish to receive their degree at the commencement ceremony must have a faculty escort. Typically, their faculty advisor (major professor) serves as escort, but if the advisor is not available the student may ask any other faculty member to serve this function. The Department Administrator emails our graduate students each semester to find out if they want to participate in commencement. S/he will need to know whether or not you plan to attend the ceremony and who will be your escort.

For more information see: <http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/commence/index.htm>

Forms

All the necessary forms can be found on our website:

<http://www.sohe.wisc.edu/departments/hdfs>

Go to “Graduate Program→ H.Current Student Information & Forms”