8.9 COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SCIENCES (CIS) PhD Program

Associate Dean for Graduate Studies: Professor Shuhua Zhou, Office: 478 Reese Phifer Hall

The college-wide doctor of philosophy degree in the College of Communication and Information Sciences is designed to:

• prepare communication scholars for positions of leadership in education, public service, the media, libraries, information-management positions, and other communication-related fields
• add to a student's usable body of knowledge in a chosen area of specialization within the field of communication and information sciences
• develop each student's research, teaching, and professional capabilities
• promote scholarly achievement and advancement of knowledge in the communication and information science disciplines, through basic and applied research

Specializations
• Communication Studies
• Information Studies
• Cultural, Critical, and Rhetorical Studies

Admission Requirements for the PhD Program

Applicants to the doctoral program must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate School (see Admission Criteria) of The University of Alabama and those stated below. Consideration for acceptance is based on having met these requirements, and on evidence of the capacity for success in communication studies at the doctoral level, in the form of clarity of expression and goals in the statement of purpose; letters from professors who can attest to an applicant's potential for doctoral-level work; record of prior academic study (including the nature and academic standing of courses of study already completed and grades earned); satisfactory scores on the Graduate Record Examination; and other information that may illustrate ability, maturity, commitment, and sense of purpose or that may otherwise indicate an applicant's potential to complete doctoral studies.

Normally, an applicant will have completed requirements for a master's degree in the communication field or in library and information studies. Consideration will be given to individuals with advanced degrees in other fields if they can make clear cases showing how their previous graduate work would apply to doctoral study in communication and information sciences. Admission for study in master's degree programs offered in the College of Communication and Information Sciences does not imply eligibility to work toward the doctoral degree. Admission to doctoral study in the College of Communication and Information Sciences requires completion of a separate application through the Graduate School. An applicant whose credentials meet the following minimum requirements may be considered for admission to the PhD program in communication:

• an undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 or higher overall (based on a 4.0 system) or a 3.0 or higher average for the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate study, and a graduate-level grade point average of at least 3.0
• a combined score of 1100 on the verbal and quantitative portions of the Graduate Record Examination general test, with no less than 400 on either the verbal or
Foreign applicants must score at least 600 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to be considered for admission.

An applicant who does not meet these requirements may be considered for conditional admission to the program if the following conditions are satisfied: an undergraduate grade point average of at least 3.0 overall (based on a 4.0 system) and a combined score of 1000 or higher on the verbal and quantitative portions of the Graduate Record Examination general test, with no less than 400 on either the verbal or quantitative portion of the examination. A student admitted conditionally to the program removes the condition by earning a grade point average of 3.0 or better during the first 12 semester hours of graduate work attempted after admission to the doctoral program, and by satisfying any other conditions specified by the College of Communication and Information Sciences Graduate Studies Committee. If the 12 hours are completed in a term in which the total credits exceed 12, the evaluation is made on the basis of all graduate work completed at the end of that term of enrollment.

A student who removes the condition immediately assumes the status of a regularly admitted graduate student. Failure to remove the condition within the first 12 hours of graduate work will result in the student's dismissal from the program. No student will be admitted to the program on any basis other than the two described above (regular and conditional admission to the PhD program in communication and information sciences).

Admission of a foreign student to the program may be contingent upon the successful completion of specified coursework in the English language offered by the English Language Institute of The University of Alabama. In such cases, the criteria for successful completion include earning at least a "B" grade in each course. Stipulated courses in the English Language Institute must be completed before the student is permitted to begin a course of study in the doctoral program.

Students who are admitted contingent upon the completion of preliminary courses specified by the Admissions Committee must complete these prerequisites during the first semester of study in the program if at all possible. Students will not be permitted to continue beyond the second semester of enrollment without having successfully completed the prescribed prerequisites. The prerequisite courses do not carry graduate credit.

The student's advisor and/or Program Advisory Committee may also recommend specific, preliminary, noncredit coursework to be completed during the first or second semester of study if deficiencies in a specific area are determined. These requirements must be approved by the associate dean for graduate studies of the College of Communication and Information Sciences.

Additional information is in the Admission Criteria section of this catalog.

General Requirements for the PhD Degree

Coursework

1. Number of semester hours required in the program: 48–60 hours as determined
by a student's program committee. An additional 24 hours of dissertation research will be taken, usually following admission to candidacy.

2. **Specialization:** 18–30 hours are required in the student's area of specialization, from one of the following three specializations: mass communication, information studies, or cultural, critical, and rhetorical studies. The student's Program Advisory Committee determines which specific courses he or she must take to satisfy program and research requirements.

3. **Cognate:** 9–15 hours are required in the student's cognate area, which has to be approved by the student's Program Advisory Committee. We recommend that students take their cognate in courses outside the College of Communication and Information Sciences. If the cognate is taken within the College, it must be in an area outside the specialization.

4. **Core requirements (courses required of every student)**

   - **12 hours required in six courses:**
     3 hours of the following:
     - CIS 600 Proseminar in Communication and Information Sciences (1 hour)
     - CIS 601 Proseminar in Pedagogy (1 hour)
     - CIS 602 Colloquium in Communication and Information Sciences (1 hour)
   - **6 hours in theory.** The student, in conjunction with the Program Advisory Committee, chooses two theory courses from the following, one of which must be in the student's area of specialization):
     - CIS 604 Mass Communication Theory
     - CIS 605 Cultural, Critical, and Rhetorical Theory
     - CIS 606 Knowledge and Information Theory
     - CIS 607 Theory Construction and Epistemology
   - **3 hours in research methods:**
     - CIS 603 Communication Research Methods
     Additionally, the student must demonstrate proficiency in the research methodology to be used in the dissertation through coursework beyond CIS 603 before taking the comprehensive examinations. Students taking coursework that requires quantitative research and/or doing a dissertation using quantitative research must complete at least one statistics course.

5. **Electives (additional courses): 0–21 hours.** These courses may be in the specialization, cognate, or other areas that the student's Program Advisory Committee may stipulate or approve.

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Semester hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total program</td>
<td>48–60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialization</td>
<td>18–30</td>
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<td>Cognate</td>
<td>9–15</td>
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<td>Core</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional/elective</td>
<td>0–21</td>
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<td><strong>Also (Graduate School requirements):</strong></td>
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<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>24</td>
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6. **Other requirements**

   - A minimum of 36 hours of coursework must be completed after enrollment in the CIS doctoral program.
   - A minimum of 24 hours of coursework must be at the 600 level. The remainder
of hours of approved graduate course credit must be at the 500 or 600 level. No slash-listed 400/500-level course may be taken in the doctoral degree program. A maximum of 6 hours of 400- or 400/500-level credit may be transferred if completed as part of a master's degree program.

- Each student must complete a minimum of four 600-level seminars from the College of Communication & Information Sciences curriculum.
- Up to 12 of these 36 hours may be transferred from a student’s masters program if approved by the student’s Program Advisory Committee and the associate dean for graduate studies. Credits so approved must have been earned within a period of no more than six years prior to admission.

**Required Plan of Study.** By the time each doctoral student has completed 30 graduate semester hours of UA and/or transfer work toward the degree, the student must have a doctoral **Plan of Study** approved by the director of the Communication and Information Sciences doctoral program and by the dean of the Graduate School. Failure to obtain approval of the Plan of Study by the graduate dean by the completion of 30 hours may result in the student’s having a hold placed on future registrations. The Plan of Study is available at the Office for Graduate Studies in CIS.

Students admitted to the doctoral program may be required to complete additional coursework to be prepared for doctoral-level (600-level) study and research in communication and information sciences, at the discretion of the Program Advisory Committee and the CIS associate dean for graduate studies.

All degree requirements must be completed within seven years after first enrollment in the program. Entering doctoral students with incomplete master's theses must complete these during the first year of doctoral study. Students must provide official transcripts of their master's degree work as evidence that their degrees have been granted. If a student fails to provide the transcript, the College may refuse to administer the PhD preliminary examination and/or may withdraw financial support; the Graduate School also would nullify the doctoral program admission.

**Scholastic requirements.** A student must maintain cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale for graduate courses undertaken following admission to the doctoral program. A doctoral student whose grade point average falls below 3.00 at any time after 6 semester hours have been completed will be placed on academic warning by the Graduate School and the College of Communication and Information Sciences.

- A student on academic warning will not be permitted to apply for admission to candidacy and may not hold an assistantship.
- Warning status must be removed (by raising the overall average to 3.00 or higher) within the next 9 hours of graduate work following the period of warning. Failure to remove the warning status will result in the student's suspension from the Graduate School and the program.
- Earning a “C” grade at any time will automatically place a student on academic warning within the College.
- A grade of “I” (Incomplete) is evaluated as an “F” in computing GPAs, and such grades must be removed within four weeks of the next term of enrollment.
- A student who earns a grade below “B” in more than two courses will be dropped from the program.

Students who are dropped from the program may petition the College of Communication and
Information Sciences Graduate Studies Committee for readmission. The committee may in turn make a special request to the dean of the Graduate School for approval of the student's readmission.

**Residency requirement.** The minimum period in which the doctoral degree can be earned is three full academic years of graduate study. The student must spend an academic year in continuous residence on the campus of The University of Alabama as a full-time student (9–12 hours of coursework per semester) or, if specifically approved by the faculty concerned, one full summer consisting of two terms, preceded or followed by one regular, full-time semester. Only non-dissertation coursework can satisfy this requirement; dissertation research cannot be used. Students must complete their residence requirement before admission to candidacy.

Preliminary examination. A preliminary examination is required of all doctoral candidates. The examination is given after all required course work and other work prescribed by the student’s Program Advisory Committee has been completed. The examination must be completed at least three months before the degree is awarded.

The student demonstrates, through written and oral examinations, a capacity to understand, synthesize, and apply communication theory and research techniques, as well as demonstrate knowledge of the pertinent literature, issues, and recent advances in the student’s area of specialization and cognate area of study. In other words, the examination must cover (1) the communication theory core, (2) the research methodology core, (3) the student's area of specialization, and (4) cognate area. The written examination is administered by the student's Program Advisory Committee, which may call on other faculty members associated with the student's coursework for assistance in preparing the examination. Sixteen hours are set aside for the examination—four hours for each division (theory, methods, specialization, and cognate). The examination is to be completed within a two-week period.

The oral portion of the examination is required of all students and will be scheduled as soon as possible following the completion of the written examination. Immediately following the oral examination, the examination committee will determine whether the student has passed, must perform additional work to demonstrate competency in one or more areas of the examination, or has failed the examination. When additional work is required, the examining committee may choose to administer another oral examination. In the case of a clear failure, re-examination must take place after six months and before twelve months have elapsed. Each of the four portions of the preliminary examination may be taken only twice. The examining committees will rule either pass or fail on the second examination.

**Admission to candidacy.** A student is certified by the dean of the Graduate School for admission to candidacy for the PhD in Communication & Information Sciences after meeting the following requirements:

- completion of the program of coursework and other requirements prescribed by the student's Program Advisory Committee, approved by the College of Communication and Information Sciences Office for Graduate Studies, and approved by the dean of the Graduate School on the Plan of Study and Admission to Candidacy forms
- demonstration, by passing the preliminary examination, of competence in the PhD core, research methods, the specialization, and the cognate
- a successful defense of a dissertation proposal
- approval by the Graduate School of the Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree
A department-approved Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree is submitted to the Graduate School as soon as possible after passing the comprehensive (preliminary) examination.

**Dissertation committee.** Following a successful completion of preliminary examinations, the candidate for the PhD in Communication and Information Sciences must form a Dissertation Committee.

The dissertation committee is composed of at least five members. The Graduate Faculty of the College of Communication and Information Sciences must be represented by at least three members. A fourth member may be from CIS or from a college or school outside the College of Communication and Information Sciences, but he or she must have graduate faculty status. A fifth member, to be appointed by the Graduate School of the University, must be a member of the Graduate Faculty in a division other than the College of Communication and Information Sciences; this so-called “Outside Member” represents the UA Graduate Faculty at large. Only full members of the Graduate Faculty may chair doctoral dissertations.

At least one committee member other than the chair must have full membership in the Graduate Faculty of the College of Communication and Information Sciences. All other members may be associate members. However, no more than one temporary member of the Graduate Faculty may serve on any given committee.

The graduate dean’s approval of the proposed dissertation committee must be obtained before significant progress is made on the dissertation--typically just before or just after the dissertation proposal meeting. For this purpose, the student submits the form for Appointment/Change of a Doctoral Dissertation Committee.

**Dissertation.** After successful completion of the preliminary examination, degree candidates must submit a written proposal to their dissertation committee.

The proposal describes the importance of the proposed topic, outlines the hypotheses to be evaluated, provides and overview of relevant literature, specifies the methodology to be used, and lays includes a timetable for completion of the project. The dissertation must make a significant original contribution to the field of communication and information sciences and must demonstrate the candidate's ability to report that research in writing in a clear, comprehensive, and scholarly manner.

The student must submit the proposal, and later the dissertation, to the committee at least 14 days prior to the defense. After the proposal has been circulated among the members, the student’s dissertation committee meets for the student's oral defense of the proposal. The candidate must complete the dissertation and all other degree requirements within seven years of the date of admission to the doctoral program.

**Final examination.** The candidate must present a copy of the final draft of the dissertation to each committee member at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the final examination. After the dissertation has been completed and accepted by the candidate’s dissertation committee for purposes of the examination, the candidate will be given a final oral examination by the dissertation committee.

The final examination is concerned primarily with the research embodied in the dissertation
and with the field in which the dissertation lies, but it may extend over the student's entire primary field of study. The final oral examination is governed by the rules of the Graduate School of The University of Alabama. All graduate faculty of the College of Communication and Information Sciences are invited to attend.

The dissertation must comply with the regulations in *A Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Graduate School deadlines, including each semester's dissertation deadline, are available at the Graduate School's homepage.

As of August 15, 2009, electronic submission of theses and dissertations (ETD) is required. Consult the ETD website for details of ETD submission.

Additional information on all Degree Requirements is in an earlier section of this catalog.