



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

College of Information Science

Student Handbook

PhD in Information

2026-2027

Revised October 2026

This handbook will be updated as needed. Faculty advisors and Ph.D. students are obligated to know and follow the Graduate College (GC) policies and the policies outlined in this document. Be aware that the College policies may be more stringent than the GC policies.

Please Note Ph.D. Deadlines for Admissions:

The application deadline for Fall admission is December 5th.

(The next application cycle will begin taking applications July 1 for admission to Fall semester)

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About the Ph.D. in Information

The College of Information Science is a multidisciplinary college where faculty researchers focus on many aspects of information organization, management, or use and its impact on individuals and society. Our broadly trained and diverse faculty and student populations work towards establishing and advancing what we know about information amid massive digital shifts in contemporary society. These foci range from the philosophies of information, information ethics and policy, and studies of digital literacy or digital archives, to computational social science, data science, machine learning, human-computer interaction, game development, and information retrieval or text mining. Beyond the wide methodological spectrum represented by the faculty, and alongside a broad commitment to issues of diversity and inclusion, much of the research happening in the College of Information Science focuses on how people engage with information, and related human factors across sectors of life, to include economic or business contexts, education, health, and art.

The Ph.D. in Information program in the College of Information Science prepares researchers and leaders for careers in which they conduct original research in academia, government, and industry. The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code of the degree is 11.0401 [Information Science/Studies], a subarea of STEM.

Information for Dual Degrees or Accelerated Master's Degree

Not applicable. The College of Information Science does not offer dual degrees or accelerated Master's related to the PhD in Information.

Career Options

The careers the program prepares students for include but are not limited to:

- Higher education
 - Tenure-track faculty
 - Research scientists
 - Teaching faculty
- Industry research positions
 - Senior software engineer
 - Senior research scientist
- Industry positions
 - User experience (UX) engineer
 - Data analyst
 - Data engineer/Data scientist
 - Database/Software engineer
 - Database administrator
 - Product manager
 - Health informatics specialist

- o Interactive designer
 - o Business analyst
 - o Front-end developer
 - o Back-end engineer
 - o Machine learning engineer
 - o Software designer/architect
 - o Interface prototyping
 - o Consultant
- Entrepreneurship
- Culture heritage organization leadership positions
 - o Library directors
 - o Museum collection managers
 - o Archivists
 - o Digital Preservationists
 - o Data curators

College Organization and Contact Information

Staff and Faculty contact information can be found on the [Graduate Advising](#) page and the [Info Sci Directory](#). Ph.D. students should contact the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for academic matters and contact the Business Office for TA/RA/GA assignments. The Director of Graduate Programs and the Program Coordinators support students on a variety of functions as noted below:

- Director, Graduate Studies (Faculty)
 - o Travel funding
 - o Petitions and policy procedures
 - o Academic questions
- Manager, Graduate Enrollment and Retention
 - o Admissions
- Director, Graduate Programs
 - o General policy and procedure advising
 - o GradPath forms
 - o Graduation steps, Ph.D. defense scheduling
 - o Student financial aid
 - o Internship opportunities
- Program Coordinator(s)
 - o Registration
 - o Ph.D. defense scheduling
- Business Office
 - o Travel authorization & Reimbursement
 - o Research & special projects coordination
 - o GA/TA offer letters and benefits
 - o contact InfoSci-Business-Office@arizona.edu

Faculty Profiles

- o Visit the [Faculty Directory](#) on the College of Information Science website.

Physical Resources and Facilities

Ph.D. students serving functions as Teaching/Graduate Assistants (TA/GA) with student interaction duties are assigned a desk in a shared office. Ph.D. students serving as a research assistant (RA) to a College of Information Science faculty are assigned a desk in one of the research labs. Equipment that TA/GA/RAs need for teaching or research is provided by the college for TA/GAs or by faculty research projects for RAs. In addition, students are reminded of the availability of university resources and facilities, including study rooms in the library, university computer labs and library lender computers.

Student Responsibilities and Professional Conduct

Membership in the academic community imposes on students an obligation to respect the dignity of others, to acknowledge their right to express differing opinions, and to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off campus.

Students serving in a TA/GA/RA role have additional obligations based on their professional roles in the college. These positions are exciting opportunities for graduate students to develop professional skills that will carry through the rest of their careers. Award of a TA/GA/RA is a privilege, not a right. Enjoy them and benefit from them, but please understand that these positions carry additional expectations, that you will:

- Devote the hours being paid for to the designated course/project.
- Make every effort to complete the assignments to the highest quality possible.
- Communicate in a timely manner with your supervisor on any difficulties encountered and actively seek solutions.
- Communicate clearly with your supervisor on expectations or change of expectations.

The obligations of TAs, GAs and RAs also include the ethical conduct of their duties. For more information, please consult the [Graduate College GA Manual](#). TA/GAs will be given the College of Information Science's Instructional Handbook, which specifies the college's expectations for professional conduct related to teaching.

New students are required to be available for orientation and GA duties one (1) week before the beginning of classes in the fall term. Students holding graduate assistantships are to be available one (1) week before classes begin, as required by their contract, for training sessions and assisting in course or laboratory preparation.

Students are expected to submit a Plan of Study in GradPath by the end of their third semester and make satisfactory progress towards their degree each year. Students should be familiar with their degree milestones and required GradPath forms to submit in a timely manner. It is the

responsibility of students to communicate with their faculty advisor on a regular basis and submit the Ph.D. Student Annual Review report. Failure to complete Annual Review reports will limit students' access to travel and other forms of additional graduate student funding.

Ph.D. Student Competencies & Learning Outcomes

These are the broadly defined competencies that you should have upon completion of a Ph.D. in Information Science. We use these competencies as goalposts to guide our programs and to help assess how well our curriculum is meeting our goals.

PhD 1	Demonstrate a deep knowledge in the student's subfield of study.
PhD 2	Demonstrate a broad knowledge across the field of information
PhD 3	Critically analyze published research results in student's primary area of study.
PhD 4	Conduct ethically responsible original research on a significant problem in information.
PhD 5	Effectively communicate and defend results of research to peers and broader scientific audiences.

Funding

Assistantships

As funding allows, graduate students in the Ph.D. program can receive 50% FTE Graduate Associate (GA) positions in the form of Teaching Assistantships (TA) or Research Assistantships (RA) for at least four (4) years based on students' interests. In some cases, students may not get their preferred position. Students should recognize that financial support from the program is a privilege and is not guaranteed. Four (4) years of funding is typically offered, and is usually specified in offer letters, on a case-by-case basis. Students receiving College of Information Science funding must maintain satisfactory progress toward their degree and a minimum GPA of at least 3.0 to receive funding. Students receiving financial aid must possess a valid United States Social Security number (or equivalent for international students).

Financial Support for International Applicants/International Students have additional requirements for financial aid eligibility. Students are encouraged to check with the [Graduate College Office of Fellowships](#) on specific funds that may be available to international students. For more information, see the Graduate College's page for [International Students](#) and International Student Services page for [Employment](#).

Students will be expected to complete an annual review with their GA supervisor(s) and Ph.D. advisor, each spring semester. Reviews will be kept on file for reference.

Our Ph.D. students are expected to fulfill TA/GA/RA job duties including but not limited to completing required TATO training, assigned time commitment, availability throughout academic dates, meeting assignment/grading deadlines, communicating student issues or concerns and maintaining weekly contact with supervisor(s)/advisor. Students can review HR information at [New Employee Onboarding](#).

Failure to satisfactorily complete these requirements may result in a position reassignment, loss of future position(s) or immediate termination thus resulting in loss of benefits, which may result in charges to the student bursar's account.

Ph.D. Student Travel Grants

Designated funds are available for Ph.D. students to present their research at national or international conferences. Travel funds are considered an award for students so be sure and list the award on your CV. To apply for student travel funds in the school, simply email the DGS with your current CV, an abstract of your research presentation, and a rough estimation of travel costs. If approved, the DGS will then email the business center and cc the student. Once this occurs the business center will go over the process and walk the student through the travel system, establishing a travel authorization, conference registration, lodging, transportation, etc. The amount of funds available varies from year-to-year, and are generally awarded on a first come, first served basis, so be sure to request your funds promptly. **Again, students who have not submitted their annual review promptly or are otherwise not in good standing may be declined requests for travel funding.**

Please note, funds are only available for research-oriented activity, and you need to be a presenter, not an observer/audience member. Detailed information about the College's annual travel policy and amounts available will be shared annually in fall orientation. Students may contact the College's business team for questions about the travel policy and distribution of funds. Learn more about PhD travel grants [here](#). Information about the University's travel policies and procedures can be found [here](#).

Other Funding Resources

All Ph.D. students are encouraged to seek out funding from a variety of sources:

- The College offers scholarships and tuition funding each semester to graduate students. Visit the [Graduate Cost & Funding](#) page and navigate to College Funding for the application and deadlines.
- The [Graduate and Professional Student Council](#) also makes funding available for travel, research, and basic needs.
- The Graduate College has [online resources](#) which can facilitate this effort
- Federal funding agencies, such as NSF and NHI, provide doctoral dissertation research funding opportunities.

- Students are also strongly encouraged to apply for Research Assistantship support through faculty and fellowship awards from other local and national agencies.
- Students seeking financial aid and scholarships may also review funds available through the [Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships](#), the [Office of Nationally Competitive Scholarships](#), and [Graduate College Funding Opportunities](#). More information can be found on the [Graduate Funding](#) page from the College of Information Science.
- [Bursar's Office](#) for information on billing and payments
- [Financial Aid Resources Overview](#)
- [Graduate College Funding 101](#)

Students facing unexpected emergencies are encouraged to reach out to the DGS or staff for assistance. Hardship funds may be available from the College, Graduate College, and GPSC

Degree Requirements

Graduate degrees at the College of Information Science must adhere to both Graduate College (GC) requirements and College requirements. Sometimes the GC requirements are more general, and the InfoSci College requirements are more specific and detailed. Students must satisfy both sets of requirements (the requirements will be consistent with one another). The requirements are located on the [Graduate College](#) and [College of Information Science](#) websites.

Note regarding co-convened courses

The College of Information Science offers some co-convened courses, which are courses with the same title and topics that offer a combined 400/500 level offering. Students who have taken the 400-level equivalent course as an undergraduate are not able to take the 500-level course for graduate credit. An exception is considered only with faculty advisor approval.

Program Requirements

A brief synopsis of the program requirements is listed below. Please read carefully the [detailed requirements](#) for a major in Ph.D. in Information.

- Completion of INFO 507 (Information Research Methods) in first year
- 36 total units of courses in major area (PhD in Information) including Research Methods (6 units), Graduate Seminars (6 units), Directed Research (9 units), Elective Courses (12 units), and INFO 507 (3 units). Note that classes from outside InfoSci may be substituted for in college classes with advisor approval.
- 9-12 units in a minor that is different from your major (College of Information Science students cannot minor in Information)
- 18 units of dissertation research (INFO 920, taken after comprehensive exams are passed)
- Research presentations and publication requirements listed below
- Completion of Annual Report in late spring

Ph.D. students are expected to maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 and to have no grade of C in major courses.

Besides coursework, all students need to meet the following research seminar and presentation requirements:

- Attend six (6) or more research presentations per year. At least three (3) of these should be College of Information Science colloquia, guest talks, job candidate presentations, or other school-specific activity.
- Give a public, research-related presentation yearly after passing comprehensive exams. Students are encouraged to present prior to this, at least once per year in all their years as an active doctoral student. Students are also encouraged to present with the College of Information Science's colloquia series by sending a request to the colloquium coordinator, with approval from the student's advisor.
- Make at least two (2) primary-authored research submissions to an academic conference or journal, including poster, paper, computer system demonstration, or research proposals, during the Ph.D. program.
- Because our program is small and we want to address needed changes before you graduate, Ph.D. students must fill out the Annual PhD Competencies Survey at the end of each school year and upon graduation. These are anonymous and used to determine if our program is meeting the expected educational needs of our students. That survey is available at: https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0BeAvsIFFcBdCiG

Advising

Successful graduate study depends upon effective relationships between the student and the advising faculty member(s). Upon arrival in the college, each new Ph.D. student is assigned an advisor, based on their stated research interests. This is to ensure that at least one (1) faculty member is tracking student progress and is available to counsel students on important issues relating to the graduate program. Students are required to meet with their advisors on a regular basis.

While students may choose to keep their assigned advisors, they may also decide to change advisors and conduct research in other faculty research areas. By the end of their third semester, students should decide (in consultation with their current advisor) whether they will keep or change advisors for the duration of their program of study. The advisor selected will guide the student through their exams, dissertation proposal, dissertation research and writing, and will chair their dissertation committee. However, if needed, students may choose to change to a new advisor at any time. To change to a new advisor, students should first ask the desired faculty member to serve in this capacity. If the faculty member consents, the student should notify their current advisor, the DGS, and the Director of Graduate Programs of the change. No Ph.D. student should be without an advisor at any point in their progress through the program. Students need to have an advisor who they respect and find rewarding to work with, and who they can see regularly for advice and discussion of their progress and plans at all stages of the program.

It is the responsibility of the student to maintain frequent contact with their advisor. In addition, students should avail themselves of opportunities to meet with professors during their office hours or contact them via email to arrange an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Generally speaking, “cultivating a relationship” means staying in good touch with a professor and receiving feedback on how the student is progressing on their research project(s). The faculty are dedicated to the training of Ph.D. students. Students should consult with their advisors to determine how often you both feel it would be helpful to meet at a given stage in the graduate school career. Students can anticipate being able to meet on a regular basis with their advisors—at least once a month, but possibly more frequently as the dissertation project requires it. In order to maximize the benefit that students receive from faculty interactions, it is important that they prepare thoroughly ahead of scheduled advising meetings. Students should plan on emailing drafts of papers and outlines of ideas to faculty ahead of their meetings in order to ensure that the meeting time is spent focusing upon making progress.

Accurate, timely documentation of progress through the program is very important. It is always in a student’s best interest to pursue and track carefully the completion of necessary paperwork. Along with an advisor, students should take an active role in keeping forms up to date and making sure requirements are met on time.

While advisors can often provide helpful advice in identifying other committee members, students are also encouraged to develop and maintain their own informal mentoring relationships with other faculty, including but not limited to: faculty who serve as the advisor for their minor area, faculty who serve on their comprehensive exam or dissertation committees, or course instructors. Education is a collaborative effort between the student and the faculty. Students are encouraged to be proactive and work with faculty and staff to ask for aid, advice and resources as required!

Courses Shared Between Degrees

There are limits on coursework that can be counted toward more than one degree earned by the student at the University of Arizona or elsewhere.

- If a student counts credits from a UA master’s degree towards a UA Ph.D., then additional transfer credit may be limited to ensure that some UA coursework is taken while in the doctoral program. Thesis credits used for a master’s degree cannot count toward the Ph.D. course credit requirements.
- Up to 30 units of credit counted toward one or more master’s degrees earned at UA or elsewhere may be counted toward the Ph.D. requirements.
- No course may be counted toward the requirements for more than two (2) degrees or programs (earned at UA or elsewhere).
- No course counted toward a bachelor’s degree may be counted toward Ph.D. requirements.
- A student earning two (2) UA doctoral degrees may use up to nine (9) units of coursework toward both doctoral degrees (as long as courses were not used toward any other degree).

Detailed information can be found on the [Graduate College](#) webpage.

Petitions, Appeals, and Grievance Policies

Petitions

Leave of Absence

Students may pursue a Leave of Absence from their graduate program if extenuating circumstances permit. The Graduate College typically approves up to two semesters of leave, and may approve additional semesters upon request. An LOA is a petition process and subject to approval. Students not enrolling in a fall/spring semester should submit an LOA, otherwise, a semester of non-enrollment will result in removal from the program and students will need to reapply.

Students pursuing an LOA cannot be paid as student workers/GAs or take advantage of university resources such as campus health or the library. Because most PhD students are employed as Graduate Assistants, or are receiving some sort of tuition benefit, they should discuss the LOA with their faculty and staff advisors in advance.

Returning from an LOA: students should inform the College of their plan to return a minimum of several months in advance so that Assistantships and proper funding may be reinstated in a timely manner.

GRO (Grade Replacement Opportunity) Effective Fall 2025

Effective Fall 2025, the Grade Replacement Opportunity (GRO) offers students the limited ability to replace an earned grade by repeating the course. Grades earned using the GRO will replace one previous grade for the course in the calculation of the [grade-point-average \(GPA\)](#), even if the grade from the repeated attempt is lower than the first attempt. Both the original grade and the grade from the repeated attempt remain on the academic record. Credit is earned for the GRO attempt only. Students must submit a [GRO petition](#) for approval.

- Graduate students may attempt GRO for 1 course with an original earned grade of C, D, or E, with program approval.
- GRO is not available to undergraduate students enrolled in graduate courses, or to students in Medicine, Pharmacy, or Veterinary Medicine programs.

Incomplete Grade Policy

An Incomplete grade may be assigned by an instructor if a student has made satisfactory progress throughout the majority of the class and is earning a passing grade. Incomplete grades are assigned at the discretion of the instructor and should reflect only a small portion of

unfinished course material. Students can get a maximum of one (1) incomplete grade per semester. Otherwise, it may lead to progress marked as unsatisfactory in the annual review.

College of Information Science Instructors will award an incomplete “I” grade as a contract with the student and will note the following information:

- **Date the student last attended class**
 - If attendance is not taken, this should be the date of the last academically related activity (paper, quiz, D2L). This date can be approximated by using the first of the month, the 15th or the last date of the month.
- **Grade the student earned as of the last date of their attendance**
 - This is not the estimated grade the student will earn when completing course requirements, but the **grade the student earned with currently completed work**.
- **Remaining coursework**
 - Listing of all remaining assignments, classwork, and any other tasks needed to finish the course, so the student understands specifically what they need to do to earn their final grade.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep in touch with the professor and make sure to turn in all assignments needed to complete the course within one (1) year of the course. Once the agreed upon coursework has been turned in the instructor will change the “I” grade to a letter grade. If for any reason the student feels they are not able to complete the course within the 1-year time frame they must submit a [Course Extension Petition](#) located in their GradPath forms in UACCESS.

All Incomplete grades must be resolved before graduation. Degrees cannot be conferred with incomplete work still on a student’s record.

Effective as of Fall 1977 semester: If the incomplete grade is not removed by the instructor **within one year** the incomplete grade will convert to a **failing grade**.

Standard Time to Degree

- Five (5) to six (6) years
- College policy states that students must schedule their dissertation defense within three (3) years of an approved dissertation proposal
- Per GC, students must meet all requirements for the Ph.D. within five (5) years of passing the Comprehensive Exam or risk being dismissed from the program. Should a student not finish within that time, the program may petition the GC for an extension to time to degree. If the extension is approved, the student may be required to re-take the Comprehensive Exam before proceeding to complete requirements, e.g., the dissertation.

Suggested Timeline Toward Degree

- Year One (1): Take **INFO 507**, identify minor area of study, complete any transfer approval and submit GradPath forms as necessary
- Year Two (2): Continue with coursework; complete **Plan of Study** in Year Two
- Year Three (3): Complete coursework; prepare for comprehensive exams
- End of Year Three (3): Pass comprehensive examinations for major and minor. Comprehensive exams should be completed no more than 6 months after the completion of coursework. The **Comprehensive Exam Announcement** form should be submitted in GradPath at least two (2) weeks before the scheduled oral exam.
 - Candidacy is reached after passing Comprehensive Exams and completing coursework; eligible to enroll in LIS/INFO 920 Dissertation units.
- Start of Year Four (4): Complete the **Dissertation Committee Appointment** form in GradPath; Complete and defend **Dissertation Proposal**; Continue dissertation research and writing. Proposals should be completed no later than nine (9) months after the completion of comprehensive exams.
- Year Five/Six (5/6): **Defend Dissertation**. Submit your **Announcement of Dissertation Defense** form in Gradpath. Congratulations!

Special Circumstances

- If students have had special circumstances that affect the student's progress in the program, please inform the advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. This could include birth or adoption of a baby, medical problems (physical or mental health), a death in the family, an extended period of fieldwork or any other special circumstance. Students should remain enrolled in the fall/spring semesters in order to maintain their active student status, or have an approved [Leave of Absence](#) on file if they will not be enrolling in courses or units. [GA Parental Leave](#) is also available for eligible life events.

Appeals

Students Right to Appeal

Students have the right to formally request exceptions to college policies and procedures or formally appeal college decisions by submitting a petition to the DGS through the GradPath system. Students may also petition the Graduate College (GC) for an exception to GC policies. You can read more about these petitions on the [academics page](#) of the catalog.

Grievances

Summary of Grievance Types and Responsible Parties

Is your problem or concern related to an academic issue? Does it involve possible violation of an academic policy or procedure? Review this information from the [Graduate College policy page](#).

Satisfactory Academic Progress and Milestones

The absolute minimum criteria for satisfactory progress include:

- Maintain a grade point average of no less than 3.0 in all graduate coursework. GPA is calculated at the end of each semester.
- Have no final grades below a “B” in major courses.
- Not carry more than one (1) “incomplete” at a time.
- Pass both written and oral portions of a comprehensive examination within four (4) years of starting the Ph.D. program. Students must take comprehensive exams no more than six (6) months after completing coursework requirements.
- Make one research presentation per year after passing comprehensive exams.
- Complete a written dissertation proposal. Approval of the dissertation proposal must be gained no more than nine (9) months after the completion of the comprehensive exams.
- Make ongoing satisfactory progress towards completing the dissertation. This means making clear progress towards data collection, analysis, and writing goals, as assessed through the annual review and in conversation with a student’s advisor. “Making progress” includes tasks such as applying for IRB approval, formally establishing access to communities or study sites, collecting or securing access to data, securing access to required computational tools and facilities, drafting outlines and chapters and sharing them with your committee, and other tasks as defined between advisor and student. If a student has not successfully defended the dissertation within three (3) years of passing the comprehensive exam, they may be given a written warning that they are not making satisfactory progress. If a student has not successfully defended the dissertation within one (1) year of receiving a written warning, they may be recommended for removal from the graduate program. Students in this situation will have an opportunity to explore and apply to College of Information Science Master’s programs to use previously earned INFO/LIS credit towards a Master’s degree.
- Pass the oral dissertation defense.

Students are evaluated for satisfactory academic progress during the annual review process held in late spring. However, if milestones and progress are not being made, a student’s faculty supervisor may give them notice that they are not making satisfactory progress in writing at any time. The student will be provided with clear goals and timelines to meet them.

Comprehensive Exam Requirements

Comprehensive Exam Committee

The student will form a major Comprehensive Exam Committee in advance to scheduling the exam. With the help of their faculty advisor, students can identify other members of the College to serve on the comprehensive exam committee. This committee should include at least four (4) faculty members. The committee will include the faculty advisor within the College, the advisor for their minor area who will be a faculty member of the department or unit offering the minor, and two additional members. One member may come from outside the College of Information. All must be tenured, tenure-track or other approved equivalent (Graduate Faculty or [Special Member](#)). Students follow Graduate College guidelines for special provision members and will work with the Director of Graduate Programs to submit required approval information.

Students must complete their **Comprehensive Exam Committee Appointment Form** on GradPath forms. This form should be submitted a minimum of three (3) weeks before the exam is scheduled.

For more details, see [GC requirements for committee composition](#), and [College of Information Science requirements](#).

Please remember that committee formation requires the mutual consent of all committee members. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain informal mentoring relationships with different faculty members, including but not limited to, those faculty who are formal members of the student's exam or dissertation committees.

Students may access previous [Comprehensive Exams and Proposals](#) for review.

Comprehensive Exam

The Comprehensive Exam is the College of InfoSci's Comprehensive Examination for Advancement to Candidacy. Students advance to candidacy once they pass the exam and have completed all coursework within their program of study. The examination, therefore, should not take place until the student has completed all, or almost all, of their coursework. The exam must be completed within one semester of finishing coursework; thus, students who complete coursework in May must sit for their qualifying exams by the following January, and students who finish coursework in December must take the exams by the following August.

The Comprehensive Exam will assess students' understanding of key concepts and foundational texts in the field of information studies, their knowledge of current research trends in their particular subfield of research, and their readiness to carry out their research moving forward. It covers students' coursework generally, though students are expected to display a depth and breadth of understanding that will likely require the use of literature beyond that found

on course syllabi. Students who started the program before Fall 2025, with permission of their chair, may follow the earlier “essay style” guidelines for comprehensive exams.

Breadth and Depth

To cover breadth and depth of topic areas for a PhD in Information, all exams will in some way address students' particular areas of research interest, while covering the following three foci:

1. Foundations of information science and key information theories, as identified in collaboration with advisor/committee;
2. At least 2 primary research areas within the College of InfoSci (students may request an additional research area with the approval of their advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies):
 - a. Artificial intelligence and machine learning
 - b. Information, communication, and society
 - c. Cultural heritage informatics, digital humanities
 - d. Archives, libraries, and museums
 - e. Data science, management, analysis, and visualization
 - f. Environmental, health, and biological information
 - g. Gaming and virtual worlds
 - h. Extended reality (VR/AR/XR) and other immersive media
 - i. Human-computer interaction / human-centered computing
 - j. Human-AI Interaction
 - k. Information policy, law, ethics, and diversity
 - l. Social sciences and information behavior/practice
 - m. Information organization, access/use, and digital curation
 - n. Information management and leadership
 - o. Computer supported cooperative work, team dynamics, and virtual teams
 - p. Science of Science, and Sociology of Scientific Knowledge
 - q. Information design, and UX/UI
 - r. Makerspaces, craft, and embodied knowledge
3. Methodology, methods, and research design relevant to the student's topic area.

Comprehensive exams should be taken after all coursework has been completed for both major and minor. Students cannot advance to candidacy or enroll in dissertation units until all coursework has been completed and the comprehensive exams have been passed.

Students are encouraged to complete the [Comprehensive Exam Cover Sheet](#) with your major advisor and committee members to identify the areas to be covered on the exam.

Note: Students who entered the program Fall 2025 and before may choose to complete the [essay-format exam](#) with the approval of their chair. Students who entered prior to Fall 2018 have the option to complete the [question-based exam](#). All other students who were admitted Spring 2026 and after should follow the current exam structure listed below.

Students must complete their **Announcement of Doctoral Comprehensive Exam** GradPath form a minimum of two (2) weeks before the exam is scheduled.

The comprehensive exam consists of a written and oral exam:

Written Exam

The written exam consists of two ~6000-word essays responding to two questions provided by the committee. Students may be given up to 4 questions and will choose two to answer. At least one question or prompt will come from each of the committee members. The chair will review the questions from the committee members before sharing them with the student to ensure sufficient coverage of the topic areas covered by the reading list.

Instead of a multiple-question exam, the student's advisor, in consultation with the committee, may decide to require the student to develop a literature review. In this case, the advisor will provide examples and guide the student with an appropriate type of literature review, such as systematic, scoping, etc., in advance of the start of the exam.

Oral Exam

The committee has 14 days to review the responses and then hold an oral exam with the student that should not exceed 2 hours (but not less than 1 hour). The oral exam is closed to the public. At the end of the oral exam, the committee will inform the student of the outcome of the exam, which may be "pass," "revise," or "fail." The Graduate College allows no more than one re-take of the oral exam. In case of revision, a deadline will be set by the committee for the student to submit the final revision within 14 days. The minor portion of the exam covering a student's minor coursework may or may not happen as a different exam process, depending on the minor department's requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to understand and alert their major adviser of minor exam requirements.

After passing the oral exam, the student should give a brown bag/work-in-progress presentation of their exam in the College of InfoSci. The student may voluntarily deposit their literature review into the InfoSci PhD Comp Exam bank, which will be used to help future students prepare.

The Graduate College has additional guidelines that should also be referred to:

<https://grad.arizona.edu/degree-services/degree-requirements/doctor-philosophy#comprehensive-exam>

Students must pass the written part of the comprehensive exam to take the oral exam. Students have one (1) chance to retake either part of the exam if they fail at their first attempt. A second attempt at the exam must be taken within six (6) months of the first attempt.

If the second attempt at the exam is failed, students will be recommended for removal from the Ph.D. program. Students in this situation will have an opportunity to apply to College of Information Science Master's programs to use previously earned INFO credit towards a

Master's degree. The result of Comprehensive Exams will be reported on GradPath by the student's advisor.

After both comprehensive exams, the student's advisor should complete the following form: https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8qyptgpfctI59I4. Students who are getting a minor in the College of Information Science do not need to be reported.

Proposal Requirements & Committee

Proposal Committee

Once students have an approved doctoral Plan of Study on file; have satisfied all coursework; and have passed the written and oral portions of the Comprehensive Examination, they may appoint their dissertation committee for defense of the dissertation proposal and final dissertation defense. The student's advisor will serve as the dissertation committee chair. This committee will often, but not always, have the same members as the comprehensive examination committee. This committee should include at least four (4) faculty members, one more than [Graduate College requirements for dissertation committee composition](#). Two (2) of these may come from outside of the College of Information Science and all must be tenured, tenure-track or other approved equivalent (Graduate Faculty or [Special Member](#)). Students follow Graduate College guidelines for special provision members.

The student should submit a **Doctoral Dissertation Committee Appointment Form** in GradPath to form the committee.

If a student's committee changes between their dissertation proposal and their dissertation defense, a new **Doctoral Dissertation Committee Appointment Form** must be submitted.

Dissertation Proposal

After passing comprehensive exams, students may enroll in dissertation units (INFO/LIS 920) with the advisor's approval. Before dissertation work starts, a dissertation proposal must be developed by the student and approved by the student's dissertation committee after a proposal oral examination. The proposal examination should be completed no later than nine (9) months after completion of the comprehensive exams. Students may pass, pass with revisions, or fail a proposal defense. Students have one (1) chance to retake the oral exam of the dissertation proposal if the first attempt fails. The completion of the dissertation proposal is recorded by the Director of Graduate Programs in GradPath forms and students/faculty advisors should notify the Director when the proposal is complete.

A dissertation proposal commonly includes the following parts (these do not need to be in the exact order as listed below) and has a typical length of 20-40 pages:

- Cover Page
- Introduction

- Clear introductory statement of the problem to be researched. The research problem for the dissertation must represent an original contribution to your field; the nature of this contribution should be made clear in the introductory section of the proposal.
- Literature Review or Related Work
 - A critical review of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature in the specific area of the dissertation. Contrasting existing work with the proposed work, it should show the novelty of the proposed work.
- Research Questions
 - A detailed statement of the problem to be researched, including research questions to be addressed or hypotheses to be tested. The nature of this section will depend upon the style of work of the dissertation and will, for example, generally be worked out in greater detail for a statistical study than for research employing methods of participant observation.
- Data and Methods
 - A description of the research methods to be employed in the dissertation, and the manner in which they will be employed. Describe also the size and composition of research data and the means to collect them. It is insufficient, for example, to say that a survey or interviews will be conducted (of what population? with what questionnaire?), that data will be analyzed by regression analysis (of which variables?), or that participant observation will be employed (of what group? to what end?). It is important to keep the data-collection plan realistic and within the means of the student. If survey instruments will be used, append also tentative questionnaires or interview schedules. If human subjects are involved, follow UA policy and procedure on obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the research.
- Research Plan and Timeline
 - A realistic schedule on carrying out the research plan
- Risk Factors
 - A discussion of any anticipated challenges and possible solutions
- Expected Results
 - A description of expected outcomes, assuming research activities are carried out successfully. What are the potential practical or theoretical implications of this research?

Oral Defense of Proposal

- Lasts 1-3 hours
- Includes a candidate presentation
- Includes a question-and-answer session
- Includes committee deliberation (closed to the public)
- Is good practice for the dissertation defense

Students may access previous [Comprehensive Exams and Proposals](#) for review.

After the proposal defense, the student's advisor should complete the following form: https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8gyptgpfct15914. Students who are getting a minor in the College of Information Science do not need to be reported.

Dissertation Defense

Once a student has passed their dissertation proposal oral examination, they may begin writing their dissertation. A dissertation in the program may be in 1 of 2 formats:

1. Article-based format: a dissertation consists of a coupling of at least three thematically related, publishable articles with an introduction and a conclusion that integrate the articles and demonstrate an overarching theme.
2. Monograph format: a dissertation as one monograph, or book. Substance and length of a monograph-format dissertation should be comparable to at least three publishable articles (though there need not be clear divisions between these three articles in this format).

Any piece of work included in the dissertation should represent the independent work of the student, such that if that work were submitted for publication, the student would be the sole, first, or corresponding author. If any work in the dissertation is based on collaborative work, this must be acknowledged in the acknowledgements sections and/or citations and/or footnotes.

Per [GC Policy](#), a committee cannot require work to be accepted for publication prior to graduation:

A common measure of quality of the dissertation is whether it is "publishable" in disciplinarily-recognized publication venues. Note that the determination of whether a dissertation meets this criteria lies solely with scholars on the dissertation committee. Programs and committees may not require that the work actually be published. The committee cannot require that outside actors such as editors, publishers, editorial reviewer, accreditation boards, etc. make that determination for them."

The student will usually show dissertation material to committee members as it is produced and consult regularly with committee members on how to proceed with, and improve, the dissertation. Once the student produces a complete draft, it will be submitted to committee members, often leading to a process of revision.

In contemplating both the form and the substance of their dissertations, graduate students should be forward-looking. The object is to develop an original and fruitful research program that will extend beyond their tenure as graduate students.

Once committee members deem the dissertation appropriate for examination, an oral examination (dissertation defense) will be held. The final dissertation draft should be provided to the committee at least four (4) weeks ahead of the defense time. The oral examination will typically start with a public presentation by the candidate, followed by questions from committee members, and then questions from audience members. At the end of the examination and in a closed session, the committee will choose one of three outcomes: pass, pass pending revisions, or fail.

The **Dissertation Committee Form** and the **Announcement of Dissertation Defense Form** must be submitted in GradPath a minimum of three (3) weeks before the scheduled defense. To schedule your defense and get assistance with booking a physical space, please follow up with the College Program Coordinators for assistance. Students should also e-mail their title and abstract to the Director of Graduate Programs three (3) weeks in advance to advertise within the College.

After submitting the **Announcement of Dissertation Defense Form**, the GC degree counselor will reach out with final formatting forms and details. Students are responsible for reviewing and understanding their requirements for the formatting and submission of the dissertation.

Dissertation Defense Resources:

- [Important Dates & Deadlines](#) for defense scheduling and graduation
- [Steps to Your Degree](#) including GradPath forms
- [Archiving the Dissertation](#)
- [Dissertation Checklist](#)
- [Dissertation Formatting Guide](#)

Annual Review Process

Ph.D. students are subject to annual evaluation for satisfactory progress based on their grade point average and overall progress towards completion of degree requirements (see [Satisfactory academic progress and milestones](#)). The College of Information Science's [Ph.D. Annual Review](#) form can be found on the Ph.D. Curriculum & Degree Requirements page (annually due April 15th).

The Graduate Committee reviews each student to ensure satisfactory academic progress. Please see the *Satisfactory academic progress and milestones* and *Program-specific requirements* sections above for details. If the major advisor and the committee agree that progress is unsatisfactory, the student will be placed on internal academic probation. The student will then work with the advisor to create a one-year action plan to bring the student back to the expected performance level and get approval from the DGS. By the following academic review, the student must have successfully completed the action plan and made satisfactory academic progress to remain in the program. Failing to successfully return to good standing in the agreed upon timeline may be grounds for removal from the degree program or the College.

If students do not submit their annual reviews on time, they will be ineligible to receive Travel or other Funding from the College of Information Science.

Information Minor Requirements

Requirements for students in other PhD programs to minor in Information

A PhD Minor in Information consists of an approved nine (9) units of College of Information Science courses (passed with grade B or better) and a written and oral examination (which forms part of the PhD comprehensive exam). Some of our graduate courses have prerequisites, but you may confer with the instructor to see if they can be waived depending on your background.

Graduates from a College of Information Science Master's program, who are also doing a PhD Minor with the College of Information Science, may not need to complete nine (9) units depending on their previous course work. Courses required in cases like these will be a decision made by the candidate's advisor and the director of graduate studies.

Comprehensive Exams

The form of the PhD Minor in Information written exam would typically be a 2-hour paper. Alternatively, it could be a format aligned with the major exam of the home department, but reflecting content for the College of Information Science.

Declaring the Minor

Successful admission will be contingent, in part, on there being a core/primary graduate faculty member of College of Information Science willing to serve as a member of the PhD Minor committee. A second faculty member is optional and may be a College of Information Science affiliated faculty member.

Students may select an affiliate faculty member as their minor advisor, but then they must also select a [core College of Information Science graduate faculty member](#).

To declare Information as a PhD minor, you should first consult with a preferred minor faculty advisor and then discuss with your committee in your home department. Once all parties agree you will enter the faculty names for your committee on GradPath.

Student Resources

General Resources

- [Graduate College](#)
- [Graduate College Academic Policies](#)
- [Graduate College Enrollment Policies](#)
- [University General Academic Policies](#)

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Final Exam Schedule](#)
- [Payment Dates and Deadlines](#)
- [Registration Dates and Deadlines](#)
- [Other UA Calendars \(holidays, events, etc.\)](#)
- [College of Information Science Event Calendar](#)
- [Disability Resource Center](#)
- [Campus Health Counseling & Psych Services](#)
- [The Graduate Center](#)
- [Graduate Professional and Student Council](#)
- [International Student Services](#)
- [Basic Needs](#)
- [New Info Sci Graduate Students](#) and [New and Current Students](#) (Graduate College)
- [PhD Information Student Resources](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
- [Graduate College GA manual](#)
- [Ombuds Program](#) for communication, mediation, and facilitation
- [GA Parental Leave Policy](#)
- [New Employee Onboarding](#)

Career Resources and Counseling

We offer a variety of resources and counseling services to assist you in navigating your career path successfully. Here are the essential career resources and counseling services available:

1. **Faculty Advisors and Program Coordinators:** You can seek general career advice and counseling from your faculty advisor or program coordinators. They are here to support and guide you in making informed decisions about your career choices.
2. **College of Information Science [Student Career Center](#):** For students pursuing careers in information-related fields, the College of Information Science offers [career resources](#) tailored to your degree. Explore these resources to gain valuable insights into potential career paths.
3. **Box Folder with Resources by Degree:** This [Box folder](#) contains a wealth of resources categorized by degree, providing you with relevant information and support to shape your career journey effectively.
4. **[Center for Career Readiness](#):** The Center for Career Readiness is your central hub for comprehensive career support.

Note: *Even after graduation, you can continue to access resources from the Center for Career Readiness for up to one year after graduation.*

5. **Graduate Center Career Support:** The [Graduate Center](#) offers specialized career support through workshops and one-on-one counseling sessions. Take advantage of these resources to refine your career goals and plan for a successful future.

Technical Support

University of Arizona students have a wide range of technology services and resources to support your academic journey. From free software licenses to 24/7 IT support, we strive to ensure that you have the tools and assistance you need to excel in your studies. Below are some of the essential technology services available to you as a student.

UA Free and Discounted Software Licenses

Take advantage of our free and discounted [software licenses](#), including Microsoft Office 365. These licenses can greatly enhance your productivity and provide you with the necessary software tools for your coursework and projects.

Commonly Requested UA IT Services and Information

Our [Information Technology Services](#) (ITS) offers various resources that are essential to your student life. Here are some of the services you can access:

- **Student Email:** Access your official university email account to stay connected with important updates and communication.
- **NetID, NetID+ (Plus), and Duo:** These are authentication systems that grant you access to university systems securely.
- **24/7 Support:** Our IT Support Center is available round-the-clock to assist you with any technical issues or questions you may have.
- **UA Virtual Private Network (VPN):** Access university resources securely when off-campus using the VPN.
- **UA WiFi:** Connect to the campus-wide wireless network for internet access across the university premises.
- **Computer Labs:** Utilize well-equipped computer labs located throughout the campus for your academic needs.
- **UAccess Student:** Access the university's online administrative portal for various student services.
- **D2L (Desire to Learn) Online Learning Management System:** Interact with course materials, submit assignments, and engage in online learning.

24/7 Information Technology Support Center

Our [24/7 IT Support Center](#) is here to assist you with a wide range of technical services. You can reach them in person, over the phone, or through chat. The center provides support for:

- **Campus Applications and Services:** Get help with university-related applications such as CatMail, UAConnect, D2L, UAccess, and NetID/Duo.
- **Troubleshooting:** Resolve issues with your personal computer, faculty, or staff computers.
- **Software Installation:** Assistance with installing operating systems and software (software licenses must be provided by the customer).
- **Security and Maintenance:** Get help with removing spyware, viruses, and unwanted software.
- **Network Connectivity:** Support for wired or wireless networking cards and troubleshooting network problems.
- **Reporting Network Issues:** Report any problems with the UA wired or wireless network.

UA Computer-Based Training

Explore our [Computer-Based Training](#), offering free 24/7 access to online tutorials covering a wide range of technical topics, including programming languages, graphics programs, web design, and more. The tutorials are divided into lessons ranging from 2 to 10 minutes long, allowing you to learn at your own pace.