

# Theory and Practice of Professional Communication, PhD

**Department:** English Department

**College:** College of Humanities and Social Sciences

## Overview

### About This Degree

The theory and practice of professional communication (TPPC) program is designed to meet the interests and needs of students who aspire to conduct advanced study of and research into the communicative practices of organizations.

Grounded in rhetorical inquiry, the program provides students with advanced study in the communicative and cultural dimensions of artifacts, processes, and technologies.

Researchers in professional communication pursue knowledge about discourse and communicative practices in organized contexts, including business, academic, scientific, technical, and nonprofit settings. They study communication as it is or has been practiced in actual, lived contexts. They primarily use theories and research methodologies associated with rhetoric and professional communication. These researchers are particularly interested in how communicative practices shape and are shaped by culture, technology, history, and theories of communication.

## Career Options

Students often work as professors of technical communication. Primarily they find work in teaching and academic research. Occasionally graduates have careers in non-academic environments as administrators or in research positions.

## What it takes

### Admissions Requirements

Applicants must have a master's degree in a subject area that complements their professional reason(s) for pursuing a PhD in Theory and Practice of Professional Communication.

#### Application Requirements:

- Complete the [online application](#)
- Pay the \$55 application fee
- Score at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile on the GRE or MAT
- Have a 3.0 or higher GPA on your last 60 semester or 90 quarter credits
- Provide transcripts of all college/university credits
- Provide three contacts for letters of recommendation
- Provide a letter of intent
- Provide a current curriculum vita
- Submit two writing samples (a total of 20-40 pages), exhibiting your best writing. The samples may include academic or non-academic writing, but at least one of the samples should demonstrate your critical research skills.

International students have [additional admissions requirements](#).

### Admissions Deadlines

The department has the following application deadline:

- Fall semester – January 15

## Financial Assistance

All PhD students that meet the qualifications are supported with graduate school [tuition awards](#), subsidized [health insurance](#), and a monthly stipend for work performed as [graduate instructors](#) in instructional activities or [research assistants](#) in research groups.

## Program Requirements

[Click here](#) to see course requirements for the **Doctor of Philosophy**.

Students must take a six-credit research internship course that is designed to immerse students in research that will lead to their dissertation.

### PhD Qualifying Exams:

Students are also required to successfully complete two major exams in order to advance in the PhD program. The first of these is a portfolio (qualifying) exam, which is to be taken at the end of the first year. The second is a comprehensive exam, which is to be taken at the completion of formal coursework. Successful completion of the comprehensive exam is required before students can begin formal work on their dissertation research.

At the end of their first year in the program, students will submit an individual portfolio of their work. Professional and/or academic work may be selected for inclusion in the portfolio, though it must be work the student has completed during their first year. The portfolio must include at least four documents and their accompanying reflective statements. To proceed beyond their first year in the program, students must pass the portfolio (qualifying) exam with a grade of high pass, pass, or low pass. A grade of low pass, while allowing the student to continue in the program, does serve to indicate concern about the student's ability to successfully complete the program. There are no retakes, and decisions are final.

At the end of their formal course work, students will write a comprehensive exam. This exam is comprised of two essays. Though the comprehensive exam is taken at the completion of coursework, students should begin preparing for this exam upon starting the program. To complete the exam, students are responsible for generating a reading list from which exam questions will be formulated, which must include at least 100 items. After submitting their reading list, students should meet with the members of their committee to discuss their reading. It is from these conversations that the exam questions will be drawn. For each essay, students will be given two questions and asked to answer one. The average exam length is 15 pages per essay. In addition, each essay must also include a works cited list. Students will have 72 hours from the time they are given the exam questions to complete both essays.

## Contact

### Advisor(s)

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## Get Involved

### Labs, Centers, Research

**Learning Suite:** The Learning Suite is comprised of two student computer labs: the Teaching Lab and the Open-Access Lab. The Learning Suite strives to foster an environment where communication can develop between students, instructors, and their audiences. It supports communication as any expression through the medians of written text, graphics, sound, and still and moving images, and updates its technology to provide as much support as possible for these forms of communication.