

Guidelines For LIS PhD Students and Faculty

Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science Program

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1. PURPOSES OF THE PROGRAM

The Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science program prepares students for careers in research, education, and professional practice. The primary purpose of the PhD program is to develop an understanding of library and information science beyond the master's degree, with particular emphasis on the conduct of original research, the production of significant research findings, and the contribution of such findings to public knowledge.

2. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Basic Admission Requirements

The following are requirements for admission to the PhD/LIS Program:

1. A master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association, a recognized international program, or the equivalent in a closely related field of study. Students must submit official transcripts as evidence.
2. Attainment in previous graduate work of a minimum quality point average of 3.50 (on a scale with A having a value of 4 points per credit). An international student's quality point average will be calculated on the basis of equivalency from universities that use a different scale.
3. Submission of scores from a predictor test, such as the Graduate Record Examination taken within the last three years.
4. At least three references from persons in the academic and professional communities. The LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies may, on occasion, require additional references.
5. An interview (in person, by telephone or using web conferencing tools) may be required as part of the admissions process for selected candidates, after an initial screening of their application materials.
6. Submission of an application fee of \$50.

2.2 Supporting Documents for Admission

As evidence of the ability to undertake doctoral work, the student's application must be accompanied by:

1. An essay (not exceeding 1,000 words) indicating, as specifically as possible, the student's detailed academic and professional goals in relation to the Library and Information Science doctoral program and discussing in detail potential areas and/or topics in which the student expects to pursue dissertation research. Students **SHOULD** identify one or more LIS faculty members with whom they want to work.
2. A complete curriculum vitae that provides an overview of education, publications,

- work, and other activities.
3. At least one example of scholarly research or professional writing in any format (print or electronic) which should be authored solely by the applicant. The student should describe fully any published or unpublished research, thesis, contributions to the professional or scholarly literature, and other professional or academic experience relevant to an assessment of his or her capacity to pursue research successfully. If the writing sample submitted is a co-authored publication, the applicant must explain the nature and extent of his or her contribution to the work, and should attach additional evidence as verification (for example, a statement by the primary author or co-author of the work, confirming the parts of the work contributed by the applicant).
 4. If the candidate has had appropriate professional work experience in libraries, information centers, publishing, the information industry, education, or similarly related areas of professional activity, a brief description should be provided.

Credentials of prospective students are reviewed by the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies. However, students who are applying for financial aid should be aware that they must be admitted and meet financial aid deadlines to ensure consideration for funding.

2.3 English Language Proficiency

Graduate students must possess sufficient knowledge of English to study without being hindered by language problems, to understand lectures, and to participate successfully in class discussion. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) must be taken if the applicant's native language is not English. The institution code for the University of Pittsburgh is **2927** and the department code is **90**.

A minimum score of 600 (paper-based), 250 (computer-based) or 100 (Internet-based) on the TOEFL is required for admission to graduate study in this program. The requirement to take the TOEFL may be waived if the applicant has received a degree from an accredited institution in the United States. Students from certain English-speaking countries are also exempt from this requirement (see <https://oafa.pitt.edu/apply/admissions-process/international-students/toefl-exceptions/> for a list of exempt countries).

Students may choose to take the International English Language Testing System exam (IELTS) in place of the TOEFL. Students should receive a score of Band 7.0.

The PhD program is a highly intensive reading and writing program that requires that students have an excellent command of English in order to be successful.

2.4 Application Deadline

All admissions materials must be submitted by January 15th of each year for beginning studies in the forthcoming Fall term and for consideration for financial aid.

Transcript Evaluation

As of June 17, 2013, all degrees obtained outside of the U.S. **will be** evaluated for equivalency to U.S. educational standards by the iSchool/University of Pittsburgh. Therefore, all international applicants must provide an official English-language translations of all pertinent transcripts. All transcripts from non-U.S. institutions, for undergraduate and graduate study, will be reviewed by the iSchool/University of Pittsburgh in terms of: the U.S. degree to which your degree is equivalent - Bachelor's, Master's, etc., the overall grade point average for your studies (converted to a U.S 4.0 scale), and a course-by-course grade equivalency evaluation for every class taken.

If you completed your degree in the U.S. but also took coursework outside of the U.S., you need to provide a certified English translation of the coursework taken outside of the U.S. if the record was issued in a language other than English.

PLEASE NOTE: the Admissions Committee may request an external review of your transcript, the cost of which is the responsibility of the applicant.

2.5 Commencement of Study

PhD students may begin their studies only in the Fall Term in order to ensure a coherent program of study.

3. MATRICULATION

3.1 On-Campus English Proficiency Test

Upon arrival, students with TOEFL scores less than 600 (paper) or 280 (computer) or 100 (Internet-based) or less than Band 7.0 on the IELTS will be given the on-campus administered English Language Proficiency Test. If remedial courses in English as a foreign language are recommended, the student must complete the remedial course during the first two terms of study. This may extend the length of the program of study.

3.2 Academic Advising and Plan of Studies

An advisor will be assigned to the student upon entering the program; however the student is free to select a different advisor for subsequent advising and registration. The PhD student should seek a faculty Program Advisor who is knowledgeable in the student's major area of study. The advisor must be a member of the graduate faculty in the Library and Information Science program who is able to spend the time and effort necessary for the advising role, will be available for examinations, and with whom a productive and comfortable working relationship can be established.

3.3 Program Advisor

The advisor selected by the student for the period prior to the dissertation stage of the program is the Program Advisor. The Program Advisor and the Dissertation Advisor may be the same person, but the student has the option to select a different advisor for the dissertation.

Upon agreement of the faculty member to act as the student's advisor, the signed agreement is placed in the student's folder. Any subsequent change of Program Advisor should be submitted in writing to the Chair of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies and placed on record in the student's folder.

Doctoral students are ultimately responsible for their own direction and progress through the program and are encouraged to seek advice from any member of the SIS faculty or other University faculty in this endeavor. The Program Advisor, however, is the one primarily responsible for providing guidance, insight, advice, information, explanation of University and School policies, and general assistance in the pursuit of the PhD degree. The Program Advisor will also approve those actions requiring a faculty signature.

The Program Advisor assists the student in 1) developing a plan for the program of studies and 2) arranging for the preliminary and the comprehensive examinations.

4. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Credit Requirement

The PhD/LIS program requires a minimum of 54 credits beyond the master's degree. A minimum of 36 credits must be taken in course work. The student must receive a letter grade in each course taken in this 36-credit requirement, *except the Teaching Practicum*.

An additional 18 credits are required which must be applied to dissertation research and writing; however, regardless of the number of credits taken, no more than 18 credits for dissertation research and writing may be applied toward graduation. The grade for these credits will appear as an "S" on the student's transcript. In order to register for, and successfully complete, dissertation credits, students must show evidence of work toward the dissertation by completing the "[Dissertation Credit Tracking Checklist](#)" and updating it at the end of the term.

The minimum of 36 credits of course work, all of which must be on the graduate level, must be distributed as follows:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 3 credits: | LIS3000: Introduction to Doctoral Studies |
| 3 credits: | LIS 3950: Teaching Practicum or FACDEV 2200 |
| | |
| 6 credits: | courses in research methodology and/or statistics |
| | |
| 6 credits: | courses in a cognate field |
| | |
| 9 credits: | 3000 level doctoral seminars in SIS |
| | |
| 9 credits: | additional courses, which may be |
| | • additional research methodology courses |
| | • additional cognate courses (up to 6 additional credits) |
| | • additional 3000-level doctoral seminars in SIS |
| | • 3000-level independent studies in SIS (maximum of 6 credits) |

- 2000 level courses in SIS (subject to approval by the student's advisor)

LIS PhD degrees are conferred only on those students who have completed all courses required for the doctoral degree with at least a 3.5 QPA.

4.2 Probation and Termination

All students pursuing the LIS doctoral degree are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 after admission to graduate study for all course work applicable to the degree. Students are automatically placed on academic probation when their cumulative GPA falls below 3.5. The graduate faculty may choose to terminate students on probation for two consecutive terms. A cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better is required for admission to LIS doctoral study and for the award of the LIS doctoral degree. In addition, students must show adequate progress in the subsequent benchmark examinations and defenses.

Each student will be reviewed annually in the Spring Term by the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies. (See the LIS Doctoral Student Annual Progress Report located [here](#).)

4.3 Cognate Field

Doctoral students are required to devote some portion of their studies to work on other disciplines in order to broaden their perspectives and deepen their understanding of library and information science. To fulfill the cognate requirement, students are required to take a minimum of 6 credits and a maximum of 12 credits in some area of graduate study outside the field of library and information science. These credits may be from more than one department or school.

Students may enroll for all or part of their cognate course work at institutions other than the University of Pittsburgh, but only when prior approval has been obtained from the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies. Courses in the School of Information Sciences cannot be used to fulfill the cognate requirement. Cross listed courses may be counted as cognates if they originate outside the School. Cognate areas and courses shall be selected with consultation and approval by the student's advisor.

If a student has significant course work at the graduate level or an advanced degree in another discipline and desires that it be considered as the cognate field, the student has the right to petition the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies for exemption from the cognate requirement. A minimum of 36 course credits and 18 credits of dissertation writing and research will still be required for the PhD students who opt to petition for exemption from the cognate requirement. Such a petition should be submitted as early as possible, preferably in the first term, in order to plan a coherent program of study.

All students who are candidates for doctoral degrees are governed by the regulations of the University Council on Graduate Study, which establishes minimum standards for graduate work throughout the University, as well as by those regulations established by the LIS faculty.

4.4 Research Methodology Courses

Research methodology courses may include courses in statistical analysis, general research methodology, and specific research methods or research methods used in specific fields of study, for instance, historiography, ethnography, or case and field study. Doctoral students should work with their advisors to identify the appropriate research methodology courses.

Research methodology courses may be taken within SIS or in another School. Research methodology courses taken from schools outside SIS cannot be used to fulfill the cognate requirement.

The research methodology course requirement must be fulfilled prior to taking the Preliminary Examination.

4.5 Teaching Practicum

A three-credit teaching practicum is required for all doctoral students in order to provide the student with teaching experience that may become part of the student's professional dossier. The teaching practicum is usually taken after completion of two terms of study. The student is responsible for identifying an appropriate course related to his or her area of interest, and obtaining the agreement of the instructor of record. Appropriate activities as part of the teaching practicum include involvement in course design, attendance at all class sessions, presentation of some course materials, office or tutorial hours, and involvement in grading. The student's teaching responsibility should involve preparation and presentation of specific topics throughout the term, and sole responsibility for at least one class session. The teaching practicum is graded on a pass/fail basis.

Doctoral students may also fulfill this requirement by completing the University Teaching Practicum course offered through the Faculty of Arts and Science. The course, FACDEV 2200, is a graduate seminar designed for Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows who will be teaching a class independently for the first time. A description of the course can be found at http://www.cidde.pitt.edu/fds/ta_ntao.htm.

4.6 Residence and Registration Requirements

- Doctoral students must register for at least 3 credits in each term until they have achieved candidacy. One term of full-time study is required to meet the residency requirement. Full-time study is defined as 9 or more graduate credits per term.
- To maintain active status, all doctoral candidates (see section 7.5) not in residence must be registered for a minimum of 3 credits in each 12-month period (3 credits in one term or 1 credit in each of three terms) from the time of admission to candidacy until receipt of degree.

In keeping with University policy, a graduate student must be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit in the term in which the student graduates.

A student who fails to register for at least one of three consecutive terms will be automatically placed on inactive status and will be required to apply for readmission in order to continue graduate study. Upon readmission, the student is required to adjust the program of studies to meet current PhD degree program, School, and University requirements.

A student may not register for dissertation credits until the successful completion of the preliminary exam.

Doctoral students who have completed all credit requirements for the PhD degree, including the minimum of 18 dissertation credits, and are working full time on their dissertations, should register for “Full-time Dissertation Study,” with a fixed-fee registration per term for both Pennsylvania residents and nonresidents. Enrollment in this course fulfills the University requirements for registration in the term of graduation.

For immigration purposes, international students studying on an F-1 visa must maintain full-time registration status on an exact and regular basis that is more strict than the residency rules required by the School as stated above. See Appendix A for details.

4.7 Transfer of Credits (Advanced Standing)

Upon petition to the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies and with the recommendation of the Program Advisor, a student may be granted up to 6 credits of advanced standing. This credit for graduate course work completed at another institution may be granted if the credit has not been applied to a previous degree, has been earned within the 6-year statute of limitations, and is relevant to the student's doctoral studies in the Library and Information Science Program. Transfer credits will not be accepted for courses in which a grade lower than a “B”, or its equivalent, has been earned.

4.8 Public Presentation

During the course of the PhD program, each student is required to make a formal presentation to faculty and students in the School or in another academic setting. The topic of this presentation may be a research project the student is engaged in or preliminary results of the dissertation project. This presentation may be a guest lecture in a course, a public colloquium, a presentation sponsored by the Doctoral Guild or a presentation at an academic conference. Documentation of presentation should be provided for inclusion in the student's file.

Attendance at colloquia is required of students in their term of residence, and is recommended throughout the PhD program.

5. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

5.1 Purpose of Preliminary Examination

The Preliminary Examination, according to *Regulations Governing Graduate Study at the University of Pittsburgh* (<http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/regtoc.html>), is held:

...to assess the breadth of the student's knowledge of the discipline, the student's achievement during the first year of graduate study, and the potential to apply research methods independently... The evaluation is used to identify those students who may be expected to complete a doctoral program successfully and also to reveal areas of weakness in the student's preparation.

5.2 Eligibility

To be admitted to the preliminary examination a student must:

- Have completed 24 credits of study or be completing 24 credits in the exam term, including 6 credits from courses in research methodology and/or statistics
- Be registered in the term in which the preliminary examination is taken;
- Apply in writing and with the advice and consent of a faculty advisor to Library and Information Science Program support staff by the announced deadline.

Students (whether full-time or part-time) are encouraged to take the preliminary examination, with the advice of the faculty advisor, as early as possible. Full-time students should take the preliminary examination near the end of the 1st year Spring Term.

5.3 Preliminary Examination Procedure

Upon completion of 24 credits of coursework, the student will submit to faculty for review a portfolio comprising the best representation of work completed thus far. Each student will also be required to present this portfolio to the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies as a whole, and the whole committee will vote on whether or not the portfolio is acceptable. A date for the portfolio presentation for the Preliminary Examination will be set at the beginning of each term. Students are required to submit their portfolio to LIS Program support staff two weeks in advance of the Preliminary Examination. Preliminary Examinations are held in the Fall and Spring terms.

5.4 Preliminary Examination Portfolio

The preliminary evaluation will be based on breadth and depth of knowledge as addressed through coursework, as well as whether the coursework taken will support the research plan of the student. This portfolio will minimally consist of the following elements:

- Course plan:
 - List of courses completed
 - Projected list of remaining courses
 - Notations concerning how all course requirements are to be met

- Research prospectus or plan and how this relates to coursework (taken and planned). This section will consist of a proposed area of concentration for the dissertation, justification for the research, and description of the methodological approach in some detail. It will also include an analysis of what types of resources will be needed to carry out the plan and to support the student through completion of the dissertation.
- Two examples of major work completed while working towards the Ph. D. At least one of these should be a significant piece of writing. The other can also be a paper or could be another type of work demonstrating depth of knowledge and research in an area.
- Other:
 - Professional activities (e.g., papers presented at conferences)
 - Awards

5.5 Preliminary Examination Outcomes

The Chair of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies will respond to the presentation with an evaluation memo to the student either noting the acceptability of the portfolio or noting the areas in which the student is deficient. The memo may be very specific and prescribe specific types of courses, work products, or other elements necessary for the student to complete their research plan or the required course work. If a portfolio is not passed by a majority of those hearing the case, the student may make a second attempt in a later term.

With the successful completion of the preliminary examination, the Chair of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies will notify the student in writing of admission to doctoral study. Please note the results of the examination on this [Preliminary Examination Results Form](#).

Failure to pass the Preliminary Examination on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the doctoral program.

Failure to pass the Preliminary Examination by the end of the 2nd Spring term (or 3rd Spring term for part-time students) will result in dismissal from the doctoral program.

6. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

6.1 Purpose of Comprehensive Examination

The University's *Regulations Governing Graduate Study at the University of Pittsburgh* state the purpose of this examination:

The Comprehensive Examination should be designed to assess the student's mastery of the general field of doctoral study, the student's acquisition of both depth and breadth in the area of specialization within the general field, and the ability to use the research methods of the discipline. ... It should be administered at approximately the time of the

completion of the formal course requirements and should be passed at least eight months before the scheduling of the final oral examination and dissertation defense. In no case may the Comprehensive Examination be taken in the same term in which the student is graduated (<http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/regtoc.html>).

6.2 Eligibility

To be admitted to the comprehensive examination a student must:

- Have completed 36 credits of study
- Be registered in the term in which the comprehensive examination is taken;
- Apply in writing using the “[Application to Sit for the Comprehensive Exam](#)” form and with the advice and consent of a faculty advisor to the Library and Information Science Program support staff at least six weeks before the scheduled exam time.

Full-time students should take the comprehensive exam in the Fall or Spring term of the 2nd year. All students must successfully complete the Comprehensive Exam within 18 months of passing the preliminary examination (24 months for part-time students).

6.3 Comprehensive Examination Procedure

In the Library and Information Science program, the following procedures apply:

- The examination will be conducted by a 3-person committee: the student’s advisor and two faculty members chosen by the student and the faculty advisor. Faculty members chosen to serve on the committee must give their consent.
- The examination will consist of two parts: a written, take-home exam over two weeks (three weekends) and an oral examination conducted by the student’s committee.
- The take-home exam will have two parts: a broad perspective on current issues in the field of library science, information science, or archives, depending on the student’s general area; and the area of research specialization, as designated by the student.
- The examination will be tailored to the student, who will choose one question in each part from a choice of two.

A more detailed explanation of the procedure is found in Appendix B.

6.4 Comprehensive Examination Outcomes

The result of the comprehensive examination will be a pass or fail. If a student fails, he/she may retake the exam one more time. Use the [Comprehensive Examination Results Form](#) to document this benchmark.

Failure to pass the Comprehensive Examination on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the doctoral program.

Failure to pass the Comprehensive Examination within the required time frame of within 18 months of passing the preliminary examination (or 24 months for part-time students), will result in dismissal

from the doctoral program.

7. DISSERTATION

7.1 Dissertation Advisor

Students must gain the agreement of a member of the LIS graduate faculty to chair the Dissertation Committee that will advise on the area of research and the design of the study. The advisor's agreement must be obtained and recorded in the student's file. Any request to change the Dissertation Advisor must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies after discussion with the Dissertation Advisor. Students retain the right to change advisors with impunity. It is important for students to be aware of and sensitive to various issues, including: 1) the importance of mutual consideration in the relationship between advisor and advisee; and 2) the academic benefits of continuity in the relationship with a major advisor and other members of the dissertation committee. Approval for the change and the selection of another Dissertation Advisor is filed in the student's folder.

The student's dissertation advisor:

- assists in choosing the members of the Dissertation Committee and in confirming the eligibility of all members selected;
- arranges with LIS support staff to schedule the dissertation proposal presentation;
- reviews progress toward completion of the research;
- arranges with LIS support staff to schedule the dissertation defense;
- chairs the dissertation defense;
- secures appropriate signatures from Dissertation Committee members and assures that all required paperwork is submitted in accordance with the LIS, School of Information Sciences, and University procedures.

7.2 Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Committee, selected by the student and major dissertation advisor, shall consist of at least four members, with the majority being from the graduate faculty of the School of Information Sciences. At least one, but not more than two, should be from another School of the University. Work in the cognate area may provide the student with the opportunity to select an appropriate outside member for the Dissertation Committee from a discipline related to the student's area of specialization. Upon the recommendation of the Dissertation Advisor, and with the approval of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies, a member may be appointed from outside the University. Outside members of the Dissertation Committee are not obligated to attend dissertation related events in person. If an outside person from another University or agency does attend in person, the LIS Program is not responsible for covering any expenses involved in the attendance of the outside member at meetings. Finally, the major advisor proposes the members of the committee for approval to the LIS Program Chair and the Dean. Use this [Doctoral Committee Form](#) to document approval of committee composition.

Meetings of the doctoral candidate and the Dissertation Committee must occur at least annually from the time the student gains admission to Doctoral Candidacy. During these meetings, the committee should assess the student's progress toward the degree, discuss objectives for the

following year, and project a timetable for completing degree requirements.

Any language requirement relates to proficiencies necessary for successful completion of doctoral research. Depending upon the student's program, proficiencies in modern languages, linguistics, and/or computer languages may be specified. The student's Dissertation Advisor will determine the language requirement in consultation with the Dissertation Committee at the time the proposal is accepted.

7.3 Dissertation Procedural Requirements

The student must submit all forms, letters, and questionnaires related to the dissertation research to the LIS members of the Dissertation Committee for approval before any such documents are publicly distributed.

The student is also responsible for meeting University requirements when human subjects are used in research. These requirements are found in the University of Pittsburgh's Institutional Review Board (IRB) *Reference Manual for the Use of Human Subjects in Research*, which can be found on the IRB website at <http://www.irb.pitt.edu/PandP/>. The School of Information Sciences has a faculty representative on the Institutional Review Board who may be contacted with questions of procedure.

Bibliographic style is best determined by the subject of the dissertation; a style manual of the student's choice may be used for the content of the dissertation and must be applied consistently throughout.

The final approved version of the dissertation must be submitted electronically to the University. For the full instructions on the submission of Electronic Thesis and Dissertation, please visit <http://www.ischool.pitt.edu/sisint/policies/graduation.html>

For ETD formatting guidelines and general information,] please visit the [University of Pittsburgh Electronic Theses and Dissertations website](#). For deadlines and contact information regarding the School of Information Sciences' required graduation and ETD paperwork, please visit the [School of Information Sciences' internal website](#) on graduation procedures.

7.4 Dissertation Proposal Defense

Prior to scheduling the dissertation proposal defense, the student must have completed all required coursework, and successfully completed the Preliminary and Comprehensive Examinations, which may not be scheduled in the same term as the dissertation proposal defense.

The student should defend the proposal of the dissertation within 18 months of successfully completed the comprehensive exam (24 months for part-time students). All students must successfully complete the Dissertation Proposal Defense within 24 months of passing the Comprehensive Examination (36 months for part-time students). Failure to successfully complete the dissertation proposal defense within the required time period will result in dismissal from the doctoral program.

The student should work closely with the Dissertation Advisor during the preparation of the proposal for dissertation research. Only when the proposal is reviewed and approved by the Dissertation Advisor will the student initiate the proposal defense process. The proposal must be submitted to the members of the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled time of the proposal defense. The presentation portion of the proposal defense is an open event and will be announced to the faculty and students in the school. If scheduling problems for committee members occur, telephone conferencing may be used. Faculty discussion about the presentation is closed and only the members of the Dissertation Committee will participate.

The Dissertation Committee must unanimously approve the dissertation topic and research plan before the student may be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree. However, approval of the proposal does not imply either the acceptance of a dissertation prepared in accordance with the proposal or the restriction of the dissertation to this original proposal. Please use this [Proposal Defense Results](#) form to document the results of the defense.

7.5 Candidacy

For admission to formal candidacy for the LIS PhD degree, a student must have fulfilled the following requirements:

- passed the Preliminary Examination;
- completed a minimum of 36 credits beyond the master's degree with a QPA of 3.5 or higher;
- passed the Comprehensive Examination;
- successfully defended the dissertation proposal and received permission from the Dissertation Committee to begin research.

When these steps have been taken, the chairperson of the student's Dissertation Committee will notify the Chair of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies, the Chair of the Library and Information Science program, and the Dean of SIS that the student has achieved formal candidacy.

7.6 Dissertation

In accordance with the University Regulations Pertaining to the Doctor of Philosophy, each student must write a dissertation that presents the results of a research project carried out by the student. An appropriate research project involves a substantive piece of original and independent research, grounded in an appropriate body of literature, and employing systematic methods and procedures to investigate a defined question or problem. It is relevant to an identifiable field as it is currently practiced, and provides a significant contribution or advancement in that field. It presents either a hypothesis tested by data and analysis, or an analysis of data supporting the development of a theory, or leading to new or substantially improved insights. It is the responsibility of the student's doctoral committee to evaluate the dissertation in these terms and to recommend the awarding of the doctoral degree only if the dissertation is judged to demonstrate these qualities.

Characteristics which a dissertation should demonstrate are:

- the establishment of a historical context for the presentation of an innovative and creative approach to the problem analysis and solution;
- a clear understanding of the problem area as revealed by analysis and synthesis of a broad

- literature base;
- a well-defined research design;
 - clarity in composition and careful documentation;
 - results of sufficient merit to be published in refereed journals or to form the basis of a book or monograph
 - sufficient detail so that other scholars can build on it in subsequent work;
 - the preparation of the author to assume a position within the profession.

7.7 Dissertation Defense

The student should work with the Dissertation Advisor to decide the right time for dissertation defense. The student must obtain the Dissertation Advisor's approval before initiating the dissertation defense process. The student is responsible for presenting one copy of the dissertation in final form to each member of the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense. The deliverable format is to be determined by each individual committee member.

The date, time, location, and subject of the dissertation defense shall be publicized in *The University Times* four weeks before the defense is held. All members of the Dissertation Committee and such other persons as are interested may attend the final defense, but acceptance of the dissertation is determined by a vote of members of the Dissertation Committee. Only members of the Dissertation Committee may be present during the final deliberations and may vote on the passing of the candidate. A report of this examination, signed by all the members of the Dissertation Committee, must be sent to the LIS Program Chair and to the Dean. If the decision of the committee is not unanimous, the case is referred to the Dean for resolution. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee should ensure that the dissertation is in final form before requesting signatures of the members of the committee.

A student who defends the dissertation, but with conditions to be met before the degree can be awarded, must meet those conditions within the required time frame:

- minor corrections (largely presentation, e.g., typographical errors) – to be completed within one calendar month, subject to approval by the Dissertation Advisor;
- substantial amendments (involving more significant revisions and/or additions, e.g., re-writing sections of chapters) – to be completed within three calendar months, subject to approval by members of the Dissertation Committee.

In both of the above cases, the student's statute of limitations will automatically be extended if necessary for the period specified, without the need for a petition.

A student who does not successfully defend the dissertation, may revise and resubmit the dissertation for examination within the time frame allowed by their statute of limitations.

Students must be registered for at least one credit or full-time dissertation credit in the term in which they defend their dissertation.

7.8 Graduation

Students must be registered for at least one credit in the term of the graduation. For full instructions about graduation, including the submission of Electronic Thesis and Dissertation, please visit <http://www.ischool.pitt.edu/sisint/policies/graduation.html>

For ETD formatting guidelines and general information,] please visit the [University of Pittsburgh Electronic Theses and Dissertations website](#). For deadlines and contact information regarding the School of Information Sciences' required graduation and ETD paperwork, please visit the [School of Information Sciences' internal website](#) on graduation procedures.

1. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

All requirements for the PhD degree must be completed in not more than 6 calendar years from the time of first registration (or 8 calendar years for part-time students). Students may, in extenuating circumstances, submit a formal request for extension of their statute of limitations or for a leave of absence from the program. The request must be submitted to the advisor and then presented to the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies for a decision.

In all other matters of policy, refer to the University publication, *Regulations Governing Graduate Study at the University of Pittsburgh*. The current version is posted at <http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/regtoc.html>)

APPENDIX A: REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR IMMIGRATION STATUS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

All international students, for immigration purposes, must continue to be registered as full-time students in all fall and spring terms until completion of their degree. In the Summer Term, such students are not required to maintain enrollment in coursework. If an international student's first term of study at the University occurs during a Summer Term, however, the student is required to maintain full-time study for that term as well.

The full-time registration is achieved first by a combination of completing all required courses (36 credits minimum) and all dissertation credits (18 credits of LIS 3999 minimum). Once the preliminary exam is successfully completed (after a minimum of 24 credits of coursework) students may begin taking a combination of dissertation credits and required credits until both requirements have been completed. Students may, with the approval of their theses advisor, register for up to 9 dissertation credits per semester until the 18 credits are achieved, by a combination of dissertation credits and required coursework can also be taken in each semester, so long as at least 9 credits of one or the other or both are taken in each Fall and Spring semester. If additional coursework (beyond the required 36 credits) is desired by the student or recommended by the advisor (for example, classes in statistical methods, programming, additional cognate courses, etc.), a mix of dissertation credits and such additional coursework may be taken as well (for example, 6 credits of dissertation and one 3-credit additional course, or 3 credits of dissertation and 6 credits of additional coursework).

Once the 36 required credits and the 18 dissertation credits (54 credits total) have been successfully completed and the Dissertation Proposal has been approved, the student then registers as a Full-time Dissertation student every fall and spring term until the completion of the degree. To do this, the student must register for FTDJ 0000 each fall and spring term. The tuition charged for this registration is \$500.00 per semester. Please note that the semester during which an international student finally completes the 54 credits is crucial for immigration purposes; unless this last term before FTDJ 0000 registration happens to be a summer semester, care must be taken to ensure that the student **enrolls in at least 9 credits**.

For example, if by the end of Fall 2012 the student has 48 credits completed and only needs 6 more credits in the Spring of 2013, **the student cannot seek approval from OIS for less than full time registration** in the Spring of 2013 because this will not be the student's last semester of registration (they will be registering for FTDJ 0000 after the Spring of 2013). As a result, the student in this example would be required to take at least 9 credits in the Spring of 2013 to maintain full-time registration, even if only 6 credits were needed.

New international students MAY NOT BE REGISTERED until they have taken the required TOEFL or IELTS test and the results are available and have been reviewed by the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies. If the TOEFL or IELTS scores are below a certain level, (see the LIS PhD admissions page for details – <http://www.ischool.pitt.edu/lis/degrees/phd-admissions.php>), then the Michigan test, administered by the English Language Institute in cooperation with the Office of International Services (OIS), is also required and the scores will be reviewed by the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies before registration is allowed.

APPENDIX B: STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

In the Library and Information Science program, the Comprehensive Examination will have written and oral components, and will normally be offered in the Fall and Spring terms. Students will notify their advisor and the Chair of the LIS Committee on Doctoral Studies of their interest in taking the Comprehensive Examination at least six weeks prior to the examination date. The dates for each student will be determined in consultation with the student and the student's comprehensive examination committee.

Students will be examined in two areas:

1. a broad perspective in current issues in library and information science, or archival studies, and
2. the student's designated research focus.

The Comprehensive Examination Committee will consist of three faculty in the Library and Information Science program: the student's advisor and two faculty members chosen by the student and the faculty advisor with the consent of the faculty members chosen. The student's committee will prepare the examination and evaluate both the written and oral components.

The written examination will consist of four questions, two in each of the areas of the examination. The student will choose one of the two questions in each area. Though the student is required to answer only two questions, there is the expectation that the response will be comprehensive and include a high level of analysis of the material. In terms of length, 12-15 pages would constitute a minimal answer for each question though longer papers are expected. The student will be given two weeks (including three weekends) to complete the written examination.

The second part of the examination will be an oral examination expanding on any points from the written work that the committee wishes to address or any questions arising from the broad, general area of interest. The oral examination (approximately two hours) will take place as soon as possible after the written component has been evaluated.

If the committee decides that the student has not completed either the written or oral examination satisfactorily, the student will be allowed one additional opportunity to retake the entire examination.

**APPENDIX C: SUGGESTIONS ON CHOOSING A DISSERTATION ADVISOR FOR
DOCTORAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH¹**
(Prepared Under the Auspices of the University Council on Graduate Study)

Before starting dissertation research, you must have a major advisor who agrees to supervise your work. In addition, you must form a complete doctoral committee, subject to approval by the department chair and the dean, and be admitted to doctoral candidacy. But the first step is the choice of your major advisor. You and your advisor must mutually agree on the advising arrangement and the research topic. Both of you should enter the relationship as well informed as possible about the other. In advising relationships, "divorces" are possible, but they upset the timely progress toward degree and are emotionally draining.

Trade-offs and compromises are to be expected in selecting an advisor. For instance, it might be preferable to choose an advisor whose students take a slightly longer time to complete their degrees if they usually gain better jobs than those of a different faculty member. While some students may be eager to work with a famous full professor, others might fear that the busiest advisors would have the least time for their students. Finally, be aware that procedures for matching students and advisors may vary by program or department.

To select the best advisor, you might meet with all the faculty members of your program and talk with other graduate students in the program about the qualities of the faculty members eligible to direct dissertations. Be cautious about making assumptions, and ask questions covering a range of topics. Some questions should best be discussed with the faculty member in question, others might better be asked of advanced graduate students. To help you, consider the attached list of questions in selecting a dissertation advisor; the list is not intended to be a list of mandatory qualities that advisors should possess. Some items pertain more to specific disciplines than to others. Remember, too, that faculty members will have a number of questions to ask about you.

Questions To Consider In Selecting A Dissertation Advisor

These questions have been adapted from a document prepared by the Graduate School, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

- Is the advisor an expert in the area of research or scholarship that you intend to pursue? Is his/her critical or theoretical orientation consistent with yours?
- How much freedom will you have in your choice of dissertation topic with this advisor?
- What is the reputation of the advisor within the discipline?
- How responsive is the advisor? How long does it take him/her to return written material with comments?
- How accessible is the advisor for discussion?
- Is the advisor likely to remain on the faculty for the duration of your degree work?
- How many students does he/she advise? If none, why? If a large number, does this affect the attention that he/she pays to individual students?
- How much time does he/she spend away from campus? Is he/she available during the

¹ <http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/dissadvisor.html>

summer?

- How long do students take to complete their degrees with this advisor?
- What proportion of this advisor's students have successfully completed the program?
- What is the placement record of this advisor's students? Where do they get jobs?
- Does the advisor publish with his/her students as first author?
- How many publications does the typical student accumulate with this advisor?
- Do the advisor's students go to disciplinary or professional conferences?
- Do the advisor's students make presentations of their own work at conferences? Do they make presentations of joint work with the advisor?
- How much interaction is there with other advisees of this faculty member? Does he/she direct a research group or rather a series of individuals?
- How much of the research is collaborative with the advisor and/or other advisees?
- How much involvement is expected in "group" research projects that are not appropriate for inclusion in your dissertation? How much of this contributes to your professional development and marketability?
- How is credit for collaborative work assigned?
- Is the advisor engaged in patentable or saleable work? If so, how does he/she assign credit to the student? Does this work get published promptly?
- Is the advisor's work funded? What are the guarantees of funding for the advisor's students? Do the advisor's students get summer support?
- Does the advisor assist his/her students in obtaining their own funding from outside sources such as fellowship programs?
- Does the advisor have good relations with other faculty in the program?
- Does the advisor have a reputation for ethical behavior?
- Are the advisor's work habits compatible with your own?

APPENDIX D: SUGGESTED STUDY COMPLETION SCHEDULE AND TIMELINE

A new completion schedule will be available in Fall 2013. Check back!