A HANDBOOK TO GRADUATE STUDY

IN

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

AND

FAMILY STUDIES

2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR

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I. Graduate Program Overview

The Human Development and Family Studies Graduate Program was established in 1969 and has produced over 500 Ph.D.s since that time. You are a part of a proud tradition.

The program of research and graduate training is designed to help students learn and generate research in cutting-edge approaches to the study of individuals and families across the life span and the development and application of new methodological approaches for these areas. This work spans all levels of analysis from the biological (genetics, physiology) to the social context (schools, families, neighborhoods, and the workplace) which is meant to inform the development and evaluation of prevention and intervention programs implemented locally or through changes in public policy.

Although students will develop areas of specialization in their study, HDFS is a single department and grants a single degree. Thus, all students complete a common core of coursework in their first year, covering the broad substantive themes of the department: Individual Development, Family Studies, Prevention and Intervention, and Developmental Methodology. While some students will elect to specialize in methodology, all students are also expected to develop strong skills in research methods, a hallmark of our graduate training. All students complete a common four-course methodology sequence, which focuses on research design, measurement, and statistics, with a strong emphasis on statistical approaches for modeling development and change over time. In consultation with their advisors, students fulfill the remaining course credit requirements through the selection of electives individually tailored to their research interests. These courses include seminars offered in the department, as well as courses offered in other departments throughout Penn State such as Demography, Women's Studies, Statistics, Psychology, Sociology, and Communication Arts and Sciences. Students may wish to consider additional specialization through a graduate minor, a concurrent degree (e.g. master's degree in statistics) or a dual-title Ph.D.

Students who enter the graduate program with a bachelor's degree are required to complete a master's degree enroute to the doctorate. Masters research is an apprenticeship experience in which the student works closely with an advisor to answer a research question with empirical data. Students who enter the program with a master's degree that did not include a thesis with empirical data will need to complete a first-year empirical project or empirical thesis. The purpose of these requirements is to make sure that all students are well prepared to conduct independent doctoral research.

The HDFS doctoral degree is a research degree, and as such, the most important training takes place outside the classroom through various apprenticeship experiences. This is the primary focus of the work the student completes in their advisor's research lab and may include carefully selected opportunities with additional labs that expand the student's skill set and exposure to research. Students are encouraged to be engaged in their lab environment and to capitalize on the intellectually rich environment at Penn State.

Students also have opportunities to gain invaluable teaching experience through teaching assistantships, courses in effective college teaching, and the opportunity for supervised teaching experiences. When relevant, students may pursue summer internship opportunities outside of the University. Graduate training in HDFS offers students many opportunities. Each student makes different choices and in so doing defines an evolving professional identity.

II. Content of Study

A. Core Competency

Students create a substantive focus of study through their selection of coursework, declared areas of emphasis, and (optional) pursuit of customized degree components such as a minor, concurrent degree, or dual title. HDFS identifies four core program areas that reflect the breadth of the department. These are: *Individual Development*, *Family Studies*, *Prevention and Intervention*, and *Developmental Methodology*. Students are expected to gain foundational knowledge across all four program areas and develop expertise in at least two of the four substantive areas.

1. Family Studies

Family Studies is a broad domain that can be approached from different levels of analysis (micro/macro) and a wide range of methodological techniques. Research and courses address the study of family structures, and the interrelation of family systems to other social structures such as marriage, and their implications for changes in the nature and quality of family relationships. This can include demographic, comparative, cross-cultural, multi-generational, and historical approaches to study the family, as well as the impact of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and age stratification on family life. Family studies may also focus on the effect of family structure on the development of individuals within the family, as well as relationship dynamics between and among family members (romantic/marital, parent-child, sibling, cross-generational), and their implications for physical and mental health.

2. Individual Development

Individual Development focuses at the level of the individual with an emphasis on understanding developmental stability, discontinuity, and change across the lifespan. Within the HDFS context, individual development extends traditional developmental psychology by expanding the focus to how individuals develop within context, such as familial, school, neighborhood, work, and community conditions. Concern is with the analysis of processes of change and stability rather than the description of age groups, and with empirical investigation of factors affecting change, including dysfunctional patterns of development. Topics of study and empirical investigation include biological bases of development, personality, cognition, emotion, perception, social competence, and learning among infants, children, adolescents, and young and old adults.

3. Prevention and Intervention Research

Prevention and Intervention research focuses on the science of developing, implementing, and evaluating a broad array of approaches for improving the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. Development of intervention programs incorporates a strong foundation in theory and understanding of targeted behavioral goals and developmental mechanisms, as well as theories of change and motivation. Implementation science focuses on understanding the cultural context in which interventions are delivered, the practical and logistical barriers to delivery, and obstacles in taking an intervention to scale. Program evaluation is a key

component of intervention development and focuses on empirical evidence of efficacy. HDFS focuses on the broader science of prevention/intervention rather than the service delivery of specific interventions.

4. **Developmental Methodology**

Methodology research focuses on the development and adaptation of statistical analysis and research design. Research may focus on techniques for studying complex systems and dynamic processes, working with "big data", real-time computational systems, and design and analysis techniques related to optimization of intervention programs. Developmental Methodology is an important tool for the study of other substantive foci and may be a primary substantive area.

The coursework is designed to provide a foundation upon which students are expected to develop advanced expertise in a topic area of their choosing. Each student will develop a unique program of research, which is expected to be informed by the theory and perspectives reflected in the department's core emphases. The combination of coursework with extensive research training through apprenticeships and laboratory experiences will provide students with both the breadth and depth reflective of doctoral status.

B. Additional Degree Specializations

Penn State offers graduate students the opportunity to create customized training experiences that can be formally recognized in their degree. These experiences can exist at varying levels of intensity and integration. Each approach requires thoughtful planning from early on in order to fulfill the requirements in a timely manner. Students interested in pursuing any of these options should consult with their graduate advisor and the Graduate PIC. It is important that students recognize that these degree specializations are not required, and students should seek consultation as to whether these additional pursuits are appropriate for the students' personal goals.

1. **Minors.** http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/minors/
   Students can pursue a graduate minor in a field outside of HDFS. Minors can be in other departments (e.g. Psychology, Nutrition) or in inter-disciplinary areas that are not duplicative of existing departmental programs (e.g. Gerontology, Demography). The process for declaring a minor varies somewhat depending on the specific program, but generally requires 15 credit hours of coursework or independent study in the minor field. Declaration of a minor requires approval of the graduate advisor, HDFS Graduate PIC, and the individual in charge of the graduate program in the minor field.

2. **Concurrent degrees**. Under some circumstances, the Graduate School permits students to pursue more than one graduate degree concurrently. At no time are students permitted to pursue more than 2 concurrent degrees. Occasionally students elect to pursue a master's degree in a different field, such as Education or Statistics. The Graduate School limits this practice to help students avoid commitments that could substantially prolong their time to completion. Independent degrees could result in a near doubling of the required coursework, and should only be pursued when the advantages post-graduation sufficiently outweigh the burden up front. Consult with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that the timing of the decision to pursue a concurrent degree adheres to Graduate School requirements.

3. **Dual-titles.** Penn State has a number of "dual-title" programs that enable students to document specialized expertise in a distinct area. Dual titles are developed to represent a specific research focus that is not duplicative of an existing degree program, but represents an interdisciplinary field that could be applied to a range of degrees. HDFS is currently affiliated with 4 dual title programs. (Demography, Clinical Translational Science, Social Data Analytics, Social Behavioral Neuroscience) Students should be aware that the Graduate School considers a dual-title to be a concurrent degree such that no additional degrees can be sought beyond the dual-title.

III. Advisors and Advising Philosophy

A. Primary Advisors

HDFS takes a collective approach to student education, and students are admitted to the program, not to individual labs. That said, the program does adopt the standard mentorship model, with students being assigned a primary advisor who guides and supervises their doctoral study and overall professional development. In many cases, advising matches are clearly identified at the application stage based on the student's expression of research interests. Sometimes students are admitted to the program based on a general fit across multiple faculty and are encouraged to identify their perceived match after the visit weekend. Students will be assigned an advisor prior to the start of their first semester. In the majority of cases this advisor oversees all years of the student's doctoral study. However, sometimes students may seek a change in advisor when they evolve in their research interests, new faculty join the department, or the working relationship with the advisor is not a good fit.

Students may also work closely with more than one faculty member over the course of their study. Students should consult with their primary advisor regarding the benefits and appropriate timing for engaging in additional collaborations, and students who establish commitments outside their primary lab should facilitate communication across their co-advisors (e.g. ask for joint meetings) and ensure that they update their primary advisor regularly regarding all of their commitments and progress. Although students are encouraged to develop a customized program of research and training experience, advisors are there to ensure that the magnitude, timing, and sequence of students' planned experiences are appropriate for achieving the stated goals. Advisors have more extensive experience and perspective, and it is strongly encouraged that students allow their advisors to advise. Together the advisor and student have a shared responsibility to work out the best possible individualized graduate program, within the stipulated requirements and the available resources. The advisor also has the responsibility to monitor the student's performance and to provide the student with evaluative feedback concerning that performance.

B. Graduate Administrators

Although the graduate program is the purview and responsibility of the full faculty, the daily administrative issues are handled by the Graduate Professor in Charge (PIC) and the Graduate Coordinator. The Grad Coordinator manages all administrative components of the program and is an important resource for guidance on procedural requirements related to registration, graduation, and milestone progression. Students are encouraged to consult with the Grad Coordinator as they progress through the program to ensure that all Graduate School procedures and requirements are accurately followed.

The Graduate PIC is responsible for ensuring the well-being of the program and students. The PIC, in conjunction with the Grad Coordinator, oversees the progress of all students in the program, makes assistantship assignments, arranges course schedules, and initiates the revision or development of program curricula as needed. The PIC is also a resource for students who experience any problems during their time in graduate school. Students can consult confidentially with the PIC if they encounter problems within their lab or classes (also see pg. 68). Students experiencing problems outside of the program (e.g. health crisis, personal loss or challenge, family crisis, etc.) are also encouraged to reach out to the PIC for resources.

C. Committees

There are four milestone requirements to completing the Ph.D.: Master's thesis, qualifying exam, comprehensive exam, and dissertation. Successful completion of each milestone will be evaluated by a committee selected by the student in consultation with the advisor. Committees should be composed of individuals with expertise with direct relevance to the student's research and/or professional goals. Students are encouraged to view their committee members as an extension of their advising resources, and as such should form their committee well in advance of developing each specific milestone product. Committee composition requirements vary across milestones, and are subject to requirements imposed by the Graduate School, the department, and any specialized degree the student may be pursuing. Specific committee composition requirements vary as a function of the milestone being evaluated and are therefore detailed in each milestone section. Always consult with the Graduate Coordinator to verify that faculty members fulfill Graduate School requirements for the composition of the committee.

IV. Degree Requirements

The Graduate School oversees the policies and procedures for all graduate degrees granted by Penn State. In addition to upholding the Graduate School requirements, each department imposes its own degree requirements and expectations. The department does not have the authority to override, waive, or excuse any of the requirements imposed by the Graduate School. The student is responsible for knowing and meeting the requirements of the Graduate School and of the HDFS program. Students should consult the Graduate School website to ensure they are accessing the most current policies and requirements.

Requirements established by the Graduate School are published online under the degree type. The HDFS program is authorized to grant the Master of Science (M.S.) and the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees. Students are only admitted to the doctoral program and are expected to complete the master's degree as one component of progress toward the doctoral degree. Although HDFS does not admit students pursing only a master's degree, students who elect to terminate their graduate training after receiving their master's degree do not jeopardize their master's degree status. Because students are admitted to the doctoral program in HDFS specifically, any change in the degree being sought (e.g., concurrent degree, dual-title) must be explicitly approved by the PIC who makes a recommendation in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School, where final authority for such change lies.

A. Coursework Requirements

Students are required to fulfill a minimum number of graduate course credits, and the specificity and distribution of these credits is regulated. Required courses (HDFS 590; HDFS 515; HDFS 501; HDFS

525; HDFS 516/518; HDFS 503; HDFS 519; HDFS 526; and HDFS 523) are typically completed in the first two years. Elective courses are selected according to the student's individual interests and/or aligned with requirements for any degree specializations. Note that the frequency and timing of certain elective offerings is highly variable. Students can consult with the Graduate PIC, Graduate Coordinator, or individual faculty for insight into likely future elective offerings. A listing of possible elective courses is provided on page 15. Exact credit and distribution requirements are detailed on the course worksheet provided on page 13. Worksheets aligned with each of the 4 available dual-titles are also provided.

B. Orientation and Professional Development

All new students are required to attend a two-day orientation held by the Department prior to the start of the first semester. Students are also required to attend the College orientation for all incoming graduate students. International students are also required to attend an orientation with the Office of Global Programs. Dates and times for these orientations are provided by the Graduate Coordinator following the student's acceptance of the offer of admission.

In the fall semester of their first year all graduate students enroll in a one-credit professional development class organized by the Graduate PIC. The orientation class introduces students to program requirements, expectations for student roles (e.g., research assistant, teaching assistant), early considerations for professional development, and ongoing research activities in the department.

C. Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI)

All graduate students at Penn State are required to complete training in a program of Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI). The general requirements include completing an online training course in the ethical conduct of scholarship and research provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) through the Penn State Office of Research Protections (ORP) and engaging in a minimum of an additional 5 hours of discussion-based education. The HDFS curriculum is designed to meet these requirements through the required coursework sequence. HDFS graduate students fulfill this requirement through HDFS 590, which is a 1 credit seminar in the fall of their first year, and HDFS 515, which is a 1.5 credit course that is typically taken in the second semester of the 2nd year.

D. Research Requirement

All students in the program are required to (1) demonstrate research competence by active participation in a research project(s) and/or successful completion of research assistantship assignments, and (2) demonstrate competence in communication of theoretical concepts and empirical findings through professional presentations and/or teaching assistantships. This requirement is central to the program.

As part of fulfilling this requirement, students participate in the department Research Day. This annual department-wide event is hosted each Fall semester to be attended by all members of the graduate program. During the event, students entering their second year present posters introducing their interests in the form of a project proposal (for Masters thesis or other research project) and students entering their third year give individual oral presentations of their completed thesis or other first-authored research project. There are also opportunities for more advanced graduate students to present, though this is not required. Faculty are invited to present brief flash-talks summarizing their own current research, and are present throughout the event to provide feedback on student research ideas.

Participating in the Research Day serves several goals:

1) Scaffold student development by allowing more junior students to see what more advanced students are doing; more senior students get practice asking questions and providing feedback.
2) Ensure all students receive early and continuing training in scientific research formulation and presentation skills. While this training also takes place in class and lab contexts, a common experience provides an opportunity for students to benefit from the broader, supportive audience of departmental peers and faculty.
3) Foster a sense of community by gathering to become more familiar with each other's work and creating the opportunity to connect with a broader cross-section of peers and faculty.
4) Create an external deadline to drive progress and ensure students are on track to complete expected research milestones (i.e., first-authored manuscript based on thesis or other research by early third year).

A. REQUIREMENTS

- First year students – attend Research Day and engage with presenters by asking questions
- Second year students – present poster during group session at Research Day that outlines proposal for Masters Thesis or other first-authored research project idea. The poster should include
    - Brief background on the topic and rationale for the current study
    - Proposed research question and hypotheses
    - Planned methods for testing research question, including dataset/s to be used
- Third year students – present slides during individual oral presentation session at Research Day that reports findings from Thesis or other first-authored research project. The 10-15 minute presentation should include
    - Updated version of the above components +
    - Results
    - Discussion
- Fourth year students and beyond – attend Research Day and engage with peers by posing questions and offering feedback; option to present further research (e.g., practice for conference talk)

B. TIMELINE

Students will work with their research mentor/s toward these goals from their first semester in the program. Guidelines for semester by semester progress and supports are outlined below:

- First semester
    - Work with advisor to clarify areas of research interest, possible questions to pursue
- Second semester
    - Work with advisor to refine research question for Thesis or other first-authored project
    - Have preliminary statement of research question and hypotheses by end of spring; identify appropriate methods and possible dataset/s to test
- Third semester
    - Work on proposal poster with advisor input/review
        - Submit abstract during Call for Abstracts window (from ~2 months to 1 month before Research Day)
        - Submit poster draft for feedback from advisor by 1 month before Research Day
        - Revise over subsequent weeks for advisor approval by 2 weeks before Research Day
    - Practice presenting in lab group and send poster for printing 1 week before Research Day

    - Present poster at Research Day
- Fourth semester
    - Complete data analysis and write up manuscript with advisor support throughout the semester
    - Have initial draft for advisor input by mid-semester to revise over the remainder of the semester for final draft to submit by end of semester
    - Put together initial draft of slide presentation for practice within 515 Professional Issues class and get feedback there
- Fifth semester
    - Work with advisor to finalize slides for oral presentation
        - Submit abstract during Call for Abstracts window (from ~2 months to 1 month before Research Day)
        - Submit full draft for advisor input/review by 1 month prior to Research Day
        - Revise over subsequent weeks for advisor approval by 2 weeks prior to Research Day
    - Practice talk with lab group
    - Present talk at Research Day

E. Teaching Assistant Requirement

Many HDFS graduate students will select career trajectories in which part of their professional responsibilities will include teaching undergraduate and/or graduate courses. Although some students will pursue career paths that do not involve formal classroom teaching, many of the skills acquired from teaching experiences translate to a wide range of professional contexts. Thus, students are expected to engage in a minimum of one TA or teaching experience during their graduate training. Note that one TAship is considered a ½ time appointment- equivalent to 20 hours per week. This may be met in a single semester, or can be divided across 2 semesters with a ¼ time (10 hours per week) TAship if the student has a ¼ RAship. In some cases students may be funded to serve in teaching roles in the summer, which can also be used to fulfill this requirement. Students who are on a training grant or other funding that does not allow students to be paid as a teaching assistant should engage in discussion and advanced planning with their training advisors as to when this requirement should be fulfilled. If the qualifying exam committee determines that serving as a TA is not in the student's best interest due to funding status or other commitments, the committee may recommend that this requirement be waived. Final approval, however, is determined by full faculty vote. Waiver of this requirement will not be made solely on the basis of the student's lack of desire to teach.

Students interested in gaining additional experience with teaching are encouraged to avail themselves of multiple opportunities. For example, students can volunteer to provide guest lectures in relevant courses being offered in the department or seek to engage and learn about teaching from individual faculty members when available. Multiple opportunities also exist to take courses, workshops, brown bags, and seminars in topics related to college teaching offered regularly through the Penn State Schreyer Teaching Institute. -Courses or seminars of this nature may also be periodically advertised and available within the department or at the College or University levels.

Students who wish to pursue teaching a course as the primary instructor of record may have the opportunity to do so. This is a good option to pursue if a student wants advanced experience in course delivery and/or intends to pursue a career in teaching. -To serve as the instructor of record for a course, students must 1) have attained their master's degree at Penn State or another institution, and 2) have previously been a TA for the course they plan to teach. Exceptions to either of these requirements must

be approved by the graduate PIC. Prior to serving as primary instructor, it is strongly recommended that students partake in additional training related to college teaching (e.g., workshops available through the Schreyer Teaching Institute, such as course and syllabus design, engaging students in the classroom, etc.). -Students with this interest in teaching are expected to communicate with the Undergraduate PIC to discuss available options, and with their primary advisor(s), in order to plan effectively for accomplishing this goal without adversely affecting progress toward the degree. Occasionally, students and their advisors may hold different expectations in terms of their research and teaching experiences (e.g., at what point in the program to engage in teaching or how much to teach). Should this occur, students are encouraged to first engage in open dialogue with their advisor(s) about the reasons underlying differences in expectations and to seek a mutually agreed upon resolution.–The graduate PIC will adjudicate cases should a resolution not be reached.

F. Communication Requirements

Candidates for the Ph.D. degree at Penn State are required to demonstrate a high level competence in the use of the English language, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The communication requirement applies to all students, but non-native English speakers may find meeting this requirement more challenging. Students who are not native English speakers are directed to page 54 for additional resources available to advance their fluency. Fulfillment of the Communication Requirement requires an assessment of the student's competence with regard to professional communication skills in both the verbal and written forms.

Verbal communication. Students are encouraged to consider that a key component to success in any career is the ability to participate in the active exchange of ideas. Oral presentation skills including both formal (e.g., class lecture, conference presentation) and informal (e.g., participation in class discussion, conversational exchange during defense meetings, professional collaborations on research projects) contexts are invaluable regardless of the specific career goals the student may be pursuing. Students who frequently feel anxious or uncomfortable about contributing to class discussion are encouraged to identify this as a professional skill they will work to develop. Verbal engagement in discussion and collaboration will be considered in evaluating student progress.

Writing skills. Writing is the cornerstone of academic careers and the ability to form a coherent and convincing argument is critical to students' success in the program. Writing at a doctoral level is a developed skill, and not one that students should expect themselves to already possess. Students should expect to work at developing their writing skills and engage in strategies to do so throughout their time in the program. Writing skills will be assessed early (e.g., in HDFS 501, 525 and 503, taken during the first year) and, if needed, students will be referred to technical writing courses or given special assignments designed to improve their skills. The doctoral committee will also examine the master's thesis, published papers, or class projects for evidence of writing proficiency.

Communication competence will be evaluated as a part of the 1st year evaluation (see page). All faculty and assistantship supervisors will be asked to rate each student with regard to their competence in each domain, taking into account the evidence of communication appropriate for the context in which they interact with the student. Students can be given 1 of 3 ratings in each category.

(1) Graduate School requirements fulfilled and this is an area of strength (applicable only to students who stand out relative to their peers)

(2) Graduate School requirements fulfilled but should continue to refine communication skills in this domain. (modal student) *brief elaboration for benefit of student feedback*
(3) Does not yet meet Graduate School requirements. (can apply regardless of native language) *Elaboration on the skills needed to be improved*

Writing: Student produces writing that is coherent such that the reader can follow the student's line of thinking. The quality and sophistication of all student writing is expected to continue to improve over time, and standards for effective written communication should take the student's current level of training into account. Assessment of writing skill should be separated from the assessment of student's content knowledge and ability to integrate complex ideas. Consider the following specific skills in providing feedback to students on their writing assignments and assessing the recommendations students should receive on how to improve their skills

- Written work is consistently free of errors in spelling, grammar, and word usage. Different students may not meet this expectation for different reasons, such as a lack of effort to produce quality written work (e.g. proofread), a tendency to misuse words due to a failure to consider the definition appropriately, and/or challenges that arise in the processes of translation that are common to English language learners (such as tense, pluralization, etc.).
- Written work is effectively organized. Ideas are presented in a linear fashion. It is clear what point the student is attempting to make. Distinct points are separated appropriately (e.g. paragraphs do not string together multiple arguments or introduce tangential ideas), and there is an effective use of transitions between ideas.
- Written work takes the reader's perspective into account. Ideas are sufficiently explained such that a reader could follow the line of thinking without having to fill in knowledge gaps based on knowing more about what the student is referring to than is conveyed in the written product. Concepts are defined clearly.

Oral: Speaking competence should be evident in both formal and informal contexts. Students should be able to conduct any required presentations in classroom, laboratory, or other professional settings. In addition to prepared content, students should demonstrate consistent evidence of being able to generate spontaneous speech indicating an ability to express ideas, engage in conversational exchange of ideas, and establish shared understanding of expectations. This should manifest as consistent contribution to class discussions (regardless of whether participation is an explicit part of the computation of the class grade), as well as a willingness to ask questions to clarify confusion (in class or in reaching out to the instructor outside of class). In a laboratory setting this should manifest as contributions to discussion, willingness to ask questions, and taking initiative in discussing research. Expectations in assistantship settings will vary, and there may be times when clarifying expectations or communicating about ideas is appropriately done over email. However, student should demonstrate ability to respond verbally to students, instructors, and peers whenever appropriate.

The advisor will compile the ratings provided by all faculty and supervisors and indicate in the evaluation letter what the recommended categorization is. The final rating will be determined by the full faculty as a part of the collective evaluation. In the event that a student is given a rating of '3', an explanation of the skills in need of remediation will be provided. Students are encouraged to take advantage of coursework, workshops, or other structured support in developing these skills. The Qualifying Exam committee is tasked with evaluating whether the student has made the necessary improvements. Students who have not fulfilled the communication expectation at that time will not be allowed to being the Comprehensive Exam. The Qualifying Exam committee will establish a timeline in which the student must fulfill the requirements.

Course Requirement Worksheet

Master's:

____HDFS 501, 503, 525
____HDFS 516/518 (Methods)
____HDFS 519 (Methods)
____A minimum of 9 credits in course work[1,2] (400 & 500 level) 6 of which must be in HDFS
____A minimum of 6 credits in 600 series (Thesis)
____HDFS 590 (Professional Development Orientation)
____HDFS 515 (Professional Issues in HDFS - 1.5 cr)
____TOTAL MINIMUM CREDITS REQUIRED IS 31

PH.D.:

____HDFS 501, 503, 525
____HDFS 516/518 (Methods)
____HDFS 519 (Methods)
____HDFS 526 (Methods)
____A minimum of 18 additional credits[1,2,3,4]
_3cr advanced developmental longitudinal modeling methods
(eg: 517, 523, 530, 534, 538, 575)
_*at least* 6 of these credits in methodology electives
_*at least* 6 of these credits in non-methods seminars
(excluding independent study)
_3cr of either methods or non-methods coursework
____HDFS 590 (Professional Development Orientation)
____HDFS 515 (Professional Issues in HDFS - 1.5 cr)
____NO MINIMUM CREDIT LOAD REQUIRED

Students are expected to have completed their basic methodology requirements (516, 518 & 519) before they schedule their qualifying examination.

[1]can not be met with independent study credits (HDFS 596)

[2]Fulfillment of these credit requirements with more than one course taken outside of HDFS requires the pre-approval of the Graduate PIC.

[3]Students may request to transfer from another institution up to 6 credits of *required* coursework with permission from the Grad PIC. Students may also request to transfer additional *elective* coursework, with the permission of the Grad PIC.

[4]Three credits of 400 level substantive coursework is allowed.

This sheet may be useful to the student for keeping track of his or her own progress through the program and meeting of the requirements.

Example Timeline for the Ph.D. in HDFS

Course	Credits
Year 1 Fall (Semester 1)	
HDFS 501: Human Development	3
HDFS 525: Introduction to Family Studies	3
HDFS 516: Methods of Research in Human Development	3
HDFS 518: Applied Statistics Lab	1
HDFS 590: HDFS Seminar	1
Attend Research Day	
Year 1 Spring (Semester 2)	
HDFS 503: Human Development Intervention	3
HDFS 519: Methods of Statistical Analysis in Human Development	3
Elective	3
HDFS 600: Thesis (if needed)	1-3
Year 2 Fall (Semester 3)	
HDFS 526: Measurement in Human Development	3
Elective	3
Elective	3
HDFS 600: Thesis (if needed)	1-3
Present poster at Research Day	
Year 2 Spring (Semester 4)	
HDFS 515: Professional Issues in HDFS	1.5
Elective	3
Elective	3
Elective	3
HDFS 600: Thesis (if needed)	1-3
M.S. Thesis defense (if needed)	
Year 3	
Elective	3
HDFS 596: Independent Study	6
Present talk at Research Day	
Qualifying Exam	
Year 4	
Comprehensive Exam	
HDFS 596: Independent Study	9
Dissertation Proposal	
HDFS 601	0
Year 5	
Dissertation	
HDFS 601	0

Prior to passing the comprehensive exam, student must be registered for a minimum of 9 credits. Students are not permitted to be enrolled in more than 12 credits in a semester. As per Graduate School policy, auditing a course does not count toward the minimum enrollment, but does count against the maximum enrollment. For any semester in which a student is not enrolled in 3 full-semester courses, the remaining credits can be satisfied with independent study credits (HDFS 596).

Students completing the Master's degree must complete 6 credits of thesis research (HDFS 600). It is

recommended that these credits be distributed across both the first and second years as it is not possible to complete all 6 credits in the second year alone. Students are not permitted to enroll in thesis credits in the summer (unless granted an exception by the Graduate PIC).

Elective and Specialization Courses

Courses are listed below within the general research area they most closely align. Note that many courses reflect integrated perspectives that span multiple research domains and may be considered to fit under more than one category. This list can be useful in planning, but students should be aware that the timing and frequency of specific courses is variable and will depend on the expertise and availability of faculty. As such, some courses may not be offered during the student's time in the program. Students can consult with the Graduate PIC and Graduate Coordinator regarding future course planning.

FAMILY:

HDFS 524: Work as a Context for Human Development
HDFS 531: Family Disorganization
HDFS 537: Biosocial Perspectives on the Family
HDFS 540: Parenting
HDFS 544: Dysfunctional Patterns in Family
HDFS 546: Family Relationships
HDFS 577: Poverty, Policies, & Child Development
HDFS 597: Special Topics
Examples of recent offerings:
Immigrant Youth and Families
Theoretical Constructions and Empirical Evaluations of the Family System

INDIVIDUAL:

HDFS 502: Biological Systems in Developmental Context
HDFS 509: Nature-Nurture Interactions
HDFS 512: Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience of Adolescence
HDFS 520: Prenatal and Infant Development
HDFS 529: Child Development
HDFS 539: Adolescent Development
HDFS 549: Developmental Theory
HDFS 565: Developmental Behavioral Genetics
HDFS 569: Development in Middle Age
HDFS 579: Adult Development & Aging
HDFS 597: Special Topics
Examples of recent offerings:
Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience of Adolescence
Successful Aging
Development of Sexual Orientation

INTERVENTION:

HDFS 506: Program Evaluation
HDFS 508: Best Practices in Intervention (topic of focus will vary by professor)
Examples of recent offerings: Family, Couples, Maltreatment
HDFS 521: Child Maltreatment: Theory, Research, and Impact
HDFS 522: Risk and Resilience
HDFS 527: Social Epidemiology

HDFS 532: Childhood Obesity
HDFS 533: Adult Obesity
HDFS 541: Optimization of Behavioral and Biobehavioral Interventions
HDFS 597: Special Topics
Examples of recent offerings:
Contemplative Practices Across the Lifespan

METHODS:
HDFS 506: Program Evaluation
HDFS 517: Multivariate Change (General linear mixed model/MLM/HLM)
HDFS 528: Observational Methods
HDFS 530: Longitudinal Structural Equation Modeling
HDFS 534: Person-Specific Analysis
HDFS 535: Integrating Qualitative Methods into Quantitative Research
HDFS 536: Research Methods
HDFS 541: Optimization of Behavioral and Biobehavioral Interventions
HDFS 575: Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis
HDFS 597: Special Topics
Examples of recent offerings:
Dynamical Systems Analysis
Latent Class Analysis
Data Mining
Bayesian Data Analysis

Competency Expectations

The primary knowledge base for the HDFS graduate program is the biological, behavioral, and social sciences. Our objective is to produce graduates who are competent in the basic scholarly methods of research design and statistical analyses of those fields so that they can both read and critically evaluate work deriving therefrom and can contribute to the empirical work of these supporting disciplines. Moreover, graduates of the program are expected to contribute to advancing theory and knowledge of human development and family studies, and/or to developing and verifying the utility of applications of such knowledge to improving some aspect of the quality of individual and family life. To accomplish these various aims, students need to be able to deal methodologically as well as substantively with the patterning of biological, psychological, behavioral, social, and environmental attributes defined across several domains concurrently.

Students admitted to the HDFS graduate program are expected to bring a minimum level of competence in methods, or to obtain that minimum level of competence during their first year in the program. Students who are uncertain or uncomfortable with their foundational knowledge in statistics should consult with the graduate PIC about additional training.

Because computer technology has become the primary tool for data analysis, particularly for multivariate problems, all students will be expected to have basic competence in using computers for data analysis by the time they schedule their qualifying examination. Some may bring such competence with them; some may develop it while working as graduate assistants; and others may achieve mastery by taking formal courses. HDFS 518 provides some training in this area, particularly

for the use of the program R.

Areas of Specialization

Students are required to identify two areas of emphasis within the department's four research domains. These areas will inform the focus of the comprehensive exam. There are no coursework requirements for specialization, however, the department recommends that students consider the following in selecting coursework to maximally prepare them in their two emphasis areas:

- **Individual Development across the Life Span:**
    - HDFS 502 (Biological Systems in Developmental Context) provides a core foundation in understanding processes within individuals that contribute to inter-individual variation in behavior
    - One to two courses focused on a particular period of the life span, e. g., HDFS 512 (Developmental. Cognitive Neuroscience of Adolescence), HDFS 520 (Infant Development Seminar), HDFS 529 (Child Development Seminar), HDFS 539 (Adolescent Development Seminar), HDFS 569 (Mid-Life Development Seminar) or HDFS 579 (Adult Development/Aging Seminar). Students are encouraged to take course work in periods of the lifespan adjacent to their primary focus as a way to extend their developmental perspective.
- **Family Studies:**
    - One elective focused on the micro level (within-family processes) (e.g. HDFS 524; HDFS 540; or HDFS 546)
    - One elective focused on macro-level (demographic) processes (e.g. HDFS 531; HDFS 577).
- **Prevention/Intervention Research:**
    - In addition to courses that target their specific research focus (e.g. specialized 508 offerings), students are encouraged to take a broad foundational course such as HDFS 527 (Social Epidemiology)
    - Students interested in prevention/intervention are also strongly encouraged to take methods electives that support this research such as program evaluation (HDFS 506) and research design in intervention (HDFS 597: MOST Design)
- **Methodology**
    - Students who identify methods as one of their substantive areas of emphasis should consult with the guidelines for selecting electives according to their targeted area of expertise. For instance, methods electives may differ for students pursuing demographic-level analyses versus longitudinal developmental change, versus intensive person-specific processes.

Exemptions, Substitutions, and Alternative Pathways

In rare occasions exceptions to the course requirements may be granted by the PIC.

Substitutions

In some instances, a student may be directed by their advisor to take a course outside of HDFS, but within Penn State University. As one example, a student pursuing a master's degree in Statistics may take a course in service of that degree that can be viewed as fulfilling one of the core methods courses in our degree. Such substitutions require advanced approval and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Students should ask their advisor to submit, via email, a statement to the Graduate PIC detailing what course is proposed, which requirement it should substitute for, and the rationale for why this substitution is in the student's best interest. Students should also provide a copy of the syllabus for the course.

Transferring Course Requirements

In some cases, a student may have completed graduate-level course work at a previous institution that is duplicative of a required graduate course in HDFS. It may be possible to have the prior course accepted in fulfillment of the HDFS requirement. Students may request to transfer up to 6 credits of *required* coursework with the permission of the Graduate PIC. Students may also request to transfer additional *elective* coursework, with the permission of the Grad PIC. Cases will be evaluated individually and the request will be considered holistically rather than simply as a function of content overlap. For instance, there may advantages to completing the course in HDFS despite overlap with a previous course. Repetition can be advantageous in solidifying concepts, and may be especially valuable for students who are non-native English speakers who may find the immersive language experience to be facilitated by the familiarity of the content. There are also advantages to remaining within the cohort sequence, at least within the first year.

Students who wish to have a course completed outside of HDFS considered as a substitute for a required course should submit a copy of the syllabus to the Graduate PIC for consideration, who will consult with the instructor of the required course. If the prior course is considered to fulfill the objectives of the HDFS course, the student can be waived from the required HDFS course. However, it is recommended the student replace the required course with an advanced elective course.

Dual-Title Options

HDFS is affiliated with 4 dual-title programs. Each program has specific requirements regarding the number and nature of required electives, and establishes its own guidelines regarding the cross-counting of courses (i.e. the number of credits that can simultaneously be used toward both degree titles). The Graduate School requires that dual-title programs demonstrate feasibility for completion without undue extension of the time to degree. In most cases, pursuing a dual-title may add up to an additional year to complete the degree, but the actual duration will be determined by the student's rate of progress. As with all situations, advanced planning is critical in ensuring timely completion.

Students are admitted into the HDFS graduate program and must apply to the dual-title program after they are enrolled in their home program (HDFS). Most programs accept students in their first year, but students have until they complete their qualifying exam to declare their intention for the dual title. Students interested in pursuing a dual-title are encouraged to discuss this with their advisor as early as possible. It is also advised that students use their first elective course (Spring of 1st year), as an opportunity to explore the dual-title discipline in order to make an informed decision. It is recommended that students select an elective that fulfills both the HDFS and the dual-title option of interest so that the student remains on track regardless of whether they ultimately decide to pursue the dual title or not.

Dual-title programs are meant to be integrated degrees that create synergistic educational opportunities and are pursued as a single program of study, not as two parallel programs. As such, students are required to declare their dual-title intentions early in the program, and to engage in research activities that reflect the integrated focus of the dual-title. Once a student passes their qualifying exam, they are no longer permitted to declare a dual-title. The Graduate School also considers a dual-title as a form of concurrent degree, and thus students may not pursue any other degree if they are pursuing a dual-title.

Dual-title programs are not associated with a department, so each program has a director who functions like a Graduate PIC for the dual-title. Students pursuing a dual-title should consult with both program heads to ensure degree requirements are being met. Below is a list of the Directors for each dual-title along with contact information. Following is a degree worksheet specific to each dual-title to help students track the credit and course requirements. More information can be found online, and from the HDFS Graduate PIC. In addition to the course requirements, each dual-title program requires the inclusion of a faculty member who is affiliated with the dual-title program on the student's dissertation committee, and requires that the comprehensive and dissertation products represent the integrated content of the dual-title.

a. HDFS and Demography.
http://www.pop.psu.edu/demography
The dual-title program in Human Development and Family Studies and Demography is designed for students who want to integrate Population Studies (including such foci as fertility, marriage, cohabitation, labor force participation, mortality) with the study of individual and family development. Participation in the program requires admission by both HDFS and Demography, the completion of specified coursework, and thesis research on a demographic topic. Demography training can be useful for students with interest in population studies and public health. It is possible to earn a dual-title masters, Ph.D., or both.

b. HDFS and Social Data Analytics. (SoDA)
http://bdss.psu.edu/soda/graduate-program-in-social-data-analytics-soda
HDFS doctoral students interested in having a degree that reflects interdisciplinary training in an array of tools, techniques, and methodologies for social data analytics, while maintaining a close association with HDFS, may apply to pursue a dual-title Ph.D. in HDFS and Social Data Analytics. Social data analytics is the integration of

social scientific, computational, informational, statistical, and visual analytic approaches to the analysis of large or complex data that arise from human interaction. The dual-title Ph.D. program provides additional training with the aim of providing scientists with the skills required to expand the field of social data analytics, creatively answer important social scientific questions, and communicate effectively with both academic and nonacademic audiences.

c. HDFS and Social Behavioral Neuroscience. (SBN)
http://bdss.psu.edu/soda/graduate-program-in-social-data-analytics-soda
This integrated degree reflects interdisciplinary training in social and behavioral neuroscience as relevant to the domains of research expertise within HDFS (e.g. integrating neuroscience techniques and perspectives to understanding individual development across the lifespan, effects of contextual environments e.g. families, schools, work, on physical and mental development, development and assessment of prevention programs, and application of advanced statistical methods for the analysis of neuroscience data). Social behavioral neuroscience reflects the study of how brain development and function influence, and are influenced by, social environments and human interaction. The dual-title Ph.D. program provides students with additional training in the neurobiological foundations of brain function in order to enable them to pursue innovative interdisciplinary research with intellectual sophistication.

d. HDFS and Clinical Translation Science. (CTS)
http://sites.psu.edu/ctsprogram/
HDFS doctoral students interested in having a degree that reflects advanced training in the design, analysis, interpretation, implementation, and dissemination of clinical prevention/intervention programs aimed at improving human health across a range of contexts and developmental stages may apply to pursue a dual-title Ph.D. in HDFS and Clinical Translational Sciences. The dual-title program is applicable for students pursuing academic careers in the area of basic research focused on processes that can be targeted through intervention practice, the development or improvement of intervention programs, or the science of translation and dissemination; or for students pursuing non-academic careers related to public health, policy, cost effectiveness or cost-benefit program evaluation. The CTS dual-title complements the expertise students in HDFS acquire in individual development across the lifespan, and the contextual processes that influence individual development such as communities, schools, families, and workplace. These contexts serve as possible targets for intervention, contexts for delivering an intervention, or potential impediments to effective intervention delivery.
*Students who do not wish to complete the full dual-title should consult the CTS website for additional information on alternative options such as the Certificate in Clinical Translational Science.

Course Planning Worksheet for the Dual-Title in HDFS and Demography

Course	√	Cr	HDFS	Demography
Core Coursework				
HDFS 501: Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 525: Introduction to Family Studies		3	Core	
HDFS 516: Methods of Research in Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 518: Applied Statistics Lab		1	Core	
HDFS 590: HDFS Seminar		1	Core	
HDFS 515: Professional Issues in HDFS		1.5	Core	
HDFS 503: Human Development Intervention		3	Core	
HDFS 519: Methods of Statistical Analysis in Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 526: Measurement in Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS Electives				
		3	Adv.Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	Elective	
		18		
Demography Electives (cross count as appropriate)				
Write each elective course in the rows below. Place a checkmark to indicate whether it counts toward HDFS electives, SBN, electives, or both				
DEMOG 590 (1 credit)		1		Core
DEMOG 501: Demographic Foundations		3		Core
SOC 573: Demographic Techniques		3		Core
		3		Elective
		3		Elective
		3		Elective
		3		Elective
		19		

- SOC 573 fulfills the requirement of a minimum of 3 credits taken outside the student's home department. This course could also be applied to one of the methods electives for HDFS
- HDFS 517 could fulfill a methods elective in both HDFS and demography
- Demography Student Handbook

Course Planning Worksheet for the Dual-Title in HDFS and CTS

Course	√	Cr	HDFS	CTS
Core Coursework				
HDFS 501: Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 525: Introduction to Family Studies		3	Core	
HDFS 516: Methods of Research in Human Development		3	Core	Statistics
HDFS 518: Applied Statistics Lab		1	Core	
HDFS 590: HDFS Seminar		1	Core	
HDFS 515: Professional Issues in HDFS		1.5	Core	
HDFS 503: Human Development Intervention		3	Core	
HDFS 519: Methods of Statistical Analysis in Human Development		3	Core	Statistics
HDFS 526: Measurement in Human Development		3	Core	
CTS 590: CTS colloquium				Core
CTS 590: CTS Colloquium				Core
CTS 595B: Translational Science Internship		6		Core
HDFS Electives				
		3	Adv.Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	Elective	
		18		
CTS Electives (duplicate cross counting items as relevant)				
		3		Statistics
		3		Epidemiology
		3		Comm.
		3		Bioinfo
		3		Reg. envir.
		3		Exp. Design
		18		
			No more than 4 can cross list in HDFS and CTS	

- Core = course required of all students completing the degree
- Elective = course fulfills general elective category toward HDFS degree
- Methods = course fulfills general methodology elective category toward HDFS degree
- Others = specific elective domain that course fulfills toward CTS degree

Course planning worksheet for the dual-title in HDFS and Social Data Analytics

Course	√	Cr	HDFS	SO DA
Core Coursework				
HDFS 501: Human Development		3	Core	S
HDFS 525: Introduction to Family Studies		3	Core	S
HDFS 516: Methods of Research in Human Development		3	Core	Q, S
HDFS 518: Applied Statistics Lab		1	Core	Q, S
HDFS 590: HDFS Seminar		1	Core	
HDFS 515: Professional Issues in HDFS		1.5	Core	
HDFS 503: Human Development Intervention		3	Core	S
HDFS 519: Methods of Statistical Analysis in Human Development		3	Core	Q, S
HDFS 526: Measurement in Human Development		3	Core	Q, S
SO DA 501: Issues in Social Data Analytics		3		Core
SO DA 502: Issues in Social Data Analytics		3		Core
HDFS Electives				
		3	Adv.Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	Elective	
		18		
SODA Electives (duplicate cross counting items as relevant)				
		3		Analytics
Already fulfilled with HDFS sequence		3		Quantification
Already fulfilled with HDFS sequence		3		Quantification
		3		Computation
		3		Computation
Already fulfilled with HDFS sequence		3		Social
Already fulfilled with HDFS sequence		3		Social
			6 credits must be taken in "disciplinary cluster 2" IST/ Geog/ CSE/ CMPSC/ Engineering	

- Core = course required of all students completing the degree
- Elective = course fulfills general elective category toward HDFS degree
- Methods = course fulfills general methodology elective category toward HDFS degree
- Specifiers for SoDA requirements
  - A = Elective meets the Analytics requirement
  - Q = Elective meets the Quantification requirement
  - C = Elective meets the Computational/informational requirement
  - S = Elective meets the Social requirement

Students should seek to fill HDFS methods electives with courses that would meet the A and C requirements for SoDA.

A minimum of 6 such credits must be taken outside of HDFS in the departments identified in disciplinary cluster 2.

Course worksheet for Dual-title in HDFS and Social Behavioral Neuroscience

Course	√	Cr	HDFS	SBN
Core Coursework				
HDFS 501: Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 525: Introduction to Family Studies		3	Core	
HDFS 516: Methods of Research in Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 518: Applied Statistics Lab		1	Core	
HDFS 590: HDFS Seminar		1	Core	
HDFS 515: Professional Issues in HDFS		1.5	Core	
HDFS 503: Human Development Intervention		3	Core	
HDFS 519: Methods of Statistical Analysis in Human Development		3	Core	
HDFS 526: Measurement in Human Development		3	Core	
SBN 590: Proseminar in Social and Behavioral Neuroscience		1		Core
SBN 590: Proseminar in Social and Behavioral Neuroscience		1		Core
NEURO: 511; 512; BIOL 478		3		Core
NEURO: 520		3		Core
HDFS Electives				
		3	Adv.Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	Methods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	NonMethods	
		3	Elective	
		18		
SBN (duplicate cross counting items as relevant)				
		3		
		3		
		3		

- Courses listed as SBN 505 or 508 can be applied toward HDFS non-methods electives
- Courses listed as SBN 506 can be applied toward HDFS methods electives
- Consult Grad PIC and Program Director regarding the application of any additional courses or non-classified course (e.g. 597) toward each program

V. Master's Degree Requirements

Although students seeking a terminal master's degree are not admitted to the program, master's level research experience in HDFS is required before students may hold their doctoral qualifying exam. There are three different ways students may meet this requirement:

1. Students who enter the program with a master's degree that included an empirically based master's thesis, regardless of discipline, should work with their advisor and the Graduate PIC in their first semester to determine whether it makes sense for them to waive the HDFS program thesis requirement or to submit and defend their first empirical project in the program as a master's thesis in HDFS. Students who believe this applies to them should submit their master's thesis to the Graduate PIC for evaluation as soon as possible. If the thesis was completed in a foreign language an English translation of the abstract must be provided. If approved, the qualifying exam must be held within three semesters (not summer) from the start of the program (by the end of fall semester of the second year) per Graduate School guidelines.

2. Students who enter the program with a master's degree but did not complete a thesis, or the thesis was not empirical, must complete an empirical project in HDFS to fulfill the thesis requirement. This project is supervised by the student's adviser, and the final version must be approved by the Graduate PIC as fulfilling this departmental requirement. The qualifying exam must be held within three semesters (not summer) after the defense of this empirical thesis project, per Graduate School guidelines. Completion and defense of the empirical thesis will result in a formal master's degree in HDFS at The Pennsylvania State University.

3. Students who enter the graduate program without a master's degree must complete a master's en-route to the doctorate. Master's research is an apprenticeship experience in which the student works closely with an advisor to answer a research question with empirical data.

All students are expected to complete an empirical project within their first two years of the program regardless of whether they arrive with a master's degree in another discipline. The decision whether to waive the HDFS thesis requirement, or to submit this project as a thesis to earn an additional M.S. in HDFS, should be made based on the individual student's professional developmental needs. In some cases, students may elect to pursue a second master's degree outside of HDFS (for instance, some students earn a master's degree in applied statistics), but only after conferral of the HDFS MS degree. The Graduate School regulates the pursuit of GCAC 209-concurrent degrees, so students are encouraged to coordinate with the Grad PIC in planning their degree goals.

A. Requirements

- The ***Master of Science (M.S.)*** program requires the same sequence of required courses as the doctoral degree in the first two years, as well as additional electives to a minimum of 31.5 credits.

- In addition, students must complete a master's thesis. Thus, students must complete at least six thesis research credits (HDFS 600). Master's students are allowed to enroll for only 6 credits of HDFS 600 for letter grades. Any additional credits of HDFS 600 must be for an "R" grade. For information on the thesis requirements, students are directed to the Graduate School website.

Students should plan to incorporate thesis credits early in the first and second year in order to avoid unnecessary delays in completing the thesis requirements. Students are not permitted to be enrolled in more than 12 credits per semester and thus plan accordingly. Summer enrollment in thesis credits is not permitted due to tuition costs, unless the student is graduating and is unable to delay graduation until fall.

B. Committee Composition

- Students are expected to identify a master's committee by the end of their 2nd year at the latest. The primary advisor will serve as the committee chair. Master's committees must have a minimum of two HDFS faculty members. The Graduate School defines graduate faculty separately from how departments may define faculty status. It is possible for research faculty whose appointment is in one of the research centers rather than an academic department to hold graduate faculty status. Such an individual may serve as the second committee member, or serve as a co-chair with a tenure-line faculty member in HDFS. Consult with the Graduate Coordinator to verify the graduate faculty status of anyone you are hoping to appoint to your committee. Additional faculty or researchers with graduate faculty status outside of HDFS may be included on the committee if deemed appropriate by the student and advisor, but will be added as a 3rd member. Together the committee and the student are responsible for a well-conceived and executed program, and both committee members should be kept abreast of the student's progress.

- The student is responsible for obtaining the committee members' signatures on a master's committee appointment form and submitting this to the Graduate Coordinator. Students should also notify the Graduate Coordinator once the defense is scheduled.

C. Timeline

- Students should be working with their advisor to identify and discuss thesis topics in the spring of their first year, and are encouraged to use the summer between the 1st and 2nd years to make significant progress toward these goals. Once the thesis topic is determined the additional committee member(s) should be identified and approached. The student should plan to communicate with both committee members about the thesis topic and project progress. The committee can determine whether such communication should include a formal proposal defense, informal joint meetings to discuss plans and progress, or individual meetings with each committee member.

- A thesis proposal meeting is strongly encouraged, but can be waived with the approval of the thesis committee. A formally written proposal communicates the theoretical foundation for the research question and clarifies the exact steps to be taken in gathering, processing, and analyzing the data. Committee input at this stage ensures that the student is getting effective feedback prior to undertaking analyses, which can reduce the chances of surprises or disappointment at the final defense. However, the proposal is not a contract between the committee and the student as to an end-product. That is, either by the initiative of the student or the committee, modifications of the proposal may be required or additional work not specified in the proposal may be needed to complete the thesis.

- If new data will be collected as a part of the thesis project students should plan to defend a thesis proposal to ensure that adequate input is received prior to finalizing the study protocol. Students collecting new data must receive IRB approval before any data collection can begin, and should plan according to the time it can take to receive approval.

- The thesis process adheres to rules of academic integrity described in section XII. The thesis document should reflect the student's ideas and writing capability. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools cannot be used in aspects related to generating ideas, writing, or editing the thesis document (other than basic spelling and grammar checks in Microsoft Word).

- Students must notify the Graduate Coordinator once the thesis defense meeting is scheduled for departmental record and graduation checkout processes. Students must submit the final version of the thesis on turnitin <u>two weeks</u> prior to the defense for the purpose of self-checking. At this time students should also send the final thesis to the committee members.

- The final thesis must be defended orally. An important focus of the oral defense will be for the Master's committee to ascertain whether the student has a general knowledge of their area of study and how their area relates to the larger field of Human Development and Family Studies.

- Students should consult with the Graduate School calendar to ensure that they comply with the process and internal deadlines for the semester in which they wish to graduate.

    - Declare intent to graduate in Lionpath
    - Submit thesis to Graduate School for format review
    - Submit final approved thesis to Graduate School
    - Ensure that you have notified departmental staff if you intend to participate in the graduation ceremony (optional).

- The Graduate School will only confer degrees three times per year (May, August, December) so it is possible that you will complete your thesis in one semester and not technically graduate until the next semester. From the perspective of the program, the thesis requirement is met once the thesis has been successfully defended and approved by the committee, and the student can move on to completing the qualifying exam without waiting for the Graduate School to finalize the master's degree.

- Completing the thesis within the first two years of the program is the typical and desired timeline. However, factors such as assistantships, plans of study, any remedial work, and completion of coursework, may affect the timing. Students who have not completed the thesis by the end of the 3rd year will be reviewed by the full faculty to determine whether adequate progress is being made.

VI. Doctoral Qualifying Exam

Students are admitted to graduate study, but are not admitted to doctoral candidacy until after they have demonstrated sufficient ability and appropriate compatibility with the HDFS program. Students' suitability for doctoral study will be determined through the doctoral qualifying exam. Students will be evaluated by their Qualifying Committee, who is charged with evaluating the extent to which the student's professional goals are achievable in the HDFS program, the student has the skills and foundational knowledge needed to pursue those goals, as well as the engagement and dedication needed to achieve the goals. This committee further serves to provide the student with feedback on their time in the program as well as structured guidance on how best to utilize the remaining time in the program to maximally prepare them for success in their future objectives.

Although HDFS takes a developmental approach to the qualifying evaluation, it is important that the students recognize that this assessment is a serious step because it becomes a determination of how both student and faculty will invest themselves over the next two or three years, and both the faculty and student careers are thus affected. Students should also recognize that qualifying for doctoral study is not a guarantee of a doctoral degree.

A. Requirements

- Students will create a qualifying exam portfolio consisting of the following materials:
    - Statement of professional identity conveying the student's research identity/targeted field of expertise, career objective, and remaining professional and educational plans such as courses, research activities, and teaching experiences. This statement is typically around 2-4 pages in length.
    - Summary of coursework completed and remaining/planned. Templates for reporting this information are available on Canvas.
    - All previous annual plans of study (see page 64)
    - Proposed timeline for remaining study by semester. Should include proposed timing of remaining program milestones, manuscript submissions/revisions, conferences, teaching experiences, etc.
    - A current CV.
    - A writing sample, typically master's thesis or first authored manuscript.

  Students are encouraged to receive feedback and guidance from their advisor on their statement of identity prior to submitting the materials to the full committee.

- Students should complete the first page of the Qualifying Exam Evaluation Form and submit the entire form, along with their portfolio materials, to the full committee a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. The committee will complete the remainder of the qualifying evaluation form and the committee chair will be responsible for presenting the student to the faculty for approval. In alignment with the collective mentoring philosophy of the department, qualifying for doctoral candidacy is a matter of concern to the entire HDFS faculty and program. Thus the qualifying committee will make a recommendation based on the evaluation, but final approval will be determined by the evaluation and vote of the full faculty.

- It is critical that students recognize that once they qualify to advance to doctoral candidacy the Graduate School will not permit the declaration of any dual-title degrees, so students must make a final determination regarding dual-titles prior to scheduling their qualifying exam.

B. Committee

- Qualifying committees must consist of at least 4 faculty members with primary, tenure-line, appointments in HDFS. Including the chair, there must be one representative of each of the 4 research areas in the department (individual, family, prevention, methods). Faculty affiliation with a given area can be ascertained from the website. A given faculty member may be affiliated with more than one area, but can only represent one area on a given committee. Because qualifying evaluations are program specific, outside members are not appropriate on this committee, unless required in conjunction with a dual-title.

- Once the student has identified a committee composition they must obtain the approval of the Graduate PIC prior to contacting faculty with requests to serve. Send an email to the PIC with the list of faculty names and the areas of representation on your committee for approval.

- Because the focus of qualifying exams is to assess alignment with the broad departmental identity, it is not necessary to identify committee members with a direct overlap in the student's research area. Students should consider a broad range of factors in selecting their committee, including faculty experience/familiarity as relevant to the student's career goals (e.g. faculty who have experience in policy, industry affiliations, teaching-focused or research-focused backgrounds as relevant).

C. Timeline

- Students who enter the program without a master's degree must complete their master's thesis defense or empirical paper requirement before sitting for their qualifying exam. The qualifying exam must be held within three semesters after the master's defense, per Graduate School guidelines. Those who have not held their qualifying exam by the end of their 3rd year will be reviewed by the full faculty to determine whether adequate progress is being made.

- Students who enter the program with a master's degree are required to complete their qualifying exam within three semesters of entry into the graduate program (Fall of second year), per Graduate School Policy.

- It is important to recognize that qualifying exam meetings are often the most difficult to schedule because they require the most members. Faculty are very busy and identifying a 2-hour overlapping window of availability is challenging. Students should plan accordingly, particularly if they face some external deadline for which having passed qualifying is required (e.g. applying for a grant or fellowship). Note that faculty are on 9-month appointments by the University and are not paid in the summer months. Students should not plan a qualifying exam meeting in the summer.

- Official qualification for doctoral study is made by the full faculty. There are two designated faculty meetings per year, December and April, in which the committee chair (advisor) can present the students' qualifying evaluation to the faculty for approval. Students should schedule their exam no less than 5 days prior to those meetings to ensure reading of the evaluation.

- Once the faculty approves the qualification for doctoral study the advisor should complete the

final section of the Qualifying Exam Rating Form and submit the document to the Graduate Coordinator. Advisors should update students on the process and provide any additional feedback of discussion that took place in the faculty meeting.

What to Expect in the Qualifying Meeting

Although the format of the qualifying exam meeting has some similarities to other defense meetings (student leaves at the start and the end of the meeting while faculty discuss impressions), the focus differs in that the student is not being asked to defend a specific product, but rather present oneself for evaluation as a doctoral candidate. There are two primary objectives of the qualifying exam. The first is for the committee to assess the candidate's suitability for continuing on toward the Ph.D. During the meeting faculty may ask the student to elaborate on their research identity and ultimate career objectives. Students may also be asked to explain projects, clarify plans for specific products, or discuss challenges they have faced and provide insight into their process and productivity. Faculty are also required to attest, at this stage, to the candidate's fulfillment of the communication and English language fluency requirements.

The second objective of the qualifying exam is to provide professional guidance to the student on how best to achieve their stated goals and make the best use of their remaining time in the program. Students should consider this a valuable opportunity to harness the guidance of 4 successful faculty members, and should feel comfortable asking questions of the committee. A student may find that the committee makes recommendations that differ from the student's intended plans. For instance, students may be cautioned against taking additional courses, may be advised not to participate in a specific project, or may be advised to postpone plans for teaching. When the committee makes such recommendations they are drawing from their significant professional experience to provide feedback to help the students set realistic goals and prioritize among them in order to be best prepared for their targeted career.

Although the Department expects all students who are admitted to the program to be successful in qualifying for doctoral study, in some cases, the committee may determine that the student should not be advanced to doctoral candidacy. In such cases, the committee will determine whether the student will be given a second opportunity to be evaluated for qualification or not. If the committee decides that the student should be permitted an additional attempt, they must indicate what evidence is needed to change the opinion of the committee, and establish a deadline in which the student must hold the second qualifying exam meeting or forfeit their option to do so. The second qualifying exam meeting must be held with the same committee.

Regardless of whether the committee votes in favor of passing or failing the student, the final decision is made by the full faculty. If a student disagrees with the decision of the committee and wishes to contest it, the student may provide a letter explaining the circumstance and reasons they are requesting reconsideration. At the faculty meeting in which the qualification recommendation is being voted on, the Graduate PIC will read the student's letter in addition to the committee report presented by the committee chair. The faculty will vote after being presented both perspectives, and the outcome will be determined by the majority vote based on the faculty present in the meeting.

VII. Comprehensive Exam

According to the Graduate School, the Comprehensive Exam should be taken when students have "substantially completed all course work," and must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 for work completed at Penn State. Prior to taking the comprehensive exam students must also satisfy the communication requirement and demonstrate fluency in English.

The goal of the comprehensive exam in HDFS is for students to develop and demonstrate content mastery and intellectual independence in preparation for completing the dissertation. The comprehensive exam product should involve integrating research and theory in the student's field of interest, broadly conceived, prior to the student's focusing on a more specialized depth area of doctoral research. The content should be broader than the specific focus of the dissertation research but sufficiently focused that a comprehensive (non-superficial) knowledge of the area can emerge and be evaluated in the context of the comprehensive exam process. The committee will evaluate the student's critical thinking with regard to theoretical, empirical, and methodological issues in the field of HDFS as well as the student's ability to clearly present thoughts in writing and orally. In order to ensure that the final product represents the student's independent skills and knowledge, all work must be completed independently. Advisors are not permitted to read or respond to preliminary drafts, and cannot engage in discussions guiding student's thinking on the exam response.

The comprehensive exam must cover two areas of the department's 4 research areas (individual, family, prevention, methods). If the student is pursuing a dual-title, the exam focus must also fulfill any requirements for the dual-title with regard to content and committee composition. Students have two procedural options for how to complete this milestone, but the core components are common across both options.

A. Requirements

- Student creates a *statement of research interests,* generally about **2-3 pages**. The statement should describe a coherent domain of research inquiry. The research domain described in the statement should ideally provide a foundation for the dissertation, but should be broader than the dissertation focus. Students are encouraged to work with their advisor to receive feedback and guidance on their comprehensive exam materials before they are submitted for further evaluation by the committee and department.

- In conjunction with the statement of research, the student will generate a *reading list* that will provide a robust foundation in the relevant literature to support the expertise targeted in the statement of research. The reading list should aim to provide exposure to core theoretical models, historical insights in the field, and current approaches and findings. The reading list should be between 80 – 100 readings (100 is the maximum number of readings), including articles and chapters, and entries should be numbered. Templates for formatting a reading list for committee evaluation are available on Canvas. Students often use an outline format to organize the content focus of the readings. However, readings should not be cross listed in multiple domains as this complicates the ability to count independent readings.

- Reading lists are a platform for students to engage in scientific exploration of the literature with guided oversight from the committee. However, the reading list does not function like a contract, as the reading list will not be compared to the final written product to verify alignment. Students may

encounter a reference in the course of their reading that is clearly relevant to their interests despite not being originally included on the list. Students should not feel restricted from browsing or reviewing additional readings. However, students should consider that the agreed upon list is the most effective way to ensure that they have been adequately exposed to the information the committee deems critical, and thus students are discouraged from neglecting or replacing significant sections of their reading list.

- The comprehensive exam itself will consist of (typically) 2-3 questions that address a broad (comprehensive) targeted field and solicit students' evaluation of current issues in the field. Students' responses should aim to demonstrate critical analysis and integration of ideas toward addressing current problems in the field, and should not be limited to providing a summary of existing literature.

- Materials must be approved before the exam process can begin. Once the student and their advisor(s) have approved the materials, all materials must be approved by the full committee, and then must be submitted to the Grad PIC to initiate the departmental approval process. The PIC will solicit a faculty member outside of the committee to evaluate the materials. This additional faculty review step is designed to ensure that the materials satisfy the departmental requirement of breadth and adequately represent the minimum of 2 departmental research domains. The evaluation process by the departmental representative is anticipated to take no more than one week. It is possible that, based on the reviewer feedback, changes may be requested or suggested for the questions, the reading list, or both.

- Students will produce a written response to the questions that <u>cannot</u> exceed 60 pages in length, double spaced. References are not included in the page limit, but are required. Students may elect to create separate reference lists for each question or provide a single reference list covering the entire exam. Questions should be written in a way that provides a rough indication of how to apportion the available response space across the questions.

- Academic integrity is integral to the comprehensive exam process (see discussion in section XII). Because the goal of the comprehensive exam is to assess a students' ability to read, comprehend, synthesize, and write about the literature, AI use is prohibited in during both reading and writing phases of the exam. Students must sign a department policy statement on AI use in the comprehensive exam to acknowledge understanding of the policy.

- Completing the comprehensive exam by the end of the 5th year of the program is the typical and desired timeline. However, factors such as assistantships, plans of study, any remedial work, and completion of coursework, may affect the timing. Students who have not passed the comprehensive exam by the end of the 5th year will be reviewed by the full faculty to determine whether adequate progress is being made.

The two options differ only in the timing and procedural process by which the above components unfold. The Options and timelines are as follows:

<u>Option 1.</u>

- The student works with the advisor to generate the statement and reading list, which are then distributed to the committee for feedback. Committee members may make suggestions on the reading list which can include additions, substitutions, or subtractions. In incorporating this

feedback the student must ensure that the list does not exceed 100 articles and must balance additions with subtractions if necessary.

- After the committee approves the materials prepared by the student, the committee works together to generate a set of exam questions that guide the student in thinking critically about key issues relevant to the student's stated research domain. The committee should ensure that the questions align with the statement and reading list, are broadly framed, and require integration of research and theory relevant to at least two areas of departmental emphasis (individual, family, prevention, methodology).

- The advisor will submit the committee-approved questions to the PIC for departmental review. The PIC will reach out to another member of the HDFS Faculty body for an outside review of the materials. The PIC will notify the advisor of any reviewer feedback. <u>The student is not permitted to see the questions.</u>

- At this point the student begins the preparation phase guided by the reading list. The reading phase typically lasts between 2-3 months during which time the student reads the articles and begins to organize their thoughts on the issues in the field.

- The writing phase of the comprehensive exam is restricted to a 3-week period of time, monitored by the Graduate Coordinator. In order to ensure that the exam process is adequately coordinated with the timing of the defense, students must schedule their defense meeting with their committee before they can schedule the writing period. The writing period must be scheduled such that it ends no less than 2 weeks, and no more than 4 weeks, before the date of the oral defense. Once the writing period is scheduled the Graduate Coordinator will provide the questions on the morning of the first day and the student will submit the responses by 5pm on the last day.

<u>Option 2.</u>

The second option for completing the comprehensive exam differs from the first option on only two points.

- Students may be involved in the development of the exam questions. Students may generate the first draft of the questions, or they may be given an opportunity to read and comment on questions drafted by the committee. However, it is important to keep in mind that the committee has the ultimate responsibility over the final question content and structure. The committee may make minor or extensive changes to the questions developed by the student, as it is understood that the committee's expertise gives it the responsibility to identify the critical questions in the field that best prepare the student for their dissertation work. Once the committee has approved the questions and materials, the advisor should submit them to the Grad PIC.

- Because the students are aware of the questions at the outset of the process, the reading and writing phases are combined and take place over a period of no more than 4 months. The 4-month window begins on the day the Grad PIC gives approval of the materials, including suggested revisions. The Graduate Coordinator will inform the student of the deadline by which the final product must be submitted.

<u>Considering which options works best</u>

Keep in mind that both options require the same amount of work and are expected to take the same amount of time overall (usually about 4 months), but differ in terms of how the work is distributed during that time. There are pros and cons to each approach, and students are encouraged to discuss these with their advisor, who may feel that one approach is more useful to the student's training than the other. Potential advantages of each option are listed below.

Option 1	Option 2
Requires student to read deeply to integrate themes broadly across the readings- an excellent strategy for building a general knowledge base.	Allowing reading to inform writing and writing to inform reading mimics the typical academic approach to writing grants or manuscripts. However, reading the articles filtered through the framework of the specific questions may limit the extent to which the student engages broader themes
Some students prefer the consolidated writing period to concentrate without distraction. However, students should consider whether they can identify a 3-week period of time in which all other responsibilities can be put on hold. Consult with your assistantship supervisor in advance about the anticipated timeline of your writing period to determine whether it is possible to arrange your responsibilities in a way that supports dedicating the majority of your time to the comprehensive exam (perhaps by trading with a co-TA to do more grading before or after your writing period if they cover your grading responsibilities during that time).	Some students prefer the broader writing window to enable them to diversify their activities and continue to make progress on manuscripts, teaching experiences, or lab work during this time. However, the less structured deadline can facilitate procrastination if the student is not disciplined in maintaining their schedule of progress.
Finite deadline can be useful in forcing students to make progress in completing the full response without agonizing over the minutiae. However, the quality and comprehensiveness of the product can be impeded by the limited time.	Broader writing window allows students to revisit articles and construct more thorough responses. However, the committee will have higher expectations of the writing quality given the 4-month window

Scheduling considerations

For both options students should ensure that they plan well in advance to coordinate the timing of the entire process, particularly if they are seeking to meet an externally imposed deadline such as being eligible for a fellowship, or if there are other obligations or constraints that dictate the ideal timing of the writing window. Students are encouraged to begin by considering when they would ideally like to defend the final product, and work backward from there to create a clear and realistic timeline. Be

sure to consider that preparing the materials and obtaining approval from the committee and the department can take 1-2 months.

Students must coordinate with the Graduate coordinator to ensure that all paperwork is submitted to the Graduate School at the appropriate times. In addition to the paperwork required to have a doctoral committee appointed, paperwork must be filed to request permission to hold the comprehensive exam. Failure to submit the request with sufficient timing can, and has, resulted in the Graduate School denying the request or invalidating the defense.

Although students often find summer to be an ideal time to commit to such endeavors, keep in mind that faculty also find summer to be a time to dedicate to their own research without distraction. Faculty are on 9-month appointments from the University and thus are not obligated to participate in summer defense meetings. Faculty also use summer to schedule their own vacations, and it may be difficult to identify an overlap in availability across all committee members. If a summer defense meeting is desired students should ensure that it can be scheduled before initiating the comprehensive exam process. Note that students must be enrolled during the summer if their defense is scheduled during the summer, and will need to coordinate with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that tuition benefits can be obtained. Given complexities of financial planning for graduate appointments, exam defenses are highly discouraged in the portion of August prior to the start of the semester.

Students who encounter unanticipated events (e.g. medical problems, family crisis) during the comprehensive exam writing period should communicate with their advisor to make them aware of the situation. In some circumstances an extension is warranted to ensure that the student has the appropriate opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and ability without being under duress. The student, advisor, and Graduate PIC can communicate to determine appropriate duration and contingencies for any alterations in the timeline.

Comprehensive Exam Oral Defense

In addition to the written product, students must defend their comprehensive exam orally in front of their committee. The Graduate School allows all delivery modes of the comprehensive examination which are fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely. Student preference for delivery mode should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree on the mode. If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode, the Grad PIC or Graduate Program Head will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Grad PIC or Graduate Program Head to the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education.

The Chair will moderate the oral exam which will focus on the comprehensive paper, but can include other issues relevant to the student's graduate education. Discussion of the student's oral and written performance will occur following the oral exam (in the student's absence). The final evaluation will rely on the Graduate School's Evaluation form, which requires doctoral committee members to rate student performance on a 5 point scale (superior to failing scores). Graduate School rules specify a favorable vote by two thirds of the doctoral committee for passing. The Committee is sent a link the day of the exam for the final evaluation. Faculty are expected to post their results within 5 days of the exam.

If the committee feels that the student has not met the expectations need to pass the comprehensive exam, the student will be granted one additional attempt to meet this threshold. The committee should document that the student has failed this first attempt, and is responsible for determining the timing and structure of the 2nd attempt. The second exam may involve re-writing specific sections or the entire

exam as originally developed, creation of new comprehensive exam questions, and/or meeting again to defend the exam orally. The committee can request a format different from the original format, but the topic must be relevant to the original statement/proposal and reading list. The timeline for completing the second exam cannot exceed the timeline for completing the first exam (e.g. 4 months), and the second exam must be approved by the same committee. Exceptions to the committee composition must be granted by the Graduate PIC. The committee is required to document the reason for failing the first exam, the expectations of the second exam, and the deadline for fulfilling these expectations and must provide this document to the student and to the Graduate PIC for documentation. Students failing the exam a second time will be terminated from the program for unsatisfactory scholarship.

B. Comprehensive/Doctoral Committee Composition

The committee for the comprehensive exam is expected to remain the same through the doctoral dissertation defense. If there is a change in committee composition at any time after the committee is initially composed the student will need to submit an amended form with the signatures of the newly appointed committee members. Students must notify faculty members if they have elected to remove or replace them from the committee.

Students are expected to form their dissertation committee no later than one semester following successful completion of the qualifying exam. The student's advisor will serve as the committee chair. Students may elect to have co-chairs for their committee, and may be required to do so under some circumstances when pursuing a dual-title degree. Students pursuing dual-title degrees must consult with the Director of the dual-title program to ensure that the committee composition satisfies both sets of requirements.

The committee is officially appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the Graduate PIC. It is the student's responsibility to oversee the completion of the appropriate committee paperwork and obtain the required signatures needed for the department to submit the request to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will verify that the committee members fulfill the required roles and have the appropriate status/qualifications. HDFS doctoral committees must include a minimum of 4 members in total:

- All must be members of the Graduate Faculty
- At least two must be representatives from the major program (HDFS) (chairs and co-chairs can fulfill these roles)
- At least one "outside unit" member, and at least one "outside field" member, often the same person fills both of these roles.
- A representative from any specialty or minor the student is completing (in most cases this person will also fulfill one of the above roles).

<u>Special Committee Members</u>

There may be times when a student works closely with a researcher who is not a member of the Graduate Faculty. These individuals may be research faculty in various centers at Penn State, or, in some cases, faculty at different institutions who may have a vital role on the project from which the dissertation draws data. Such individuals can be appointed as special members of the doctoral committee if deemed appropriate (and may be more likely to be added to the dissertation committee after the comprehensive exam). Special member appointments require approval from the Graduate School and students will need to coordinate with the Graduate Coordinator to prepare the request.

Although special committee members have the same expectations as all other committee members, the Graduate School does not recognize them as fulfilling any of the roles required, and are thus added as an additional member. Students are strongly encouraged to involve research faculty who have been, and will be, meaningfully involved in the student's dissertation work on the committee through the special member role. This is an appropriate and important way to officially acknowledge the time and effort the researcher is devoting to the student's educational development. Formalizing the acknowledgement of these types of contributions is an important step for research faculty in being able to apply for graduate faculty status.

In the event that a faculty member serving on a student's committee leaves the University prior to the student completing their degree it may be possible to continue their role on the committee. Faculty who retire from the University may request an extension of their graduate faculty status and continue to serve on the student's committee if they are willing to do so. Faculty who depart the University for reasons other than retirement may be able to request continuation of their graduate faculty status for one year. Students who will not complete their degree within that one year time frame are required to replace the departing faculty member. If the student and the former faculty member wish to continue their association (such as in cases where the student is using data collected by or with the former faculty member) the individual can be appointed to the committee as a special member. If the student will complete the degree within the subsequent year and wishes to keep the advisor in the role of Committee Chair they should ensure that the advisor is willing and available to travel back to State College for the dissertation defense. Although the Graduate School permits remote (e.g. zoom, telephone) participation in some circumstances, it does not permit the student or the Chair to participate remotely. If the advisor will not be able to return to State College in person, a Co-Chair should be appointed.

VIII. The Dissertation

The Doctoral Dissertation should constitute independent scholarly work, and have the potential to make a significant contribution to the field. The evaluation process for the Dissertation integrates departmental and Graduate School policies and procedures. The dissertation represents the culmination of students' formal doctoral education in HDFS, and the faculty expects that students who reach the point of preparing a dissertation proposal will have the methodological and conceptual sophistication necessary to undertake an independent research project. Nonetheless, consultation with, and involvement by, the Doctoral Committee throughout the dissertation process is an important element of students' continued scholarly development. Students in HDFS are therefore required to hold an in-person dissertation proposal defense meeting. The proposal meeting should be scheduled prior to the execution of the dissertation product in order to ensure that students engage in the appropriate activities. Defending the dissertation proposal by the end of the 6th year is the typical and desired timeline. However, factors such as assistantships, plans of study, any remedial work, and completion of coursework, may affect the timing. Students who have failed to have a dissertation proposal defended by the end of the 6th year will be reviewed by the full faculty to determine whether adequate progress is being made.

A. The Dissertation Proposal

Dissertation proposals may vary in format depending on the format of the dissertation, the possible options of which are described below. Regardless of format, the proposal should include a

fully developed and well-articulated introduction that conveys the rationale and importance of the dissertation study(ies). The proposal should also include a fully articulated and detailed methods section, which should include all elements of detail expected of a methods section for a publication-ready document. Specific measures, sampling plan or participant descriptions (if data are already collected), and a detailed data processing and data analysis plan should be included. The proposal document should essentially represent half of the final dissertation product, and should be a complete road map to executing the dissertation. Lack of specificity at this stage increases the chances of the final product not meeting the committee's expectations. Thus, students are strongly encouraged to ensure that their proposal is as developed and detailed as possible for their own benefit. This may include providing descriptive data if working with archival data so that the committee can evaluate whether the sample is appropriate for the stated analysis goals. Students may also consider describing "plan B" strategies, particularly for projects that will proceed through a series of analysis steps; the later steps inherently dependent on specific outcomes of earlier steps.

Although the dissertation proposal is not a final product and students cannot fail a dissertation proposal per se, poorly prepared or underdeveloped proposal products do a serious disservice to the student. The committee can engage only with the materials they are provided and if the proposal is underdeveloped the student loses this valuable opportunity to get directed feedback and guidance from the committee to ensure that the final dissertation is of the highest quality and the student encounters the fewest setbacks. Ensuring a well-developed proposal is the single most important thing a student can do to make their dissertation defense as smooth and productive an experience as possible. As such, students should plan well in advance to get as much feedback from their advisor as possible in preparing the proposal. Students are encouraged to schedule their writing process to allow for ***multiple*** drafts of the proposal to be evaluated by the advisor before scheduling the defense.

Prior to the proposal meeting students and advisors should make a plan for taking notes and the student should review their understanding of the committee's feedback before the meeting adjourns. Students may also wish to summarize the agreed-upon changes or recommendations in written form and circulate this after the meeting, to ensure that committee members have the chance to clarify any of their suggestions for the student. This will ensure that there are no misunderstandings between the student and committee member(s) that will result in problems at the dissertation defense stage. This is especially critical since most students have post-graduate jobs in place by the time they are defending their dissertation, and a failure to fulfill the expectations of the dissertation can jeopardize the student's intended graduation timing.

Even with a fully developed proposal students are likely to encounter unanticipated obstacles in executing their dissertation research. As students begin their analyses they may find that the results are not emerging as expected, or they may encounter unexpected findings and patterns of association. Writing the dissertation is expected to be a process, and this process can lead the final dissertation product down a different path than was originally proposed. In most cases this is reasonable and expected. However, students are strongly encouraged to remain in contact with the full committee to provide updates of any substantive changes from the proposal, to avoid problems at the time of the defense. It is also important that students keep in mind any additional collaborators who may be outside of the committee, such as co-investigators on the project from which the data were drawn. Substantive changes to an originally agreed upon proposal can inadvertently lead to overlap with other projects the student may not even be aware of, and could jeopardize the possibility of the student ultimately having the ability to publish their dissertation work.

B. Dissertation formatting options

Graduate School policy stipulates that the dissertation may take the form of journal articles. In HDFS the dissertation format is approved by the Doctoral Committee at the time of the proposal meeting. All committee members must sign the departmental evaluation form to indicate that they have approved the student's dissertation plan. Dissertation format options are described below:

As the culminating demonstration of the student's doctoral-level mastery of a field of research, dissertations should be larger in scope than a master's thesis or single manuscript-style paper. Typically this is accomplished by identifying a set of related research questions that can be examined to inform a broader research objective. As an example, consider how a grant proposal typically identifies multiple aims to be assessed with the proposed project. A dissertation should similarly identify multiple (2-3) research questions that typically represent different vantage points or levels of analysis to a common issue. Because of its complexity, it is typically the case that the dissertation will eventually be broken into smaller units for the purpose of publication.

Maintaining clarity and organization of a dissertation product is no small feat of academic writing. Students are encouraged to make effective use of subheadings to guide the reader through the literature review, and to organize the results according to research question. However, students also have the option of preparing the dissertation in the form of separate manuscript-style papers that, in combination, are comparable in scope to a single dissertation.

Whether the dissertation is best prepared as a single or multiple papers should be discussed with the advisor and committee, and an agreement should be made before the proposal is prepared. Single-paper dissertations may be more manageable when all data will be drawn from one study, and thus the majority of the methods section would be shared across all research questions. In contrast, dissertations that make use of different samples to assess related questions are likely better prepared as separate papers. The total number of papers that comprise the multi-paper dissertation will be determined by the Committee, and students should define independent papers logically and efficiently. For instance, students should not feel compelled to segregate what would logically be parts (a) and (b) of a single research question into independent papers in an effort to fulfill an arbitrary number of papers for the dissertation. Likewise, literature reviews would typically not be considered a free standing paper in the multi-paper option, but part of the rationale for the empirical papers. In determining what qualifies as an independent paper the student and committee are encouraged to consider whether the paper would be publishable as a stand-alone product, or whether it would likely be recombined with another component. As noted, dissertations often evolve between the proposed and final products and this may include reconceptualizing the number or scope of papers. Changes of this magnitude should be approved by the committee.

For a multi-paper option there should be an overarching introduction, which is a scholarly integration of the multiple papers that comprise the dissertation. This overarching introduction should provide a conceptual justification for the papers, and should not be redundant with the specific papers. This should be included in the proposal stage. Similarly, the final dissertation should include an overarching discussion that synthesizes the results of the separate papers, and describes their collective meaning and overall contribution to the field. In other words, multi-paper dissertations should not be conceived as combining multiple manuscripts simply to document productivity, the product itself should be coherent in its intellectual goal.

At the time of the proposal students may include 1 paper that is already published, or submitted for publication. Note that the publication status of any paper does not preclude the committee from asking for revisions. If a published or submitted manuscript is included at the proposal stage it must be (1) separate from any work done for the master's thesis and (2) conceptualized, analyzed, and first authored by the student, although it may include co-authors. Published products related to the comprehensive exam (i.e. a literature review) can be included, provided that an empirical paper is also developed for the dissertation. At the final defense stage there is no limit to the number of dissertation papers already submitted or published. However, the committee is still able to require any revisions or changes regardless of publication status.

Academic Integrity. The dissertation adheres to rules of academic integrity described in section XII. The dissertation should reflect the students' ability to generate, conceptualize, analyze, and write research studies at the doctoral level. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools cannot be used in aspects related to generating ideas, writing, or editing the thesis document (other than basic spelling and grammar checks in Microsoft Word).

Dissertation Defense and Graduation Planning

It is the student's responsibility to inform the Graduate Program Coordinator a minimum of three weeks prior to the date of the final oral examination as permission to hold the defense must be submitted to, and approved by, the Graduate School in advance. It is also the student's responsibility to submit the final written dissertation product on turnitin two weeks in advance of the oral examination. Failure to provide the materials with sufficient time to review could lead to a cancelation of the scheduled defense. Permission to submit final products fewer than 2 weeks before the defense date must be sought from each committee member in advance.

Students must defend their doctoral dissertation orally in front of their committee. The Graduate School allows all delivery modes of the dissertation which are fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely. Student preference for delivery mode should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree on the mode. If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode, the Grad PIC or Graduate Program Head will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Grad PIC or Graduate Program Head to the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education.

Graduate School policy also indicates that the oral defense is a "public" event, open to the faculty at large as well as other interested individuals. In accordance with this policy the Graduate Coordinator will circulate an announcement of the oral defense date, time, and location. As with other exam meetings, the student will be asked to leave the room at the start of the meeting and faculty will discuss their impressions of the product and plan for the meeting. This portion of the meeting will not be available to the public. Anyone attending the oral defense will be invited in after the initial Committee discussion when the student returns. After the defense, the student and anyone attending the meeting will be asked to step out of the room and the faculty will conduct their evaluation of the student's performance. On the day of the defense, the Graduate School will generate an email to faculty with a link to an evaluation form to submit their decision; a favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the committee is required for passing a final oral examination.

In most cases, even when the student passes the exam they will be required to make revisions.

The committee should discuss before the meeting ends whether (a) any revisions will be required (as opposed to simply recommended when pursuing publication) and (b) whether anyone other than the dissertation chair needs to review and approve the changes before the final dissertation can be submitted. However, in some cases the committee may determine that the student has not fulfilled the expectations of the dissertation and has not passed the final defense. In this instance the committee is required to document the reason for the failure, and to determine what must be accomplished in order to pass the final dissertation requirement. The student will be granted one additional opportunity to meet these expectations, and must provide this documentation to the student and to the Graduate PIC for documentation. The committee will also define the deadline by which the student must fulfill these expectations and hold their second defense. The committee will determine what a reasonable timeline given the requests should be, but it cannot be longer than one year from the original defense date. The second exam must be approved by the same committee. Exceptions to the committee composition must be granted by the Graduate PIC. Students failing the exam a second time will be terminated from the program for unsatisfactory scholarship.

Defenses that take place during the summer require the student to be enrolled during the Summer semester, even if the degree will not be conferred until the Fall semester. The student is responsible for working with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that they are accurately enrolled and that they have received the necessary tuition credit. Although summer can be an appealing time to complete a major milestone, it is important to note that this may be a particularly challenging time to arrange a committee defense meeting. Faculty have 9 month appointments from the University, meaning the University does not pay faculty during the summer and they are therefore not obligated to participate in any student defense meetings. Summer is a typical time for faculty to take vacations, and coordinating the availability across multiple faculty members will be more challenging in the summer. Furthermore, faculty also view summer as a good time to devote to their own research, and may simply be unwilling to allow extraneous commitments to detract from that time. If you are planning to defend in the summer it is important that you take these issues into account and confirm with your committee that this is a feasible timeline.

At the stage of the dissertation defense students often have plans for post-graduate employment and residential relocation in place. It is important that students understand that scheduling defense meetings within weeks of the date postgraduate plans are to take place is highly risky. Committee members are under no obligation to approve a final product to meet a deadline for the student's employment eligibility or other constraints. Students should expect that they will be required to engage in revisions of their final product, and should allow themselves at least one month following the defense to accomplish the revisions and have the final product approved.

The University confers degrees only 3 times per year (May, August, December), and has very rigid deadlines regarding the timing of submission in order to have the degree conferred. Students planning to participate in the doctoral hooding ceremony can only attend the ceremony in the semester in which their degree is conferred. Advanced planning is required for students wishing to fulfill the deadline for a specific graduation.

Even though the degree will not be officially conferred immediately, nearly all postgraduate positions consider the student to have graduated once all degree requirements have been met. In other words, a student who successfully defends their dissertation on July 30th will not have their degree conferred by Penn State until December of that year, but will be eligible to hold a postdoctoral position in August. Most jobs require only a letter from the Department to verify the fulfillment of degree requirements. The Graduate School is also willing to provide a letter verifying completion if needed for job eligibility or visa status.

Students are expected to complete the thesis and final oral examination within two years of completion of the comprehensive examination. Further, after completion of the comprehensive examination, the student must maintain continuous registration in the program for Fall and Spring of each year until the dissertation is accepted by the doctoral committee. Failure to maintain registration results in termination of student status.

IX. Funding

HDFS has been able to consistently support graduate students financially through a range of mechanisms. While the specific source of financial support may have varying implications, reviewed below, in each case the support includes (a) payment of full tuition costs, (b) a stipend to cover living expenses, and (c) a subsidy toward health insurance premiums. Although in the overwhelming majority of cases students are able to live comfortably without the need for incurring debt, it is certainly not the case that the financial assistance available to graduate students is comparable to the income they would earn working full-time. As such, it is important for students to have a clear understanding of the financial assistance package they are receiving at any given time so that they can make their personal financial decisions accordingly.

The minimum stipend students receive is regulated in part by the University and the College, and subject to changes each year. Changes to the minimum stipend are a function of increases for cost-of-living adjustments, or general increases in stipend levels. The minimum appointment level for a graduate assistantship in the College of Health and Human Development is set at a Level 14 appointment. The corresponding dollar amount of this level will be verified with students at the time of their appointment. Over the last 5 years the Graduate School has worked hard to increase the stipend levels graduate students receive by several thousand dollars, and the stipend amount provided is sufficient for the costs of living in State College.

There are multiple sources of financial support for students and it is likely that students will receive different sources of funding throughout their time in graduate school. Some sources of funding provide a higher stipend than the Level 14 appointment, and some provide additional funds for research. Each type of funding is described below. As indicated in the acceptance letter students receive, the Department has been able to guarantee full financial support for students for a minimum of 4 years, provided the student remains in good standing academically and meets the eligibility for the available source of funding (in most cases this means physical residence in State College). Historically, the Department has been successfully able to support students beyond the initial four years, for as long as needed to complete the program. Students need to be aware, however, that in the event that the departmental resources are restricted, priority for funding will first be directed toward students within the first 4 years. Students in need of funding beyond their 4th year will be evaluated and prioritized taking into account the following factors (1) time in the program, with lower priority for students who have been here for 6 or more years, (2) funding history, with lower priority for students who have already been funded largely by departmental resources, (3) productivity and academic performance, (4) progress toward degree, with highest priority for students whose completion is imminent.

A. Departmental Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantship appointments qualify students for full tuition coverage and graduate health insurance benefits. Assistantship appointments can be made as ¼ time or ½ time appointments, corresponding to an expectation of 10 hours or 20 hours per week of work dedicated to the assistantship. Note that the Graduate School does not permit students to be employed beyond a 20 hour (1/2 time) assistantship because it is recognized that employment at that level would not leave sufficient time for students to complete their degree-related obligations (coursework, milestones, etc.). Assistantship appointments include the eighteen-week semester, which includes one week before and one week after the 16-week class schedule. Students must seek prior approval from faculty they are assigned to if they are not able to comply with these guidelines.

The College awards each department a certain number of graduate assistantship positions each year. These lines are used to support students who do not have alternative funding, and are the source of guaranteed departmental support. In almost all cases the department awards these positions as teaching assistantships. In some cases the department may appoint a student to a ½ time TAship, which would equate to 20 hours/week of a commitment to a single course, or to 2 ¼ time TAships, which would equate to a 10 hour/week commitment to 2 different courses. These decisions are made semester by semester as a function of the specific course, student schedule availability, and TA needs. Detailed guidelines regarding TAship expectations and responsibilities appear on page 46

For all first-year students the department provides students with a ¼ TAship and a ¼ research assistantship (RAship). This is designed to ensure that students have a dedicated allotment of time (10 hours/week) to devote to their research lab and can begin to develop ideas for the master's thesis or other research products. In some cases the department may permit the graduate assistantship to be allocated entirely toward an RAship, usually this is an arrangement between the advisor and the Department Head. For instance, advisors may have been granted RAships as part of their hiring agreement, or in conjunction with other obligations, that they are able to use to support graduate students.

When students accept a graduate assistantship they make a commitment to fulfill the duties associated with it. Failure to complete these responsibilities satisfactorily will result in placing the student on probationary status for future funding. If problems persist, the student may lose priority for funding. In the event of disagreements or problems between holders of a graduate assistantship and faculty supervisors, the PIC will conduct a review and make recommendations. Assistantship performance is one element of students' Annual Reviews. More information about RAship expectations can be found on page 50.

Decisions about assistantships are made by the PIC in consultation with the department head, faculty, and students. To provide financial assistance to as many students as possible, and to expose students to as wide a range of experiences as possible, it is necessary that these decisions be made by the PIC with the approval of the department head and not by individual faculty. It is not always possible each semester or even each year to match a given student with an assignment that is optimal for their program objectives. Nonetheless, every effort is made to give each student a range of experiences and

assignments consistent with the student's' Plan of Study. In general, the criteria used in the determination of students' assignments include students' academic accomplishments, interests, and needs, and faculty requests for specific students. Each semester the PIC sends out questionnaires to both faculty and students asking for their preferences. Depending on the student's career objectives, every effort is made to expose the student to a range of courses and faculty. As students progress through the program, an attempt is made to introduce them gradually to assignments that involve increasing responsibility.

Eligible students may also have the opportunity to serve as the instructor of record for a course, As stated above, eligibility requirements include holding a master's degree or equivalent and previous TA experience in the class the student is intending to teach. Moreover, students are strongly recommended to first partake in training specifically related to college teaching (e.g., Schreyer Institute Graduate instructor positions are assigned as a ½ time appointment (20 hours).

B. Penn State Fellowships

There are multiple fellowships that may support students during their time in the program. The majority of these are awarded to students in their first year in the program. Students do not need to apply for these fellowships, but will be nominated by the Graduate PIC and Admissions Chair at the time an offer of admissions is made. Students who are awarded a fellowship will be notified of this in writing, with specific details provided for the duration of the fellowship coverage and the expectations associated. Students who receive a fellowship in their first year will not be required to serve as a TA, but are expected to fulfill their RA responsibilities of a minimum of 10 hours/week in their research lab. In most cases the fellowship only provides support for the student in the first year, and the student will be transitioned to a departmental graduate assistantship in subsequent years. In some cases, the fellowship awards the student a stipend level that is higher than the departmental graduate assistantship. This higher amount may only be in effect for the first year, with the student assuming the regular amount when they transition to departmental support. In some cases, the increased amount of support is continued for a second year, or beyond. In such cases the student is still supported by the departmental assistantship, with the associated expectations, and the College or University supplements the difference. Details specific to each student are provided in writing at the time of the award.

Some fellowships are available for students beyond their first year. Often these fellowships are restricted to students further along in the program (students who have completed their copmrehensivesa exam experience a dramatic reduction in tuition rate and thus are more affordable to support). Students will receive notices when fellowships are accepting applications.

C. Grant-funded RAships

The majority of RAship positions are supported by independent investigator research grants. Grants can be written to include graduate student support, typically in conjunction with a specified set of services the student would provide to the project. Such services could include analysis, data processing, data collection, laboratory management, recruitment, etc. The exact expectations that accompany any given RAship position should be discussed with the RAship supervisor. In many cases this is the student's advisor, but it is also not uncommon for students to be supported by a project directed by another faculty member, inside or outside of HDFS. When a student is supported on a research grant they are not drawing from the allotment of grad assistantships provided to the department. In these cases the

grant is expected to pay the full costs of tuition, the student's stipend, and the health insurance premium. In some cases, however, the department may have to augment support if the grant does not have the full resources needed to cover all of these expenses. In such cases students may be expected to engage in some departmental service activities, and could potentially have a split funding arrangement with a ¼ TAship and a ¼ RAship.

D. Training Grants

Penn State has a proud history of receiving multiple training grants. Training grants are designed around a general research focus in an effort to train future scientists in a specific field. Federally funded training grants are highly prestigious awards that Universities compete for, and only the universities deemed to have the best training environment for the research focus, productive faculty, and strong record of student success, are awarded such grants. Training grants typically provide student support for anywhere from 2-4 years, depending on the grant. Students pursuing research related to the focus of the training grant are eligible to apply to these training programs. Students will receive notices when each training grant program is seeking applicants. Federally funded training grants cannot support students who are not U.S. citizens, although in many cases the College provides some matching funds that these programs can use to create slots for international students. Training grants may impose additional educational requirements such as specific required coursework; participation in seminars, summer training programs, or professional activities; and typically require that the student pursue their dissertation research in the relevant domain. Some training grants may also be able to provide additional support to cover travel costs for conferences, or other material resources. Training grants will vary with regard to the stipend provided, and whether or not summer funding is additionally provided. However, all training grants are designed to ensure that students' time is protected for the purpose of research. As such, students are typically not permitted to teach or engage in additional employment while supported on a training grant. Because of this protected time, students are expected to demonstrate a high level of productivity while supported on a training grant, and should strive to publish multiple papers. Student productivity is the primary metric by which the success of a training grant is evaluated by the funding agency and so students should consider that while they are supported by these mechanisms they are the stewards of this resource and their actions will directly determine whether this resource will be available for future cohorts.

E. Externally funded fellowships

Several federal programs support mechanisms by which students can apply for their own funding. HDFS is proud to have had several students be granted such prestigious and competitive awards. These grants essentially serve as individually tailored training grants, and typically require the student to detail the training activities and environment. These grants also serve to protect the student's time to be dedicated to research, and as such students are not permitted to teach or engage in other employment during this time. Federally funded graduate training grants are not available to international students. International students are encouraged to examine dissertation grants supported through private agencies or academic societies, as well as investigating whether they are eligible for funding from their home countries.

F. Credit requirements and associated tuition

Students are required to be enrolled full time to be eligible for funding, and for non-citizens to meet their visa requirements. Full time status is considered 9 credits per semester, which can be fulfilled by

enrolling in 596 independent study credits to compensate for course enrollment below the 9 credit minimum. Note that auditing a course does not count toward this minimum. During this time, the funding source is require to pay the full costs of the student's tuition. In the semester following the successful defense of the comprehensive exam the student is eligible to enroll in 1 credit of HDFS 601 (dissertation study) and will be considered a full time student for all intents and purposes. This equates to a substantial reduction in the cost of tuition, and as such certain fellowships may only be available to students who are post-comps. Note that this tuition reduction is applicable in the semester *after* the comps defense, not the semester of the comps defense. Students wishing to be eligible for the reduced tuition in the fall must successfully defend their comprehensive exam before August 1st. Please note that summer defense dates require summer enrollment and students must coordinate with the department to ensure that they can receive tuition coverage for the summer.

G. Summer Funding

Graduate assistantships are 9-month appointments and do not include summer funding. The stipend is paid, however, in equal installments across a 10-month period, from August through May. Students will be charged a small fee each month for their portion of the health insurance premium, which will be determined by the number of family members they cover. Students should note that there is a slight increase in their insurance fees in the spring relative to the fall semester in order to absorb the full 12 months of coverage into the 10 months of stipend payments.

Most students are able to find funding in the summer months. Summer appointments are not guaranteed, and it is not guaranteed that the payment will be equivalent to the monthly stipend (it could be higher or it could be lower). As such, students are strongly encouraged to budget to allow a cushion in June and July if needed. Summer funding is available through multiple routes, the most common of which is being supported to conduct research either by their advisor or another faculty-run project. Summer support does not require investigators to pay tuition and health insurance fees so supporting a student in the summer is often more affordable. Students are encouraged to discuss funding options for summer with their advisors. The Department has some positions available during the summer in both teaching and administrative support categories. Students will be surveyed in the spring about their funding plans/needs and every effort will be made to ensure that students are provided some support in the summer if possible. Students should be aware, however, that funding is typically predicated on student's ability to be on campus during the time of support so students who are planning extended vacations during the summer may find that there are no available sources of funding. Funding will also be prioritized by need. Students receiving a fellowship during the year that pays a substantially higher stipend will be prioritized below a student who received the basic graduate assistantship.

Graduate assistants are eligible along with other University staff members to become members of the Penn State Federal Credit Union, which is a possible source of loans as well as a means of savings. The Office of the Credit Union is in the Hetzel Union Building (HUB).

X. Expectations for Graduate TAs and Graduate Instructors

Serving in a teaching assistant (TA) role is a required component of your graduate training. Some students will amass extensive experience in this role during their time here (e.g., by TAing multiple courses and/or serving as the instructor of record for a course), and others may only fulfill the minimum requirement. As a TA your role is to provide instrumental support in the classroom that makes it easier for the instructor to do their jobs effectively. While it is true that the responsibility for the success of the class relies heavily on the instructor, how the TA engages with the class makes a huge impact on student's perceptions, and as the TA you are ultimately responsible for your own professionalism and courtesy. Your TAship is also the source of your graduate tuition, health insurance subsidy, and monthly stipend, and thus it is important that students understand that a failure to fulfill their TA obligations could have an impact on their funding, or their ability to secure funding in a future semester. In the sections below, more information is provided on being a successful TA, followed by a few notes specific to being an instructor of record.

Being an A+ TA involves the following behaviors:

Apprenticeship. Your TA experience is an excellent place to begin to develop your teaching and mentoring skills. Instructors can help scaffold skills like developing exam questions (harder than you think!), preparing and delivering a single lecture, supporting undergraduate learning etc. Whether you imagine yourself in a career that involves teaching or not, these can be useful skills that generalize broadly to interpersonal communication and transferring your knowledge to others. If you do envision teaching, this is an important place to start. Developing lectures to give in class not only gets you a leg up in your own course resources for future, the instructor can provide support, feedback, and guidance throughout. Serving as a TA for a course is the first step to teaching it as the instructor of record.

Attendance. Your presence in class ensures that you are aware of the information students are expected to be learning so you can effectively guide them in interpreting this information later, answering questions, and being able to grade exams. Your presence in class also serves as a valuable role model for undergraduate students. While you are there, know that everything you do on your computer is a distraction. If you are on email, shopping online, or clearly working on something else, they will notice. Be respectful of the instructor's policies regarding electronics, but regardless of whether there is a specific policy, you should not use your cell phone during lecture. This sends the wrong message to the students about what is appropriate behavior in the classroom as well as your level of engagement and respect. Sitting in the back only goes so far to conceal that you are doing something else. Take a seat up front. Be visible. Be an active part of the instructional experience.

If you have TAed this class before and know the material well, the instructor may still prefer you to attend so the students get to know you and see you as a resource. If there is an understanding with the professor that you will not attend classes make sure the students know that up front so they don't misinterpret your absence. If possible, attend the first class to introduce yourself and tell them personally that you know the material well and are always available to help, but that you have a scheduling conflict and won't be in class.

Availability. Yes, in this world of Instagram and electronic communications students often overestimate the extent to which you should be available at the touch of a button, but availability is a core requirement of any teaching position. Respond to email within 24 business hours. This is excellent professional advice for all work related emails. If you are away longer than 2 days during the week use a vacation autoreply to let the sender know there will be a delay. There is no excuse for never responding.

Instructors are expected to respect the boundaries of the TA appointment and should not make demands of the student's time that exceed the appointment expectations, or extend beyond the context of the class. In many instances the weekly time commitment for the TAship will be lower than the 10 or 20 hours appointed. However, there may be individual weeks when an assignment or exam requires an intensive time commitment to grading. The department assumes that the expectations of student time will balance out across weeks, but if this is not the case then the student should seek assistance from the Graduate or Undergraduate PIC.

Attitude. Your success and your own well-being will be greatly enhanced if you can approach your TA responsibilities with a positive attitude. It may be tempting at times to view teaching as peripheral to your goals, and thus potentially a distraction from them, but it is important to see your TA responsibilities as an integral part of your graduate training. The fact that you are here in graduate school suggests that you take your success and your accomplishments very seriously. Consider your TAship one of those accomplishments that you seek to be successful at.

One of the biggest challenges in teaching undergraduates is remembering that the majority of them are not you. They may lack the level of maturity that you had at that age, and you will probably find yourself thinking "I would have *never* said/done that when I was a student" more than once. Try to let go of any feelings of annoyance or anger and see the students for where they are in their own growth and development, and ask yourself how you can help them get to the next stage of their maturity rather than bemoaning the stage they are at now. That doesn't mean you have to treat them like children or do everything for them, just try to be constructive in scaffolding them toward independent responsibility. If you find yourself exasperated, consult with the instructor before you respond.

How students engage with and respond to graduate teaching assistants is highly variable. Some students see you as closer to them and thus more approachable than the professor. However, some students resent the sense that they are graded and judged by someone who is less than the professor and more of a peer. They may be particularly sensitive to the perception that you are being arrogant if they think you think you are better or smarter than they are (particularly when giving them grades that are lower than they wanted). If a student is pushing back against your authority to issue grades, try not to get defensive. Getting into a power struggle to assert your authority isn't likely to make the situation better. The student has a right to understand how their grade was arrived at, so be sure that you are able to offer that explanation. The instructor you are TAing for may have specific policies for these scenarios, but one strategy can be to tell the student that you can only consider requests to change a grade if the rationale for that request is presented in writing along with the original document. This allows you to think through the request without being put on the spot, and puts the responsibility on them to be clear about their reasoning ("I really tried my hardest but my dog died and my best friend borrowed my car and didn't put gas in it and I stopped for gas but there was a line and I was late" looks much more ridiculous in writing than pouring out of a crying student's mouth in office hours). Keep in mind that there is such a thing as a reasonable request. We all get tired grading a single assignment over and over and over. Sometimes a student can point to content in their assignment that really reasonably does fit the rubric and you missed it; or phrasing in a question that really was, in retrospect, a little vague or misleading. You can always take the written request and say "I can see what you are saying, let me discuss this with Professor X at our next meeting".

Appropriateness. Being a TA puts you in the unique position of being an authority figure and a subordinate at the same time. Take care to understand the appropriate behaviors associated with each of these roles. First and foremost, respect boundaries. Your role with the students and with the instructor is a professional one, and should remain so at all times.

Respect the policies of the instructor even if you do not agree with them. You can log your disagreements into the mental "things I'll do differently when I am teaching" file, but you aren't the instructor this time. Make it clear to the students what you do and do not have the authority to agree to or

change for them (e.g. deadlines).

Never disparage the instructor to a student. This may seem like a way to placate a frustrated student, and you may even feel like the student has a good reason to be frustrated, but this will never make anything better for anyone. What you are hearing from the student is their side of the story and it is almost certainly not the whole story. If you are concerned about what the student is telling you, ask them if they would like you to discuss their concerns with the instructor for them. You can present the complaint or concern to the instructor to get their take on the situation and advice.

Maintain an appropriate distance from the students. Sometimes there is not a significant difference in age between graduate and undergraduate students, but your position of authority can make it inappropriate to engage on a personal level with students. You should not be seeing students outside of the TA context, and need to turn down invitations to socialize. If a situation arises where a student is intent on pushing those boundaries, you should consult with the instructor, Undergraduate PIC, or Graduate PIC.

Appearance. There is no dress code for serving as a TA but you should be mindful of what your clothing choices convey about your attitude. Clothing can be one way of conveying your authority position in the classroom, and demonstrating a maturity that is greater than the students you oversee.

Acceptance. We are living in tumultuous times. Although we do not anticipate problems in our classrooms, it is important to consider the best way to respond when conversations veer out of your comfort zone. The University is committed to making Penn State a space where everyone feels safe and respected, and that includes people whose ideas and opinions do not match your own. Remember these things: (1) everyone has a right to their opinion, (2) everyone has a right to state their opinion freely, (3) Universities should be places where conflicting ideas can be exchanged and debated, where minds can be changed by the evidence, and students are exposed to new ideas and new situations and can practice expressing themselves. Debate and disagreement don't have to be bad things.

Admittedly, these ideals are difficult to adhere to when tempers are flaring. If someone says something in class that is clearly extreme and provocative, one of two scenarios is likely. The first is that the student is passionate about the topic, and is feeling a swell of emotion as the conversation is going on. Adrenalin is pumping through their blood as their conviction rises in their mind and they prepare to speak publicly in class with the known risk of being denounced by others. Your goal here is to help de-escalate the arousal in the speaker's body, which will not be accomplished by shaming them or the sentiment they expressed. Responding in a neutral way "this is clearly a very important issue to you" can validate their right to have an opinion, without validating the opinion. Know that calming down from an adrenalin rush can take a few minutes, so the speaker may remain worked up at first, but will likely shift into more reasoned discussion if you continue to gently lead them there. Take a quick survey of your own arousal level. You may be surging with adrenalin too, which means you will have to work harder to remain the force of calm control in the room.

The second scenario is that the speaker is seeking to shock the class and be provocative. The shock goal may be more prominent than their actual belief in what they are saying. In this instance they are hoping to lure you into denouncing them or the ideas. Replying with a neutral acknowledgement, "there are a lot of people that feel that way" undercuts their goal entirely, which has the value of catching them off guard, and failing to reinforce their behavior.

Remember, neither you nor the students have an inherent right not to be upset by another person's beliefs. However, everyone does have the right to feel safe. Hate speech is not protected if it is threatening to broad groups of people such that anyone who shares those characteristics would reasonably be concerned. Even if the student is not making threats to a particular person, you do have the right to shut down comments that threaten violence ("race war") or are intimidating even if it is not clearly directed at a person in the room. Remind the student of this and give them a chance to comply. If they do not comply you should ask them to leave.

Accountability. In your role as a TA you are accountable to the employee reporting mandate that governs all of us. This includes issues related to child abuse, and gender-based discrimination. You are required to report any information you are aware of that indicates acts of harassment, discrimination, or assault, on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or sexual identity. This can include events you observe yourself, are told about by one of the individuals involved, or are told about by an individual not directly involved. This information may be shared directly with you in person or email, or indirectly such as in an assignment completed for class. Information regarding Title IX requirements including when and how to make a report can be found at http://titleix.psu.edu/. For more information on reporting wrongdoing along with additional options and resources see page 62.

Note that Title IX reporting isn't restricted to your role as a TA. You may also find yourself in a position to report something that you are aware of happening to another graduate student, professor, or staff person, and may wish to report something that has happened to you. If you have experienced something but aren't sure if you want to report it you are encouraged to report to the Title IX office. The personnel there will handle the case with discretion, and in compliance with your wishes. Reporting gives them a chance to simply reach out to you to help make you aware of your options and resources, you remain in full control of how to proceed.

Assessment. Finally, it is important to know that performance in your TAship is assessed in two ways. First, instructors fill out TA rating forms both at mid-semester and the end of the semester. Mid-semester forms are useful to help identify any challenges or issues while there is still time to address them if needed. Second, undergraduate students are given the same opportunity to complete teacher evaluations (SRTE) for their TAs as for their instructors. Both of these assessment tools help us to identify candidates to nominate for the University-level graduate teaching award, as well as provide documentation of performance and success that can be used in nominations and recommendations. If problems are indicated in any of these evaluation mechanisms the Graduate PIC will discuss the issues with you so they can be resolved.

Note on Graduate Students Serving as Instructors of Record

Advanced doctoral students may have the opportunity to serve as instructors of record for a course. An instructor of record serves as the class leader and is responsible for delivering lectures and course materials, dealing with student issues when they arise, and evaluating students and assigning grades. Many of the A+ TA recommendations still apply (e.g., appearance, accountability, etc,); the difference is that as instructor of record the graduate student is "in charge" of the class. Teaching a class requires a substantial time and effort commitment, often exceeding typical TA commitments (i.e., more than 20 hours per week). As noted above, students who wish to serve as the instructor of record must 1) consult first with the Undergraduate PIC to determine which course is to be offered, 2) currently hold a master's degree or equivalent, and 3) previously have TA'd for the course they intend to teach. It is strongly recommended that students also first avail themselves of training opportunities through the Schreyer Teaching Institute related to College-level instruction, as well as consult with their primary mentor(s) to discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of teaching a course during specific junctures in their graduate training, prior to teaching a course as the instructor of record. Students are encouraged to also consult with the Graduate PIC if questions or issues around teaching as the instructor of record arise.

XI. Expectations for RAship

There are a multitude of routes available to you for funding your graduate training, which can make it confusing to know what the implications are of different types of funding mechanisms. You will certainly observe that expectations of students vary from lab to lab, even when they are funded similarly. This document is meant to provide some guidance on how to think about and approach your lab research assistant responsibilities.

What are my responsibilities as an RA?
This is actually a very difficult question to answer because that will vary greatly from lab to lab. As a research assistant, your role is to provide instrumental support to the scientific endeavors taking place in your research lab. What that support entails will differ depending on the type of research projects being done in your lab, the stage of those projects, the personnel in the lab, your skills, and your interests. However, it is up to the PI to make the determination of what your contributions will be. Although it may feel at times like your RA tasks are a burden, keep these issues in mind.

- *Doctoral training follows an apprenticeship model*. You earned your undergraduate degree through 4 years of coursework. Although your graduate degree will involve a good bit of coursework, that is not the primary mechanism by which you will develop doctoral-level knowledge. The reason your graduate training is funded is that your learning process involves doing, creating, and contributing actively to science. If learning just involved taking courses and writing papers with the help of an advisor, that would be a service-based model in which you would be responsible for your tuition (e.g. a master's degree). The truth is, research takes a lot of work and not all of it is glamorous (ok, maybe none if it). Collecting data, writing IRB applications, entering data, cleaning data, etc. may be dull at times, but the experience really is invaluable to your training. That is how science gets done, you will never really be qualified to run your own lab if you don't know every little thing about how the pieces work (and don't work). As you develop these skills you will become qualified to train and supervise others, and your skill set and responsibilities will grow over time.

- *You are part of a team*. Science is a collaborative process and a team effort. When you make decisions about how to use your time make sure you keep that in mind. You might put off something your advisor asked you to do in the lab because you have a paper due in class, some additional readings, an opportunity to go see an interesting speaker, etc. Know that the one thing you were asked to provide is likely a piece of something larger and it can be the case that by making that your lowest priority, the chain of steps that follows is also being delayed. Your contribution to the scientific process affects everyone else on the project, your advisor, other graduate students and postdocs, and collaborators elsewhere. Make sure you understand how your actions affect others before deciding something isn't a priority. If you feel overwhelmed and aren't sure how to prioritize tasks discuss your concerns with your advisor.

I already worked 20 hours this week
Trying to figure out how to quantify RA time is so tricky. Quantifying something in terms of time is an obvious metric for a job, but the reality is that how long it takes to complete a task can vary so much from person to person. For instance, one person may complete a task in 5 hours that took another person 25 hours to do. Both may be valid, for instance, if one person had much more experience and familiarity with the task, making it genuinely easier to get done. However, this sort of discrepancy could also

suggest that one person wasn't working in as diligent or focused of a manner. How much time you genuinely commit to your research obligations is on the honor system, but a misunderstanding between an RA and a PI can be a major source of frustration for both. If you are feeling like what is being asked of you is taking more than 20 hours it is important to reach out and discuss this with your advisor. Take detailed notes about the times you worked and what you completed. Be explicit about where you felt stuck or which aspects of a task are more tedious and time consuming than the PI realizes. Sometimes students are reluctant to admit that they don't fully know how to do things they've been asked to do, but communicating this can be very helpful. For instance, if you explain "I've never run an analysis like that before so I spent a lot of time working out how to do it in R, and then I read some additional tutorials to make sure I was interpreting the correct things" this makes it more reasonable that it took a full week to run a single analysis. If you don't communicate the PI may interpret things differently.

How does my Masters' Thesis or Dissertation factor into my RAship?
This is another tough question to answer, and one that will vary from lab to lab. Some labs may feel that you completing a paper contributes to the scientific productivity of the lab. Others may feel that completing a paper is "your" time that should be separated from the work you do for your RAship. Most labs are probably somewhere in the middle. Communication is key, check in with your advisor regularly about expectations.

I am being funded by a training grant—how does that affect my RA responsibilities?
Congratulations! Training grants are wonderful opportunities and an excellent accolade on your CV. What the training grant requires of you should be clearly specified by the training grant coordinators, but as with everything- ask if you aren't sure. It is critical to keep in mind, however, that the grant is designed to protect your time so that you can do research. This funding mechanism frees your time from a TAship so you can focus it on scientific training. How to direct that time is something that should be discussed right from the start, ideally with your advisor and with the training grant coordinator. Time spent in a productive way toward developing your research skills is valuable. This does include time devoted to collecting and processing data. However, the tasks you do should coordinate with your goals and should therefore be relevant to papers you can complete and opportunities to develop new skills. Sometimes this can be an opportunity to expand your experience in a second lab for instance. However, sometimes students are tempted by the buffet of interesting research at Penn State and charge enthusiastically into too many directions. Your advisor and the training grant coordinators are there to provide you with valuable and constructive advice, and at times that means advising you to scale back. It is also important for you to understand that the training grant is not a just a placeholder for money that frees you to do whatever you want. Penn State is granted these incredibly competitive funds on the promise of training future researchers on the cutting edge of a certain field. As such, accepting a traineeship is a contract in which you agree to conduct research in the related field. Resist the temptation to stretch or manipulate your interests to fit a funding mechanism. These grants simply aren't the right fit for everyone and that is ok. It is also important to remember that the funding agencies monitor productivity very closely. If you accept a traineeship it is imperative that you commit to contributing to the well-being of the program by being productive.

I have my own funding—how does that affect my RA responsibilities?
Fantastic! Obtaining your own funding (e.g. national scholarship, NIH-funded NRSA, NSF) is an amazing accomplishment and you should feel proud of your success. Depending on the specific funding mechanism, these grants are often designed to fund you as a doctoral student by freeing your time to do research and participate in the training experiences that occur in Graduate School. This is, again, part of the apprenticeship model. Grants such as NSF predoctoral awards and NIH's NRSAs assume you are actively engaged in your advisor's research projects. Other grants may be designed to support you through a very specific dissertation study that you will execute. If your grant involves analyses of data

collected from a larger project, respect the fact that your opportunity is coming as a function of other investigators' intellectual property, and the effort of countless investigators, staff, and students. Your grant is an amazing accomplishment, but it does not reflect an isolated accomplishment. You are still part of a team even when you have your own funding. As you consider what the implications of your own funding are for your lab responsibilities make sure you discuss this with your advisor in advance to avoid any misunderstandings.

I am funded on a TAship but still being asked to do RA duties in my lab

Research requires data, and collecting data can be extraordinarily time consuming and difficult. Faculty with research grants are expected to support students on grants whenever possible, but graduate students are usually the most expensive category in a grant budget, and there may simply not be enough funds. Faculty conducting pilot research won't have funds to support a grad student, and yet the research needs to get done. Participating in the process of collecting data, scoring data, training and supervising RAs, and managing databases is invaluable experience for all graduate students. Students will not learn how to conduct research on their own if they only have the opportunity to analyze data and write papers. However, it is also not possible for students to make progress in their degree if they are expected to commit a significant amount of time to research responsibilities on top of a TAship. Students completing a TAship may still be expected to contribute to their lab's research project in various ways, in the circumstances when the student will be working with the data being collected as part of a master's thesis or dissertation product. Expectations should be discussed when devising annual plans, and lab duties should be considered carefully within the context of the student's competing demands and professional goals. In the event that a student feels the expectations are impeding their progress in the program they are encouraged to speak with the Graduate PIC for assistance.

I really feel like I am being asked to do too much

Feelings of being taken advantage of can arise for multiple reasons, but regardless of the reason, if you are feeling that way then something is definitely wrong. Although not commonplace, there are cases in which a student's time is not being respected, or students are being asked to do things that are not in their best interests for career training. Your advisor should be working with you to develop annual research goals that are reasonable and developmentally appropriate. Data collection and lab management tasks should not be so extensive as to preclude time for publishing and completing training milestones (e.g. dissertation). Conversations with your advisor are important to help keep communication open and make sure everyone's perspective is understood. However, if that does not seem to be working, or if you aren't sure how to start that kind of conversation, set up a meeting with the Graduate PIC to discuss your concerns. The Department is committed to your training and is invested in your success. Although most of the time students and advisors work together without problems, there are cases where the student/advisor relationship is not productive. Sometimes this can be easily remedied with a little help, but sometimes a switch is in order. Switching labs is not indicative of a failure on anyone's part. Sometimes two good people just don't have compatible personalities, and sometimes interests and goals just change. You should not worry about how this will reflect on you, or on the advisor. The Department can help you navigate these situations. Please reach out at any time.

XII. Additional Program Requirements and Expectations

A. Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence

Originality of intellectual contributions are the foundation of our profession, and thus plagiarism of another's ideas or written products without appropriate crediting of the source is one of the most serious academic offenses. All students complete a plagiarism training module within the first semester of arriving at graduate school, and are accountable to the academic and professional standards of originality and source citation. International students, who may find the nuances of paraphrasing versus plagiarism difficult to parse, are encouraged to participate in workshops on this topic through EPPIC (see page 55).

The Department expects that all work produced, whether for a course assignment, program milestone (e.g. thesis), or publication, represents original work, and that content within it is appropriately cited. Be aware that originality extends beyond simply being the author of the material, and includes not repurposing previously written products for a new assignment. Extending or revising one assignment to fulfill a second assignment may be appropriate, but only with the awareness and permission of the instructor.

Because the Department is responsible for verifying the originality of the work submitted as evidence of your program requirements, all milestone materials will be evaluated for originality. Students will be required to submit the final written copy of their (a) master's thesis, (b) comprehensive exam, and (c) final dissertation to a central Turnitin site a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense. A copy of the originality report will be provided to the committee prior to the defense. No precise threshold of originality can be expected to reflect appropriate scholarship in all cases. For instance, a student's final dissertation defense could include manuscripts that have already been published by the time of the defense. The committee will evaluate the originality report and determine whether a violation of academic integrity needs to be reported to the College for investigation.

The originality of work produced outside of these milestones may be evaluated by the instructor or advisor at their discretion. Any incidence of plagiarism, regardless of the context, will be considered a conduct violation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) policies in the graduate program are evolving. While we encourage students to learn proficiency in AI as a tool to support work, it may also impinge on academic integrity. As a general approach, it is important to be proactive, transparent, accurate, and ethical when using AI to support your work. Students should be proactive by communicating with instructors, advisors, or collaborators about their AI use, to ensure it is appropriate and approved prior to engaging in work. Students should be transparent by explicitly describing how AI was used in their work (e.g., AI disclosure statements). Students must ensure work done using AI is accurate – often AI output has errors, but as the person conducting that work, it is your responsibility to ensure that your work is accurate. Finally, ethical use of AI is essential – your work should reflect your intellectual contribution, abilities, and ideas. AI use that changes the degree to which the work is your own often impinges on ethical practices in educational and scholarly work. *If faculty determine that inappropriate AI use occurred, a Special Review will take place and faculty will determine an appropriate action that could include probation or dismissal from the program.*

Students should consult with instructors, supervisors, and advisors before using AI to complete their responsibilities or tasks in classes, assistantships, labs, or elsewhere. Instructors have discretion regarding whether and how AI can be used in their courses. Students should consult syllabi and instructors to determine what AI use is appropriate and permissible. Students should consult collaborators,

journal/conference/professional society requirements, colleagues/co-authors, and their advisors regarding AI use in the conduct of research, or in the analysis and writing of manuscripts and research output. Finally, AI use on program milestones is generally not permitted. Students should consult milestone requirements in this manual for milestone-specific guidance.

B. English Language Proficiency

HDFS has a proud history of training graduate students from many countries around the world, many of whom are not native English speakers. English language fluency is necessary for a student to be able to succeed in this program in the context of the extensive reading load, writing requirements, and expectations for contributing to academic discussion. As such, minimum fluency requirements are enforced at the admissions process through standardized testing, writing samples, and conversations when appropriate. These requirements are in no way meant to be exclusionary or reflect a student's capability to pursue doctoral research, but rather an effort to ensure that students will be comfortable and feel capable of keeping up with the demands of doctoral research in an English-speaking environment.

Even when meeting the minimum criteria for admission to the program, there are sometimes cases where non-native English speakers feel challenged in keeping up with the pace of conversations, and lack confidence in participating in discussions. Furthermore, students may have uneven English fluency skills, for instance being fully competent in conversation but struggling with writing. Whether or not the student aims to pursue a career in an English-language institution, we strongly encourage students to take steps to continue to improve their English language skills in speaking, reading, and writing, throughout their time in the program.

Language Requirement for Teaching Assistants
English language fluency is a requirement of the University for students serving as a TA. International students who were required to complete a TOEFL exam with their application will also be required to pass a verbal English fluency exam upon arrival, if they are scheduled to TA in their first year. Students not TAing in their first year can elect to postpone the exam until the following year. Students who do not pass the exam will be permitted to retain their TA position (and thus their funding in the program), but will be required to take remedial steps to improve their English. Details regarding the exam dates and procedures will be provided by the Graduate Coordinator.

Language Requirement for the Doctorate
The Graduate School requires English language fluency for students to qualify for doctoral candidacy. The Department will evaluate student's fluency in the context of the Communication Requirement Evaluation, which will include an assessment of English language competence demonstrated in coursework, class participation, presentations, laboratory interactions, and milestone meetings. Students who do not demonstrate sufficient fluency may be required to take steps to improve their skills.

International students are strongly encouraged to seek opportunities to improve their English fluency throughout their time in the program as this skill is best developed through sustained practice. Below are resources available to international graduate students that contribute to the further development of fluency. These options range from social opportunities to structured courses.

English for Professional Purposes Intercultural Center (EPPIC) http://www.eppic.la.psu.edu/

- Monthly workshops on popular topics such as: writing effective abstracts, avoiding plagiarism, participating in group work, successful job interviews, writing concisely, preparing a literature review, organizing slide presentations, presenting a poster, etc.

- Weekly speaking groups
- Individual consultations

Intensive English Communication Program (IECP) http://iecp.psu.edu/
- Summer institute for graduate students http://iecp.psu.edu/pre-fall-institute

International Ministries at Penn State http://www.impennstate.org/
- English classes http://www.impennstate.org/english-classes/
- Language partners http://www.impennstate.org/partners/

Global Connections https://www.gc-cc.org/
- Conversation Partners https://www.gc-cc.org/programs/conversation-partners
- English language classes https://www.gc-cc.org/programs/english-language-classes/
    - Group and private

Language Institute at Penn State https://language-institute.outreach.psu.edu/

- **English as a second language summer programs**

Resources for improving writing
- EDTHP 580

C. Attendance expectations

Graduate courses are designed to foster engagement and exchange through seminar-style discussions and interactions. As such, being present in class is considered to be critical for the learning process, and regular and reliable attendance is required. Students should plan to be on time for classes, remain for the full duration of the class, and have prepared in advance by completing all readings and other assignments. While, it is understood that there are occasions in which a student will need to be absent, it is expected that all efforts will be made to keep absences to a minimum.

Below are the typical scenarios in which a student may need to be absent. If you are going to be absent, it is important that you discuss this with all individuals who are affected. This will typically include your advisor, anyone you serve as a TA for, and any professor of a class you are taking. Each individual will determine whether the requested absence violates expectations (e.g. if the absence amounts to a failure to fulfill lab or TA responsibilities, or if the extent or frequency of absences interferes with the learning process and warrants dropping the class to retake at a time when the student is available). A pattern of absences across contexts may also be raised as a point of concern by the faculty.

Illness. Illness strikes us all from time to time and you may find yourself too unwell, or too contagious, to attend class. This is common and reasonable, and should not be a cause to worry. When possible, this should be communicated to the professor prior to class starting. If you aren't able to send an email before the start of class make sure you follow up as soon as you are able. If you have a condition or situation that warrants an extended absence, keep in communication about when you expect to be able to return. You do not need a medical note for regular illnesses leading to the need to stay home for a day or two. Extended absences from TA assignments should be supported with a doctor's note or other documentation as appropriate.

Professional conflicts. There may be times when professional development opportunities conflict with your obligations as a student or a TA. However, it is incumbent upon you to avoid such conflicts when

they are within your control (e.g. do not schedule a personal meeting with a faculty member, or a training session for a lab protocol, during a time that conflicts with an existing obligation). If a conflict arises that is beyond your control, you should consult with your advisor, as well as seek permission from the instructor for the class (or TAship) you would need to miss.

Personal conflicts. It is understood that there are certain obligations in one's personal life that do not lend themselves well to schedule coordination. For instance, the death of a family member, illness of a child or other dependent, or the participation in a friend or family member's wedding are events that occur out of your scheduling control. Faculty, too, will encounter these issues from time to time. It is important to communicate in advance when something arises and you are not going to be able to make it to class. If you find yourself in a position where you will be going away (for instance if a family member falls ill or is getting married) consult with your advisor and the professors of all classes you are taking or serving as a TA for to discuss an appropriate duration and/or any accommodations you may need to make to ensure your obligations at school are fulfilled. For instance, there may be occasions when you need to travel to a conference, or for a major family event, and you are tempted to extend the duration of your stay (e.g. leaving for a full week to attend a weekend wedding, staying in Europe for a week following the conference). This may be approved by a faculty advisor for a student who is done with classes and has an appropriate plan in place to keep up with RA obligations, but may be inappropriate for a student actively taking classes or serving as a TA.

D. Residency expectations

Graduate School Policy GCAC-601 (Residency Requirements – Research Doctorate) states "Over a twelve-month period the Ph.D. student must spend at least two consecutive semesters, exclusive of summer sessions, as a registered full-time student engaged in academic work at the Penn State campus(es) offering the Ph.D. degree in the student's graduate major program." During this time it is expected that students be a "full time student engaged in academic work at the University Park Campus". Graduate School Policy GCAC-601 (Residency Requirements – Research Doctorate) further states that individual graduate programs may establish their own more stringent residency requirements. In general, HDFS strongly discourages remote residence during the training program. While there is no specific policy prohibiting you from completing a doctoral degree remotely, there is also no policy guaranteeing this option for you. Your ability to complete your degree remotely is predicated on (a) whether you can identify a mechanism of support, (b) willingness of faculty instructors in terms of providing remote course options (should the student need to take classes), and (b) the willingness of your academic advisor to continue serving in an advisory role. Earning a doctoral degree is an apprenticeship and is therefore different than other types of degrees. It may be difficult to realize what you extract from being here when you are not in classes, but your presence in this environment makes possible the exchange of ideas that forms the infrastructure of an intellectual environment, and as an apprentice, it is expected that you are contributing to this environment as well as gaining from it. Again, remote residence is strongly discouraged, and **should be restricted to time after successfully defending your dissertation proposal**.

Funding

Departmental. In most cases, residence outside of State College renders a student ineligible for Departmental funding. Although some opportunities for online TAships exist, we regularly receive more requests for these than can be accommodated. Preference is based entirely on need, not on the timing of the request. Priority is given to students needing to take a leave of absence for medical reasons.

Research Grant. Students supported by an advisor's grant must procure a written agreement from the advisor indicating that the advisor is aware that the student will be completing the work remotely, and detailing the expectations of what work will be completed. This written agreement must be signed by both the student and advisor and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. A new agreement is needed each semester.

Training Grant. Training grants are highly competitive and awarded specifically to institutions that can demonstrate extensive resources and an ideal academic environment for training. It is the expectation of the funding agency that the students supported on these grants are immersed in the training environment the University can provide. As such, students are strongly discouraged from residing outside of State College while supported on a training grant. Approval for remote residence or leaves of absence must be granted by the training grant supervisor as well as the student's academic advisor.

Student Grant Funding. Most graduate student grants (e.g F31, NSF grants) are essentially individualized training grants and, like training grants, are awarded with the understanding that the student is receiving training in an immersive environment. As such, requests to complete the degree remotely while supported on these grants must be approved by the grant Program Officer.

Advisor approval.

Although it is a student's decision whether to remain in State College or complete their degree remotely, it is important to note that faculty may decide for themselves whether to continue serving in an advisory role for a student who is not in residence. All faculty have different perspectives on what is and is not appropriate, what is appropriate for a given student, or reasonable at a given time. The Department has no policy mandating faculty participation in non-resident training. If you are considering moving it is critical that you discuss this with your advisor in advance to determine whether this is a feasible solution. If your advisor is not willing to continue in a supervisory role from a distance, you will need to identify a new dissertation advisor. Because you will continue to be enrolled (e.g. 596, 600, 601) until you defend your dissertation, an advisor must be identified as supervising these credits.

In advance of your departure you should create a memorandum of agreement with your advisor regarding: the terms of your departure (e.g. frequency, timing, or duration of any return trips to campus); the communication policy during your non-residence (e.g. mode of and frequency of communication); agreed work products including interim deadlines (this should include both products related to degree progress and any work related to RA support); and a specification of the consequences of failing to fulfill the agreed expectations.

E. Leaves of Absence

Occasionally there are instances in someone's life that require an extended absence from the University. If you find yourself in this situation you should discuss with your advisor and the Graduate PIC who can advise you on your specific situation. The Graduate School does have guidelines for leave of absences for graduate assistants. More information can be found on their website under Graduate Education Policies.

Unpaid leave. There may be occasions wherein a student needs to take a break from the graduate program for a number of reasons (e.g. going to stay with an ailing family member for an indefinite

amount of time, attending to a medical or psychological condition that requires intensive or remote care). If you are in good standing in the department, it is often possible for you to leave the program and return in the subsequent year. Leaves should be arranged with your advisor and the Graduate PIC, and it is critical that you remain in communication as appropriate during the leave. The Graduate PIC will communicate with you regarding the timeline in which you will need to decide whether or not you intend to return in the subsequent semester. If you are in good standing and wish to return, a position will be reserved for you. However, if you do not communicate in a timely manner it is possible that the funding associated with your position will be granted to an incoming student and this could lead to delays in the timing of your return. It is important to note that if you take an unpaid leave of absence this also means you will not be covered on the University health insurance policy. It is important that you make appropriate arrangements for your health insurance needs before you initiate an unpaid leave of absence.

Paid leave. In many cases students who need to take a leave of absence need to utilize their medical insurance during that time, and may need to be paid their stipend during that time in order to support themselves. This can be a trickier process, as there is no inherent disability mechanism for students, and your employment history will determine whether you are eligible for federal disability/Medicaid benefits.

HOWEVER, if you are post comps, you must be enrolled continuously as per University policy. If you are not enrolled for any period of time between comps and your dissertation defense, the University will require you to pay the back tuition of the semesters you were not enrolled. This is a University policy and the Department does not have the power to grant exceptions.

Because each case is unique, requests for a leave of absence must be submitted to the Department (PIC and Graduate Program Coordinator) in writing for evaluation and determination of the options. Standard items to include are start and return date, how this impacts your assistantship/fellowship duties, and other notable items. If applicable, appropriate documentation should accompany the request. For instance, if the leave is in relation to a medical condition then a note from your physician formally recommending the leave is needed. The physician does not need to disclose any personal or private information about the medical condition itself, but must state in writing that it is her/his professional recommendation that you be granted a leave, with an indication of the recommended duration. If relevant, stipulations as to what the student should/should not, can/cannot do during that time is also important. For instance, if the student needs to be at a medical facility in another city to receive treatment, but could conduct online TA activities during that treatment, that is very helpful in identifying a possible mechanism for providing the student with funding support during the absence.

For students whose funding is not provided by the Department (e.g. on an advisor's grant, training grant, or F31) arrangements regarding medical or family leave should be made with the funding supervisor. In this instance, you will also need to submit in writing to the Department (PIC and Graduate Program Coordinator) information about your intended leave start and return date, how this impacts your assistantship/fellowship duties, and other notable items.

F. External employment

There may be occasions when students seek employment opportunities outside of the University, or take on an overload of employment within the University. There could be various reasons for doing so, from financial need, to fulfilling a specific career development goal. It is essential that you be aware of the University's and the Department's policies regarding employment.

The Graduate School assistantship appointments (RA and TA) require you to receive Departmental

approval before accepting outside employment. A ½ assistantship is assumed to be 20 hours per week committed to your teaching or research assistant responsibilities. The restriction to 20 hours is meant to ensure that you have an appropriate amount of time to dedicate to your courses (3 3-credit courses translates to 27 hrs/week of in and out of class time) and program milestones and training (thesis, dissertation, comps, manuscripts, conference presentations, etc.). Adding additional obligations to outside employment risks a strain on you physically and emotionally, and detracts from the time you are committing to making progress in the program. By requiring that you seek approval the University does not forbid outside employment, but hopes that any such situation is determined to be in the best interest of the student.

The Department strongly discourages students from seeking outside employment for the reasons indicated above. Outside employment almost always results in slower progress through the program than would otherwise be possible. However, we also understand that there may be extenuating circumstances that could warrant an exception. As such, outside employment requests should have the approval of the advisor, and be submitted to the Grad PIC to be evaluated by the Departmental Exec committee.
Note that if you are on a federally funded training grant you are obligated to abide by their procedures and restrictions regarding outside employment. The Department does not have the jurisdiction to provide exceptions in these instances.

Most graduate students are not employed outside of the University. The above expectations do not apply to small, isolated "jobs" such as babysitting, house sitting, or pet sitting for money. Other non-employment sources of income such as child support, rental income, or money that is gifted to you is also not a problem. Rather the information in this section primarily concerns any arrangement with an employer that requires you to commit a specific number of hours on a regular and ongoing basis. If you are uncertain about a particular situation just ask.

G. Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships

Workplace romance is an inevitable reality when you have like-minded people spending time together day after day. Even when everyone is a consenting adult, complications arise when there is a difference in power and status between the individuals. Graduate students could be in a real or perceived position of greater power in the relationship, for instance with undergraduate students working in the laboratory or enrolled in HDFS courses over whom you have, or could end up having, a supervisory or teaching relationship. Graduate students could also be in a real or perceived position of less power in the relationship if a romantic or sexual relationships romance developed with a faculty member.

The University policy related to consensual relationships is as follows:
https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad85#D

"CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS:

While not expressly prohibited, romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty and students, staff and students or supervisors and subordinate employees are strongly discouraged. Such relationships have the potential for adverse consequences, including the filing of charges of sexual harassment. Given the fundamentally asymmetric nature of the relationship where one party has the power to give grades, thesis advice, evaluations, recommendations, promotions, salary increases or performance evaluations, the consensual nature of the relationship is inherently suspect.

Even when both parties have consented to the relationship, there may be perceptions of conflicts of

interest or unfair treatment of others. Such perceptions undermine the atmosphere of trust essential to the educational process or the employment relationship. Accordingly, the person in the position of supervision or academic responsibility must promptly report the relationship to his or her immediate supervisor. Once the consensual relationship is reported, the immediate supervisor is responsible for eliminating or mitigating the conflict of interest to the fullest feasible extent and ensuring that fair and objective processes are in place for decisions relative to grading, thesis advice, evaluations, recommendations, promotions, salary increases, or performance evaluations. The new supervisory or academic arrangement should be documented."

As indicated in this statement, it is important to understand that when a romantic relationship develops between two individuals with unequal status within the department, it has significant implications for everyone. The lower ranked individual often suffers the greatest consequences when perceptions develop that the student's accomplishments were favored rather than earned. It is important that steps be taken to avoid the myriad of problems that can arise in cases where a graduate student becomes involved with a professor, particularly so that appropriate protections can be afforded to the student.

As stated in the University policy, it is imperative that any romantic relationship that develops between two individuals of unequal status be disclosed from the start of the relationship. In the event of a graduate student becoming or being involved with an undergraduate, it is important that you communicate this relationship to the department in a timely manner so that you are not assigned to a teaching assistant role that would place you in a supervisory role. If a romance seems possible with a student during the course of a semester you are serving as a TA, it is expected that the graduate student will refrain from acting on this, including socializing with the student in any way, until the course is over.

In the event that a romantic or sexual relationship develops between a graduate student and a faculty member in HDFS, or anyone with a graduate faculty appointment who could potentially be involved in a supervisory role on the student's research projects, courses, or departmental milestones must report this to the Department Head. Reporting should be the responsibility of the faculty member. Discretion can be maintained broadly, but the departmental administration must know of the situation so that protections can be put in place. In no circumstances will a faculty member be permitted to serve as an advisor or committee member for a student with whom they have or have had a romantic relationship.

H. Professionalism and Conduct

The Graduate School maintains that student conduct is a component of satisfactory scholarship http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/appendices/appendix1

"By virtue of their maturity and experience, graduate students are expected to have learned the meaning and value of personal honesty and professional integrity before entering graduate school. Every graduate student is expected to exhibit and promote the highest ethical, moral, and professional standards as scholars, and as future faculty, professionals, and leaders in their respective fields. Meeting this expectation is a component of satisfactory scholarship for graduate students, in addition to meeting academic standards such as, but not limited to, the minimum required grade-point average or grades in required courses for the program. A violation of ethical, moral, and/or professional standards is regarded as a serious offense, raising grave doubt that the graduate student is worthy of continued membership in the Graduate School community, and may result in academic sanctions including suspension or dismissal by the graduate program in which the student is enrolled, from that academic program, and/or by the Graduate School from continued or future enrollment in any graduate program at the University. A violation of ethical, moral, and/or professional standards may not necessarily involve Code of Conduct

behavior, but still may result in academic sanctions including suspension or dismissal by the graduate program and/or the Graduate School, as described above. However, engaging in any Code of Conduct behavior, as determined by the Office of Student Conduct, does constitute a failure to exhibit and promote the highest ethical, moral, and professional standards expected of graduate students, and may result in additional sanctions as described above, in addition to any disciplinary sanctions by the Office of Student Conduct."

Completion of your degree in HDFS requires adhering to moral and ethical standards of research as well as appropriate professional and personal behavior. Violations of any of these expectations can result in probation, loss of assistantship, suspension, or dismissal from the program. Students should be aware that they are accountable for their behavior at all times, including behavior in person and online. Below are the domains of professionalism and personal conduct that graduate students are expected to abide by. Examples of inappropriate behaviors are provided, although this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Professional Behavior	
Respectful Behavior in Classrooms	Refrain from personal insults during discussion.
	Do not engage in unrelated activities on your computer or other device.
Honesty	Patterns of lying or misrepresenting information to justify absences, assignment extensions, or relief from responsibilities are a serious violation of integrity.
Discretion	Respect for others in professional contexts includes respecting the rights and reputations of your colleagues. Spreading of rumors and/or discussing personal matters unrelated to the academic context conveys a lack of professionalism. If you have concerns regarding the behavior of another student, faculty member, or staff member you should raise your concern to the appropriate authority.
	In the event that a dispute arises a resolution should be sought, ideally, with the individual involved, but in the event that assistance is needed the appropriate authority should be contacted (see conflict resolution). Disputes should not be discussed online (posted, tweeted, blogged, etc.). Revealing information about, or anger toward, an individual online creates a permanent and often times searchable record of your emotional state. Sarcastic or joking tones can be difficult to interpret online and statements can be misinterpreted. Regardless of how justified you may feel about the accuracy of the content, the act reflects poorly on you.

Personal Behavior	
Maintain a culture of respect toward all individuals.	Acts of bias, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or aggression will not be tolerated. In addition to evaluation by the Faculty, behavior that violates these expectations will be reported to the appropriate University office for investigation.
	Penn State is committed to principles of academic freedom and free speech, and recognizes that not everyone shares the same sets of values and beliefs. The academic environment is one in which ideas can be discussed, debated, and explored. Students are responsible for maintaining respect toward others during discussions or debates, and to refrain from expressing personal beliefs that are irrelevant to the context, or in a

	manner that is declarative or hostile rather than in the service of a constructive discussion. Behavior that represents a serious violation of these principles that occurs outside of the campus context can be evaluated by the Department to determine whether the behavior could contribute to a hostile or intimidating work environment for others. This could include behaviors such as making public threats of aggression or violence or posting hateful or threatening speech online.
Students shall not be under the influence of any recreational substance at any time while on campus and/or performing duties associated with their assistantship or traineeship	

Ethical and Moral Expectations	
Integrity in all coursework	Compliance with all plagiarism guidelines
	Submit only original work not previously submitted in other courses in whole or in part without permission of the instructor
	Do not submit or take credit for the work of others with or without their permission
Integrity of research	Compliance with all IRB regulations
	Maintain integrity of data and databases used for analyses
	Retain data, databases, and analyses for external examination
	Accurate and honest representation of the steps taken
	Acknowledgement of the contributions of others
Honest representation	Accuracy and integrity of any representation of your accomplishments including grades, test scores, references, and claims of achievements or awards on any CV or application submitted, posted, or distributed for any purpose.
Dutiful reporting of any violation of which you are aware	Cheating or integrity violations in graduate or undergraduate courses that you observe or are made aware of • Report to the course instructor and/or Undergraduate/Graduate PIC
	Unethical behavior in research conduct that you observe or are made aware of • Research misconduct orp@psu.edu • Student misconduct http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/conduct • Discuss concerns with your advisor and/or the Graduate PIC
	Reasonable concerns related to safety or the potential threat posed by another person, whether or not that threat is directed at you • Behavioral Threat Management Team: 855-863-BTMT(2868) or 814-863-BTMT(2868) or reportbtmt@psu.edu or http://btmt.psu.edu/report
	Bias or discrimination enacted toward others • Report acts of discrimination related to sex, gender, sexual orientation, or sexual identity to Title IX http://titleix.psu.edu/ • Bias or discrimination not based on sex can be reported at https://reportbias.psu.edu/ or http://www.psu.edu/dept/aaoffice/ • If possible, report to Graduate PIC
	Child Abuse • https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad72
You also have the option of reporting any ethical violation related to education, discrimination, research, or sexual misconduct anonymously through the Penn State Hotline http://www.psu.edu/hotlines or 1-800-560-1637 **Reports are anonymous and the hotline is administered through an independent third party.**	

XIII. Student Development and Evaluation

As a part of the Department's philosophy of student development and support, there are multiple mechanisms in place to provide regular evaluation and feedback of student progress. The intention is to provide students with guidance throughout the program to prevent the emergence of problems, and students should consider this feedback to be a normal part of a training environment. Individual mechanisms by which student evaluation takes place are described below.

A. First Year Review

HDFS faculty with graduate faculty appointments (i.e. tenure-track faculty with primary appointments in HDFS) engage in annual evaluation of graduate student progress. Although faculty may review student progress at any time, a special meeting devoted to reviewing all students completing their 1st year in the program is held at the end of spring semester, typically the first week in May. The intent of the review in the first year is to give students early feedback on their performance by evaluating student strengths, and identifying areas in which students should focus efforts toward improvement.

Each student's primary advisor will take the responsibility for conducting a thorough evaluation of the student's work, and presenting the summary of this evaluation to the full faculty. This typically entails soliciting feedback from all instructors and assistantship supervisors that worked with the student in the first year. Feedback will include grades earned in each course, class participation, work habits, reliability, professionalism, and progress. Students should review the program expectations regarding things such as attendance and assistantship duties and are encouraged to self-reflect on how their behavior may be perceived by others. Faculty are encouraged to voice any concerns that may have arisen so that minor issues can be corrected before serious problems arise or accumulate. Faculty may also share positive impressions of students' strengths and recommendations for growth. Following this faculty discussion the advisor will amend the summary presented to include any additional issues or comments raised. The final letter will be provided to the student and advisors should meet with the student to discuss the letter if possible (advisors who will be out of town at this time may need to make alternative arrangements). Both the student and the advisor should sign the letter, and the letter will be filed with the department.

It is important to understand that the purpose of this meeting is entirely supportive and meant to provide feedback and guidance on student development. Students should not be anxious about the first year review process, and should be assured that it is not the intention of this process to screen individuals out of the program. In almost all cases when concerns are raised, they are minor problems that can be easily addressed with constructive feedback. This feedback should be incorporated into the evaluation letter that the advisor prepares, and should be shared with the student. Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor to discuss concerns and to consider any feedback provided to be constructive and in support of their professional development.

In some cases, more significant concerns may be raised about a student's academic performance, level of engagement, or professional behaviors. In the event that the student's performance or behavior in the first year is below the standard expected in the program, the faculty may decide to place the student on probation. Probation serves as a clear warning that changes are needed in order to be successful in the program. Students placed on probation will be provided with the evaluation letter prepared by their

advisor, as well as a departmental evaluation letter prepared by the Grad PIC, reflecting the discussion and decision of the faculty. The departmental letter will specify the reasons for the probation decision, and make clear what changes are expected in the coming semester. Probation cases are then re-evaluated by the full faculty in December at the final faculty meeting of the semester. Students placed on probation may be understandably dismayed. However, students should know that in the overwhelming majority of cases where probation has been issued, problems have been quickly corrected and the student has gone on to successfully complete the program. Therefore students who are placed on probation are encouraged to take a positive and proactive response and continue moving forward in their degree.

B. Annual Review

Although the department engages in collective oversight, students should also be receiving regular feedback from the advisors. To facilitate this, and to help students scaffold their productivity, students and advisors are required to complete a Plan of Study on an annual basis. Students entering the program will complete their first Plan of Study at the start of their first semester. All subsequent Plans of Study will be completed annually at the end of the spring semester.

A Plan of Study establishes concrete and attainable objectives for student's professional growth. This will include coursework, research activities (e.g. presenting data at a conference, writing a manuscript, revising a manuscript, etc.), apprenticeship activities (e.g. learning new techniques or engaging in aspects of a research project, management of other research personnel, etc.), and/or other academic and professional objectives (e.g. gaining teaching experiences) for the upcoming academic year. The Plan of Study document is available on Canvas. Students should begin the process by scheduling a meeting with their advisor, and providing their initial draft of the Plan of Study at least 2 days in advance of that meeting.

- The document begins with a brief description of the student's research interests. Students may notice that their interests evolve over the years, typically becoming more specific.
- Next, the document summarizes the previous year's Plan and indicates the status of all previously stated goals (included descriptions of the stage projects are in that have not yet been completed, and reasons why goals were not met).
- The student then proposes specific and attainable goals for the coming year. For example, rather than stating a goal of "submit a manuscript" students should indicate more specifically what data that paper would involve and the general research topic it would address. Students are encouraged to also consider breaking objectives into more discrete units that can be more easily met, such as identifying a target dates for having a draft of the methods and results section, a draft of the discussion, a full manuscript draft for co-authors, and so on. This makes it easier for students to recognize when they have fallen behind schedule earlier in the process, and makes it easier to see how long projects might take and when they might overlap with other deadlines.
- Finally, the student is asked to reflect on their working style, habits, and obstacles. This is meant to help facilitate a conversation with advisors about strategies that can facilitate meeting goals, including ways that the advisor can support the student. Students and advisors may find that they have different working styles or expectations (micromanagement vs autonomy; incremental drafts versus whole products) and a constructive conversation about these differences can help develop a compromise plan that both parties can agree to.

Students may need to revise their plan after meeting with their advisor. Once the final plan has been developed, advisors and students each sign the document, which is then submitted to the Graduate Coordinator and archived. At this stage, advisors are also required to evaluate the student's degree progress. The advisor will provide a rating recommendation based on the student's progress using the

categories Pass, Fail, and Probation. Students who receive a rating of fail or a recommendation of probation will be discussed by the full faculty for evaluation and consideration of whether probation is warranted. The full faculty review takes places at the end of the spring semester (typically April), however there is an additional designated faculty meeting at the end of fall semester(typically December) in which a student who has been placed on probation will be re-evaluated to make sure the student is meeting the terms of the probation letter. Regardless of a probationary discussion, faculty have the opportunity to discuss ongoing student issues at either the December or April faculty meetings.

C. Special Review

The First Year review and the Qualifying Exam are the two points in the course of the degree that all students are evaluated by the full graduate faculty as part of the program requirements. In most cases, the remainder of evaluation of students' academic accomplishments and degree milestones are evaluated by committees, as detailed in the handbook sections related to master's qualifying, and dissertation exams. Decisions resulting in dismissal from the program for failing to meet academic standards in the context of those milestones are made by the designated committees. However, decisions to dismiss students from the program outside of those milestone evaluations may also occur. Reasons for dismissal outside of academic performance include sustained failure to make reasonable progress, and violations of conduct or professionalism expectations.

1. **Sustained Failure to Make Progress**.

It is understood that there is variability in the time students take to complete their degree. Ideally students would complete their degree within 5 years, although many students take 6 years to finish. Delays may occur for students pursuing dual-titles who require extra coursework, students who undertake their own data collection, or for personal reasons such as taking time off for family leave. In all cases the Department would like to see students succeed and complete the degree, and every effort is made to support students academically and financially for the full duration of their degree. However, the provision of support is predicated on students continuing to make progress. The adequacy of progress will be evaluated by the faculty for any student who is delayed in achieving degree milestones including (a) failure to defend the master's thesis by the end of the 3rd year, (b) failure to pass the qualifying exam by the end of the 4th year, (c) failure to have completed the comprehensive exam by the end of the 5th year, (d) failure to have a dissertation proposal defended by the end of the 6th year. Students in each of these categories will be identified by the Grad PIC at the time of the annual faculty review meeting. The student's advisor will be consulted and asked to recommend whether they (a) think the student is making reasonable progress and have no concerns; (b) are concerned, but wish to delay faculty evaluation until a later date pending the student's plans to complete a product soon; or (c) agree that the student should be discussed at that time. If a student is demonstrating a failure to make adequate progress that places them at risk for dismissal, they will be placed on probation. Specific and achievable evidence of progress will be identified that the student must be able to demonstrate within the next semester. The student's progress will be evaluated again at the end of the probation period and a determination will be made as to whether the student can be taken off probationary status, or whether the student will be dismissed from the program.

2. **Conduct violation**

Should concerns be raised about a student's conduct, these concerns will be addressed at the time they arise, and may therefore be evaluated outside of the context of a routine evaluation meeting. When concerns are brought to the Graduate PIC outside of standard review contexts, the Graduate PIC will

address the concern in a way that balances the departmental view that the graduate program is governed by the full faculty with the importance of respecting the privacy of the student and any other individuals involved. For the most part, this balance will be evaluated in light of the seriousness of the offense, the extent to which the offense can be viewed to have impact or implications for the entire departmental community, and the need to comply with any procedural policies dictated by the University.

When concerns are raised, the Graduate PIC will typically consult with the student's advisor and/or with the Department Head in determining a course of action. The Graduate PIC or Department Head may elect to pursue additional consultation with the Departmental Executive Committee, or with an ad hoc department committee on student conduct that is assembled to represent the views of the broader faculty. If an ad hoc committee is assembled, the committee will determine the extent of information gathering that is warranted, which is expected to increase with the seriousness of the concern, while maintaining respect for student privacy. Assurances regarding the maintenance of confidentiality will be formally obtained from the committee in cases where confidentiality is required. The committee shall meet as soon as possible with the student, who may elect to have an additional faculty member present with them. The student will be kept informed of the committee's process and expected timeline.

It is important to note that expectations governing graduate students' professional conduct and interpersonal behavior exist at multiple levels ranging from policies of a specific supervisor (in a research lab, or a TA context), the Department, the College, the Graduate School, the University, State/Federal law, and policies of Societies, Agencies, or Journals in the profession. Violations that are reportable to offices or agencies outside of the Department will result in parallel processes investigating the reported offense. The Department will independently assess the nature of the violation and determine the appropriate course of action regarding the student's standing within HDFS, but the outcome of the Departmental process could differ from the outcome issued by any of the other offices or agencies involved. Specifically, the Department retains the right to dismiss any student from the doctoral program even in instances where the student has not been dismissed from the University.

Depending on the nature of the violation, disciplinary consequences could be issued by the advisor, the Graduate PIC, the Executive Committee or an ad hoc Faculty Committee, or the full Faculty. When a full Faculty evaluation takes place, "Faculty" is defined as individuals with Graduate Faculty status in HDFS whose primary appointments are in HDFS. If a full faculty evaluation/vote is to take place, faculty members will be provided notice via email at least one week in advance so they have the opportunity to make arrangements to participate in the meeting in person or via technology. A minimum quorum of 51% of voting-eligible faculty must participate for a vote to be valid.

Potential consequences for student conduct violations could include one or more of the following options.

Corrective Conversation
Any individual who experiences or observes unprofessional behavior by a graduate student is strongly encouraged to provide that constructive feedback directly to the student at the time of the incident. In most cases, this is sufficient to correct the problem without the need to involve the full Faculty. However, the individual is also encouraged to notify the student's advisor and/or the Graduate PIC so that a pattern can be identified if one emerges. Should concerns be presented to the full faculty for consideration, faculty could decide that a clear statement of the expected behavior is the appropriate response at that time. Such feedback could be delivered by the advisor or the Graduate PIC.

Loss of Privilege
As a result of student behavior, a decision could be made to remove access to certain resources such as

access to certain data, access to office space, opportunities to teach, or eligibility for financial support. Decisions to restrict or revoke privileges can be made by the individuals responsible for the privilege in question. For instance, a researcher's decision to revoke access to data is their own and does not require approval of the Faculty. A decision to revoke financial support provided by the Department can be made by the Departmental Executive Committee without requiring Faculty approval. The Department could deny assistantships to a student due to failure to fulfill responsibilities, misconduct in executing those responsibilities, or failure to make appropriate academic progress.

Probation

In the event that the conduct in question is considered to be incompatible with earning the degree, probation may be issued. Probation serves as a warning that corrective action is needed in order to remain in the program. Decisions to place a student on probation require a vote of 2/3 of the eligible faculty present at the meeting (presuming a quorum has been met). Following the faculty discussion, the student will be provided with written feedback explaining the problematic nature of the behavior as well as clarification of expectations for future behavior. Students placed on probation will be provided with clear expectations for changes necessary to remain in the program. Status will be re-evaluated at the end of the subsequent semester (December or May faculty meeting) to determine whether the terms of probation have been met. Failure to meet the terms will result in dismissal from the program. Probation can be issued for any academic or conduct violation, but typical reasons include a failure to fulfill program expectations such as assistantship duties or degree progress.

Dismissal

Decisions to dismiss a student from the program outside of academic milestone evaluations and without a probationary period are not taken lightly, and will occur only under extreme circumstances. Because such extreme circumstances are rare, it is difficult to define the exact circumstances and contexts that could lead to this outcome. In nearly all cases, a violation significant enough to warrant consideration of immediate dismissal will also result in investigations by other agencies, such as the Office of Student Conduct, the College of Health and Human Development Academic Integrity Committee, the Graduate School, the Office of Threat Management, the Title IX office, or local police. As indicated, the Department may make decisions independent of these other offices and agencies, but investigations by these other offices do supersede departmental decisions in that (a) the Department is obligated to comply with procedures and regulations pertaining to investigative processes by these offices and (b) the Department does not have the power to override a decision to dismiss a student from the University that is issued by a higher office.

If the Department is considering possible dismissal the student will be permitted to submit materials or written statements for consideration, and may elect to have an advocate of their choosing attend the faculty meeting in which the case will be discussed. Advocates must be faculty or staff at Penn State (although they need not be graduate faculty or hold primary appointments in HDFS) and have had sufficient interaction with, or supervision of, the student to know them well. The Advocate is not charged with the responsibility of campaigning for a particular outcome, but is there to represent the student's interests and ensure the integrity of the process. In an effort to avoid bias, the facts of the case will be presented to the faculty by the Graduate PIC. As such, the Graduate PIC will not be selected to serve as the Advocate, but can help the student identify an alternative person for that role. As with the Advocate, the Graduate PIC is not responsible for campaigning for any specific outcome and is should only present the information in as unbiased of a manner as possible.

Every effort will be made to have cases evaluated and voted on during a regularly scheduled faculty meeting in order to ensure the highest faculty representation. However, there may be instances when urgency dictates that the Department Head convene an emergency meeting. If an emergency meeting is

being held outside of a regularly scheduled faculty meeting or during the summer, all HDFS graduate faculty will be notified of the nature of the disciplinary concern being discussed so they can elect to make arrangements to attend the meeting by phone.

XIV. Guidelines for Resolving Problems, Grievances, and Disagreements

The Penn State Graduate School outlines avenues that graduate students may pursue to address concerns or conflicts, across a wide range of issues. Students are strongly advised to take the time to read and familiarize themselves with the various resources available at the University on the Graduate School website: https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-student-life/avenues-to-address-graduate-student-concerns/. Additional websites and contact information are provided on this page for Penn State offices and resources available to report misconduct, bias, discrimination or harassment, as well as various other concerns and issues that may arise. In addition, links are provided to Graduate School policies on Conduct (GCAC-801), Procedures for Resolution of Problems (GCAC-802), Procedures for Termination of the Degree Program of a Graduate Student for Unsatisfactory Scholarship (GCAC-803), and Termination of Assistantships Due to Inadequate Performance (GCAC-804). In particular, students are advised to familiarize themselves with GCAC-802, Procedures for Resolution of Problems. Questions on any graduate school policy and procedure can be directed to the Graduate School: graddeansoffice@psu.edu.

In general, HDFS graduate students in need of assistance for resolving problems, grievances, and disagreements should follow the conflict resolution pathway as described by the Graduate School.

Your Adviser

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Graduate Program Professor-in-Charge and/or Department Head

Grad PIC
Department Head:

↓

Administrator for Graduate Education in your College or School and/or Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Kathryn Drager, Ph.D. (kdd5@psu.edu)
Nicole Webster, Ph.D. (nsw10@psu.edu)

↓

Associate Dean for Graduate Student Affairs of the Graduate School

Sarah Ades, PhD (sea10@psu.edu)

In many cases, relatively minor conflicts or issues that arise can be resolved with clear communication with your advisor (e.g., clarifying expectations on lab work, establishing working hours, etc.). The graduate PIC and Department Head are also always available to provide consultation and advice or to mediate advisee/advisor communications to facilitate an outcome amenable to all parties.

However, should the conflict or issue be more serious or of a sensitive nature and the graduate student does not wish to engage with their advisor, they are encouraged to talk directly with the graduate PIC (first) or Department Head (second). If, for whatever reason, the student does not wish to engage with program or departmental leadership, the following avenues are available. First, students are encouraged to seek out a trusted faculty member in the department for advice or consultation. Second, students may directly contact the Administrator for Graduate Education in HHD (Kathryn Drager would most likely be the point of contact). Third, students may reach out to the Graduate School ombudsperson (https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-student-life/graduate-student-ombudsperson-program/). Ombudspersons provide a safe environment for graduate students to discuss ideas, concerns, and options and can help students identify relevant University and Graduate School policies, provide connections and resources for support, and, in some cases, make referrals to other formal channels with investigatory powers.

In the sections below, further, more specific guidelines are provided for how to proceed should conflicts or concerns arise with A) your advisor, B) an instructor, C) a supervisor, or D) other graduate students.

A. Advisor/Advisee discord

The relationship between an advisor and a student can be complicated and challenging. As with any relationship, both parties are expected to engage with respect, consideration, and communication of their expectations and perceptions. When both parties accept responsibility for the success of the relationship problems can be avoided or addressed successfully. However, this relationship differs from other relationships in that there is a clear power differential. There may be situations in which a student must comply with expectations that s/he may not agree with. The following provides guidelines on how to proceed in such circumstances.

Prevention. Most cases of discord between advisors and students can be resolved with communication. Often students feel uncomfortable expressing their desires or requests, which can lead to misunderstandings and resentment. In the event that a student disagrees with an expectation of the advisor, or feels that the advisor has failed to provide them with important assistance or opportunities, the best course of action is to address this directly with the advisor. Most often one of two scenarios will result (1) the advisor is now aware of something they weren't before and can correct the problem or (2) the advisor can provide a rationale for the expectations that give the student a perspective they did not have before.

Participation in the advisor expectations worksheet activity in the 1st year (or later if helpful) can create a platform for starting discussions about working styles and expectations. A copy of this worksheet is available on Canavas. Students should also make use of the Annual Plan to highlight issues that need discussion or where consensus has not been reached.

Mediation. There are times when communication does not suffice to bring the advisor and student in line

with one another's point of view. In these instances students are encouraged to reach out to additional faculty to discuss their situation. Other faculty members can provide perspective, suggestions, strategies, or act as advocates for the student if requested. Sometimes it can be helpful to just get a second or third opinion. Students are always welcome and encouraged to reach out to the Graduate PIC, but can also turn to other committee members both within and outside of the department, or other faculty they feel comfortable with. When reaching out students should be explicit as to whether they would like the individual to keep all or part of the information shared in confidence, or if they would like the individual to take action on their behalf.

Dissolution. There are times in life when relationships just don't work out, even when the people in that relationship are not bad people. Some individuals have clear and specific working styles that can be incompatible with other styles. In such an instance, it may be worthwhile to seek an alternate advisor. Students should feel that they are able to change advisors without being made to feel guilty or resented. Students can facilitate a positive dissolution of an advisor/advisee relationship by following these guidelines.

- Reach out to individual with whom you would like to work to discuss the possibility of moving to their lab. Some faculty may not have the additional capacity to bring in a new student. In addition, you want to ensure that the new lab will be a better situation for you so you should engage in clear communication about expectations and opportunities. If the motivation for changing advisors is centered around a research topic, it is possible that the new faculty member is willing to provide you access to research opportunities and serve in a guiding role on your committee even if she/he is unable to serve as your primary advisor. Co-advising may be an additional solution.

- Reach out to the Graduate PIC to discuss the situation and receive guidance on the appropriate course of action.

- Communicate with your current advisor to make them aware of your decision to leave the lab.

It is also possible that an advisor may wish to dissolve a relationship with an advisee. An advisor may reach a point where s/he feels that the student is not responding to feedback, not engaging in the lab or research environment as expected, and/or not making reasonable progress. This may also occur if the student's research interests have evolved sufficiently that the advisor is no longer the best person to provide key mentorship. Advisors should raise these concerns with the student in a clear and forthright manner. Concerns should be expressed in the Annual Review, and expectations should be documented to ensure that the student and advisor have a shared record of the concerns. Advisors are encouraged to set interim goals and revisit progress at least once per semester as appropriate. Difficulties that arise between the advisor and student, especially as relate to ability to make progress in the degree, should also be raised as appropriate during the candidacy meeting.

In the event that an advisor considers dissolution of the advising relationship, a clear statement to this effect must be provided to the student. Students should be informed of the reasons for the discord and the conditions under which the advisor would dissolve the relationship. For instance, if the student is not participating in the lab environment, consistently non-responsive to advisor feedback and guidance, or failing to make interim progress for a sustained amount of time, the advisor should make clear the required adjustment to behavior and the timeline in which that change must manifest in order for the relationship to continue to work. If the advisor does elect to dissolve the relationship they should notify the student as well as the Graduate PIC so the student may be assisted in identifying a new advisor.

B. Student/Instructor discord.

In the event that a student has a disagreement with the content, assignment, or grade received in a course they are expected to address this respectfully with the instructor. In the event that the student feels that this did not result in a reasonable resolution and wishes to have the situation evaluated by a third party they should seek consultation with the Grad PIC. If the student does not feel comfortable consulting with the Grad PIC they should consult directly with the Department Head. Resolution of disagreements is expected to begin at the Departmental level unless (a) the situation involves bias or discrimination and should also be reported to https://reportbias.psu.edu/ (b) the student has reasonable cause to believe that *neither* the Graduate PIC *nor* the Department Head are able to provide an unbiased evaluation. In this event the student is directed to contact the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education.

Students are also able to describe any issues or concerns related to the class in the SRTE response forms if they wish to raise their concerns anonymously. Be aware that although there is no way to identify a respondent, your identity could be inadvertently implied if you reveal specific information.

C. Student/Supervisor discord

In the event that a student has a disagreement with the expectations associated with their assistantship (teaching or research) they are expected to address this respectfully with the supervisor. In the event that the student feels that this did not result in a reasonable resolution and wishes to have the situation evaluated by a third party, they should seek consultation with an appropriate Departmental administrator. This can include the Grad PIC, but may also include the Undergrad PIC for situations related to TAships, and can include the Department Head. Resolution of disagreements is expected to begin at the Departmental level unless (a) the situation involves bias or discrimination and should also be reported to https://reportbias.psu.edu/ (b) the student has reasonable cause to believe that no administrative authority (PIC or Department Head) is able to provide an unbiased evaluation. In such an instance the student is directed to contact the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education.

D. Disagreement between or among students

Although the Department cannot mediate disputes of a personal nature, students should consult with the Grad PIC regarding any disturbing behaviors observed in others. This includes behaviors indicative of problems with physical or mental health, including substance abuse, which may warrant intervention and support. Reports will be kept in confidence, but can also be made anonymously either by submitting the information anonymously in writing, or providing the information to the Graduate Steering Committee representatives to report to the Grad PIC.

XV Additional Professional and Educational Opportunities

The Department and College offer multiple opportunities for student participation. Engaging in the citizenship of the academic community is an excellent way to gain valuable professional experience that will prepare you for post-graduate life regardless of your specific career track. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the Graduate Student Steering Committee, as this is a great way to establish a strong social connection within the department, and the Steering Committee provides the context in which many service and leadership experiences can be sought.

Through the Steering Committee students are also encouraged to take an active role in shaping their own educational opportunities and experiences. Students can generate suggestions and requests for professional topic brown bags, invite guest speakers, and contribute to the development of new ideas and opportunities. The annual graduate student symposium was student generated and run, and is an exceptional example of the kind of community building students are encouraged to engage in.

Graduate students are also regularly appointed to serve as representatives to the Faculty Meetings, the Program Planning and Departmental Evaluation Committee, the Admissions Committee, and search committees convened when new faculty positions are created. The experiences provide useful insight into departmental infrastructure and process, as well as opportunities to represent the students' perspective when decisions are being made. These experiences also make nice additions to your CV.

Graduate students are also occasionally sought for involvement in College or University-level committees or working groups, and students can become involved in the leadership of the Graduate Student Organization which serves the entire campus community. Graduate students are often sought to participate in supporting undergraduate research, and may be asked to judge research events, or provide guidance to groups of undergraduates on topics like preparing for graduate school. Students will receive announcements via email when opportunities like this arise.

Beyond Penn State itself students are encouraged to become members of academic societies relevant to their research focus. Such societies often have committees specifically for students, so students should consider opportunities of being involved in those contexts. Academic societies may also provide opportunities for students to be involved in reviewing abstracts for conferences, special grant mechanisms to support dissertation work, and awards and honors specific to graduate students in the field. These societies often also provide students with information about postgraduate positions and are valuable contexts for networking in the field.

XVI. Graduation

The Graduate School regulates the timing with which degrees are granted and it is critical that students attend to the specific dates and deadlines for graduation. These dates are updated annually by the Graduate School and are available online and sent out via email from the program coordinator.

It is the responsibility of the student to activate their intention to graduate on LionPath and to pay the thesis fee at the beginning of the semester in which an advanced degree is expected to be received. If the student does not graduate, the intent to graduate must be reactivated during the actual semester of graduation. Deadlines are given in the calendar found on the Registrar website.

A preliminary graduation list is prepared by the graduate recorder soon after the deadline for each semester. Transcripts are prepared and checked in the offices of the Graduate School and the recorder. The records of candidates who appear to have met requirements are forwarded to major and minor department heads or program chairperson for review and recommendation. The final list of approved candidates appears in the commencement program.

Only those transfer credits that have been accepted by the Graduate School and entered upon the student's transcript by the recorder before the graduate list deadline will be considered in evaluating a student for graduation at the end of that particular semester.

Attendance at commencement exercises is expected, however students that do not attend the ceremony will receive their diplomas in the mail. Commencement for doctoral students involves a ceremony in which the doctoral advisor formally hoods the new Ph.D. Students wishing to participate should be sure to alert their advisors well ahead of time.

All degrees conferred are tentative until final grade reports have been received and all requirements fulfilled, even though the student's name may have appeared in the commencement program. A student's transcript or diploma, or both, may be withheld until any outstanding financial obligations to the University have been paid.