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WELCOME TO THE HDFS GRADUATE PROGRAM!

Welcome to the UW-Madison Graduate Program in Human Ecology: Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS). We’re glad you’re here, and hope this Handbook will help you successfully navigate your graduate career. If you are arriving here from another part of the U.S.—or another country—you will have the new geographic/cultural environment to get used to as well as the campus. Even if you are from Madison or have attended UW-Madison, graduate school represents a whole new world. We’re here to help you with the transition. And so is the UW Graduate School—the following website is a great starting point:

UW Graduate School: Graduate Student Life

This Graduate School website contains information that will orient you to your new life on this campus and has great resources to help you later in your journey here (for example: tips for finding jobs, dissertator support, workshops, etc.) Visit it often and explore it deeply!

In an effort to keep pace with changing policies in the Graduate School, we will often refer you directly to their website—they have final authority on many aspects of your graduate work. You will want to bookmark

UW Graduate School: Academic Policies & Procedures
http://www.grad.wisc.edu/education/acadpolicy/index.html

It’s a valuable source of information for you and includes the UW Graduate School policies for everything from who can be on your committee to how many credits you need to register for, deadlines, warrants...everything from A to Z. This Handbook is intended to inform you of the additional Human Ecology and HDFS policies and norms that you will need to navigate your journey here.

We all know how it feels to be new to a community-- it can be confusing and seem overwhelming. This Handbook is unlikely to answer all of your questions, so be sure to ask! There are four people you should immediately think of when you have questions: (1) your advisor, (2) the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator, (3) HDFS Graduate Program Committee Chair, and (4) HDFS Departmental Chair. All are willing to help you navigate the program and want to support your professional development. Other graduate students can also be great sources of support and advice. They share your vantage point and can supplement the information you receive from faculty and administration.

The Handbook is organized in a logical sequence for a first-time user. We begin with some background information and then move chronologically through your beginning steps, and then through to the completion of the Master’s and Doctoral Degrees. (If you are looking for specific information, see the Table of Contents to help you navigate.)

The focus on the details of policies and procedures in this Handbook could make you lose sight of the overall purpose of your work in our department so we begin with the department’s Mission: “To improve the quality of life by discovering, integrating, applying, and disseminating knowledge about
human development, relationships, families, and communities, all in their larger social contexts.”

We believe that the time and effort it takes to become a graduate of our department will help you personally, and will prepare you to use your degree to make a difference in the world in your chosen area of study.

INTRODUCTIONS

The Department of Human Development and Family Studies & the School of Human Ecology

HDFS is one of four current “concentrations” (or sub-plans) within the Human Ecology Graduate Major (G549):

- Civil Society and Community Research (formerly Interdisciplinary Studies)
- Consumer Behavior & Family Economics (Consumer Science Department)
- Design Studies (Design Studies Department)
- Human Development & Family Studies (HDFS Department)

Currently our department has 13 tenure-track faculty and a handful of additional adjunct faculty who have “zero dollar” joint appointments. Faculty with joint appointments have their main appointment in another department on campus, but they can serve on (and “chair”) our graduate students’ committees. We also hire several lecturers throughout the academic year (including some of our own doctoral students). In Administration we have an HDFS Department Chair (which changes every 2-3 years), and a Graduate Program Coordinator for the entire School of Human Ecology. These individuals may also be assisted by part-time student hourly help. Department Faculty/Staff meetings occur each month. A graduate student representative (elected by GSO—the Graduate Student Organization) comes to these meetings.

Within the department we have several “standing committees” including:

- Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC)—focusing on undergraduate issues (curriculum, course offerings, admissions, policies)
- Graduate Program Committee (GPC)—focusing on graduate program issues (such as admissions, recruitment, financial aid decisions, merit review, curriculum, course offerings, policies). A graduate student representative, elected by the Graduate Student Organization, serves on the GPC to represent student interests.

HDFS is housed in the School of Human Ecology (which is one of 21 schools and colleges within the UW—Madison). There are also governance committees at the School level. Most important with respect to graduate students is the SoHE Graduate Program Committee. One graduate student representative from across the entire school of Human Ecology serves to represent all of the graduate students at these regular meetings.

For a better understanding of our relationship to the School of Human Ecology, familiarize yourself with the School website and note in particular the Faculty & Staff Resources for finding information about governance, directories, building policies, technology and more.
Finding and Using Space and Facilities

In fall 2012, SoHE (School of Human Ecology) officially opened its new building, Nancy Nicholas Hall (1300 Linden Drive), which includes the Lehman Family Interaction Laboratory, new Preschool Laboratory, Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, rooftop terrace, and 100 Women of Honor wall, among other wonderful spaces. The HDFS department is located on the fourth floor of Nancy Nicholas Hall. The main departmental office is located in room 4198.

You will want to familiarize yourself with this state-of-the-art new building. When you arrive on campus, stop by the main departmental office and introduce yourself to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. As of the writing of this version of the Grad Handbook, the School’s Graduate Program Coordinator is Liv Lindenberg (2109 Nancy Nicholas Hall, Phone: 890-3243; email: llindenberg@wisc.edu). She can show you where things are located, including your mailbox, and faculty offices.

Most departmental and school communication occurs through email. The department bulletin board located in the main office has information about upcoming events including fellowship and job opportunities. Nancy Nicholas Hall provides access to WiFi and there are tables and chairs located throughout the building for you to use. There is also a graduate student lounge on the second floor for all graduate students in the building to use.

On the second floor of Nancy Nicholas Hall, there is a copy and scanning center that graduate students can use for a small fee. The department does not support copying or printing for your personal needs, including your course and thesis work.

If you need to schedule a room for a meeting, there are several available, contact the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.

Funding of Graduate Students

For a general introduction to funding and a variety of funding sources, fellowships, scholarships, travel and research awards, visit the SoHE website: [http://sohe.wisc.edu/prospective-students/graduate-students/funding/](http://sohe.wisc.edu/prospective-students/graduate-students/funding/)

A number of teaching assistantships (TA’s) and often some project assistantships (PA’s) are available directly through the department. A distinction is made between School/departmentally administered assistantships and those administered by individual faculty members (usually funded by their grants). Faculty make their own decisions about hiring assistantships for their outreach and research work since specific skills are often required. The department makes hiring decisions for departmental TA's and PA's.

Eligibility for instructional TA positions in the HDFS department will be determined by guidelines set by the [English as a Second Language Program at UW-Madison](http://wwwuienews.wisc.edu/). Consistent with those guidelines, all non-native English-speaking graduate students who want TA funding must take the SPEAK test.
**Departmental Funding Priorities**

Because the department’s first priority is to provide tuition remission for all graduate students in good standing, priority for HDFS assistantships will be given to students who are in good standing and who DO NOT have another campus TA/PA/RA or fellowship that includes tuition remission. This includes assistantships outside of the department and on other campuses (e.g., UW-Extension). Students who accept a departmental assistantship of 1/3 time or more are confirming that they do not have another appointment that provides tuition remission. If a student has another assistantship or their situation changes, they need to contact the HDFS Graduate Program Chair immediately.

Our goal as a department is to fund all graduate students enrolled in the program. It is a top priority to support all MS/PhD and PhD track students who are making satisfactory progress in the program. In order to promote the timely completion of degree requirements, ensure fairness, and reward students who are making satisfactory progress in completing benchmarks, the following criteria are used to prioritize the funding of graduate students. Students engaged in the MS/PhD or PhD track will receive higher priority than those seeking a terminal MS degree.

1. Students who are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees as defined by the Graduate School and the HDFS Graduate Program (reference page 17 and 18 of the Handbook) will receive higher priority.
2. MS/PhD students who have received 5 or fewer years of funding will receive higher priority than those who have received funding for more than 5 years. Similarly, PhD students (i.e., those who entered the program with a master’s degree) who have received 4 or fewer years of funding will have higher priority than those who have received funding for more than 4 years. Note: The term “funding” refers to any source of funding that covers tuition (e.g., fellowships, graduate lectureships and project, research and teaching assistantships).

For students who do not meet the above criteria, efforts will be made to provide funding, however, departmental needs, student progress, and years of prior funding will be taken into account in allotting additional funding. Students who do not meet the above criteria but have exceptional circumstances (e.g. instances wherein the student has been successful in garnering their own support) and the support of their advisor may petition the GPC for consideration of higher funding priority.

To be eligible for any funding from the department, you must participate in the Annual Review of Graduate Students process, and meet certain requirements: you must be making “satisfactory progress towards your degree” and you must be enrolled “full-time” (defined as a minimum of 8 credits, see “SoHE Full-Time Enrollment Policy for Funding Eligibility”) during the semester you receive an assistantship.

**The Graduate Student Organization**

The current HDFS Graduate Student Organization (GSO) was recognized as an official UW-Madison student organization in September 2000. The group brings a formal graduate student voice to the department.

The following outlines the purpose and goals of the GSO:
• Establish a unified graduate student voice and select representatives to serve on departmental committees.
• Create a support system and sense of community among HDFS graduate students.
• Improve communication between HDFS faculty and graduate students.
• Provide support and ease the transition for incoming graduate students.
• Aid the department in recruiting and retaining dedicated and diverse students.
• Advocate for graduate student interests and well-being.

Since its inception, members of the GSO have worked to advocate for students’ needs and voice their opinions on departmental policies, procedures, and customs. Elected students represent the GSO at departmental faculty meetings and at the Graduate Program Committee (GPC) meetings. The GSO assists in the search and interview process for new faculty members. Each year, the GSO organizes a service and/or research project. In past years, for example, students have organized a book drive for a reading program at a local correctional facility, volunteered at the Special Olympics, and conducted a research project on well-being and meditation practices. The GSO has also organized and sponsored colloquiums on topics relevant to HDFS students and faculty. Finally, the GSO has served as a social support system for new and current graduate students. The GSO sponsors a number of social activities during the school year, from ice-cream socials to Halloween parties.

All graduate students in the department are automatically considered members of the GSO, although participation in GSO activities is of course voluntary and varies. All students are invited to attend the GSO meetings, usually held once a month on campus. Co-Chairs are selected in January and serve for two academic semesters. Any active graduate student has the opportunity to be elected as a GSO Co-Chair or represent the GSO at faculty and GPC meetings. These roles are considered important leadership positions within the Department and relevant to graduate student professional development. The Graduate Program Chair usually serves as the faculty sponsor of the organization.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: ORIENTATION, ADVISING AND REGISTRATION

Wisconsin Welcome and Orientation

“Wisconsin Welcome” occurs the week before classes begin. All students with appointments (assistantships) should arrive on campus and meet with their supervisor during this week. There are also important orientations for graduate students at the Graduate School, School and Department levels. Libraries and other facilities on campus give tours and hold informational workshops. You should receive invitations to these events in late summer.

Under the TA collective bargaining agreement, completion of diversity, affirmative action, and harassment training is required for TAs to progress to the "experienced" pay rate. This training is provided jointly by the Office for Equity and Diversity and the Academic Personnel Office. HDFS requires that all TA’s attend one of these trainings, preferably the first semester they TA. Registration may be accessed here: http://www.oed.wisc.edu/workshop.html
**Address/Email/& MyUW**

DoIT (Division of Information Technology) offers a full range of computer and internet support services for UW students, staff, and faculty. It includes internet access, email, MyUW portal, and web space. For more information, visit DoIT at 1219 West Dayton Street or go to "Getting Started" at [https://www.doit.wisc.edu/students/new-students/](https://www.doit.wisc.edu/students/new-students/)

Once you activate your netID, be sure to keep the university informed of your current address and contact information. Log into your MyUW to update.

The SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator keeps an updated email distribution list and directory of all currently registered HDFS graduate students. The *email address and address you enter online will be the one used.*

You will also have a mailbox in the department where you can receive campus mail and information from faculty and other students.

**Your Advisor**

The Graduate School requires that all students have an advisor. You were assigned an advisor when you were admitted into the program. Whenever possible, the admissions committee first shared your application with the faculty members you requested and/or to the faculty they felt shared your interests. The advisor you were assigned to is someone who agreed to accept and mentor you in the program. They will help you determine your course schedule, and serve as the Chair of your thesis/dissertation committee(s). While working on your thesis or dissertation, you will also sign up to take research and thesis credits (HDFS 990) with this advisor.

You and your advisor share responsibility for working out the best plan of action for your graduate work here, working within the department’s stipulated requirements. Your advisor is there to assist you in all aspects of the planning of your graduate program, such as helping you select appropriate courses, introducing you to campus resources, suggesting other faculty you may want to get to know and invite to join your committee, and reviewing and guiding the development of a research plan. The advisor is also responsible for monitoring your performance and providing you with appropriate feedback.

You should plan to meet with your advisor several times during each semester. Don’t wait for your advisor to contact you, make an appointment whenever you need advice or guidance. A useful first meeting may include establishing a plan for the two of you to work together—for example, you may want to decide whether to schedule regular meetings or whether you will initiate them.

**Advisor and Student Advising Difficulties**

Advisors should set clear expectations for themselves and their advisees, and then provide regular, documented feedback to advisees. As with any other work relationship, however, advisors and advisees may have difficulties with one another sometimes. The first priority is to engage in a constructive process of modifying or repairing the relationship. If the standard process of expectation...
setting and feedback provision is not adequate, the advisor and/or advisee should seek guidance from the GPC Chair in strengthening the relationship or advising practices.

At times, an advisor may feel that a relationship with an advisee is not mutually beneficial. Under such circumstances, the advisor will take the lead in working with the GPC Chair and the advisee to find a new advisor for the student. If the advisor is the GPC Chair, another member of the GPC will serve in the Chair’s role for this process. The student will then need to have the Advisor and Committee Form completed to officially change advisors.

**Changing an Advisor**

Faculty recognize that the interests of students can change, so changing advisors is encouraged when it supports your individual development. Many students do end up changing advisors. However, the advisor you are initially assigned to is the only faculty member who has made a commitment to work with and supervise you. If you want to switch to a new advisor, it is your responsibility to find someone who is willing to work with you. Talk to both your current advisor and the faculty member you wish to become your new advisor to get their mutual consent before making the official change. Graduate students should cordially work with their original advisor to make these switches whenever possible. If you need help on how to make the switch graciously and comfortably, ask your new advisor or the GPC chair to help facilitate these changes.

To make the change official, **you need to inform the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator** and the change needs to be recorded in the university student record computer system. The “Advisor and Committee Form” should be used for this purpose. Signatures will be required of you and both your current and new advisors. The form is submitted to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.

Note: All departmental forms mentioned in this Handbook may be accessed from the HDFS Graduate Program Website (see section entitled “Forms and Documents”). The forms available on this website are listed on the last two pages of this Handbook.

**Degree Committees**

MS students form a Master’s Committee, while PhD students form two committees over the course of their tenure here, a Prelim Committee and a Dissertation Committee, and MS-PhD students form all 3 of those committees. Committees have the responsibility of overseeing your progress in the department with respect to a range of hurdles or “benchmarks” including the completion of your coursework, the development of a research/dissertation proposal, your oral defense of your research and, for PhD students, the defense of the preliminary examinations.

The Graduate School sets minimum requirements for the composition of all degree committees, found on the [Graduate School website](#), and defined further in [UW-Madison’s Faculty Policies and Procedures](#). Your advisor is the Chair of your degree committee and must be a member of the Graduate Faculty (see Graduate School policy above). In special circumstances a co-chair situation may be worked out so that a member of the committee works together with your advisor to chair your committee. In consultation with your advisor, you select the other faculty members to invite to your committees.
Although it is recommended that you form a committee as early in your graduate career as possible, in practice, it is usually easier to invite members to a committee after you have become better acquainted with faculty through classes and once you have settled on a specific research topic. In selecting committee members, do not expect that all of the faculty members will have a specific expertise in your chosen research topic—we are a small department and our faculty expect to serve on committees where their own research may not be directly relevant to yours.

While committee members are generally all members of the Graduate Faculty, when there is a rationale for inviting someone outside of the Graduate Faculty to serve on a committee (e.g., faculty from another university, retired faculty, scientists, research associates, academic staff, professionals) the HDFS Executive Faculty can approve the outside member. Submit the signed "Request to Appoint a Non-Graduate Faculty Member to a Master's Doctoral Committee" form (found on our website) with a copy of their CV to the Chair of HDFS for approval by the HDFS Executive Committee.

Retired (and former) faculty: The Graduate School no longer gives extensions for retired and former professors to remain members of the Graduate Faculty after one year. However, a one year extension is automatically given. Therefore, a retired professor may remain as the sole Chair of a degree committee for one year after retirement--after that, they may no longer remain as Chair, but may co-chair with another current HDFS graduate faculty member and remain on the committee with the approval of the HDFS Executive committee. Note: the Graduate School only allows ONE member of a degree committee to serve who is not a member of the Graduate School faculty.

When you determine the membership of your Committee (Master’s, Prelim or Doctoral), you should complete the “Graduate Student Advisor and Committee Form” and submit it to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. If a circumstance arises that requires changing the membership of a committee, the decision should be discussed with your advisor, the relevant parties should be informed, and the change should be noted in the department’s official records by submitting a revised “Graduate Student Advisor and Committee Form” to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.

For Graduate School policy on forming your committees, please go to the Graduate School website: Academic Policies & Procedures.

Master’s Committee

Your thesis committee will serve to guide you in the process of developing your research thesis and they will evaluate your work. In addition to completing a “Master’s Thesis Evaluation Form,” they will review your checklist and verify that that you have completed all course requirements, and ultimately they are the ones who will sign your warrant. The chair of your committee (also your advisor) must be a Graduate Faculty member and from HDFS. The HDFS Master’s Thesis Committee will consist of at least 3 members (2 of whom must be Graduate School Faculty (including faculty who have retired within 1 year) or former Graduate School Faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement). See additional information under "Degree Committees" above.
**Prelim Committee**

PhD students are required to form a Prelim Committee, which is responsible for preparing your preliminary examination (within the department guidelines) and evaluating your written and oral performance with the use of the “HDFS Preliminary Examination Assessment Form” and the “Preliminary Examination Outcome Sheet”. Further, the committee is responsible for reviewing your coursework and making sure that all degree requirements have been met. The committee consists of your advisor and 2 other members of the HDFS faculty.

**Dissertation Committee**

Your dissertation committee (also referred to as the “Final Oral Examination Committee” by the Graduate School) will serve to guide you in the process of developing your research dissertation and they will evaluate your work at both the proposal stage and the final defense. They are the ones who will complete the “PhD Dissertation Evaluation Form” and sign your degree warrant and welcome you as a Doctor of Philosophy. Including your advisor, the HDFS Dissertation Committee consists of at least 5 members, 4 of whom must be members of the UW-Madison Graduate School faculty or former UW-Madison Graduate School faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement. Permission from the HDFS Exec Committee is required to include a person who is not a member of the Graduate School faculty, it is not automatic. At least 3 (not more than 4) must be "HDFS faculty", and one of the 5 members must be from "outside HDFS" (often from the minor field). "Outside your field" may include faculty from other departments within SoHE (e.g., Consumer Science, Design Studies, Civil Society and Community Studies). A faculty member holding a joint appointment in HDFS with a primary home in another department may serve as either an "outside" member or as one of the HDFS members. See additional information under "Degree Committees."

It is common for students to ask all three members of their Prelim Committee to continue on their dissertation committee and then invite two additional members to their committee. Circumstances can arise that require a change of committee membership between the proposal and defense stages, but in general this is discouraged unless you are changing topics from your prelim focus. If you do change the membership of your committee, you should complete a new “Advisor and Committee Form” and inform all parties.

The Graduate School must approve degree committees (Master’s and Doctoral committees) and this occurs when the Graduate School issues you the warrant. It is critical that your committee meet the stated guidelines.

**Your Curriculum**

**Overview of Required Courses**

During a typical semester, most full time graduate students who are also employed as a TA, PA, or RA take three courses, for three credits each, for a semester total of nine credits (according to SoHE policy, 8 credits are the minimum if you hold an appointment through SoHE or HDFS).
There are four courses required for all graduate students in HDFS, regardless of whether they are in the Masters or PhD program: (1) HDFS 664: Proseminar, (2) HDFS 865 Family Theory, (3) HDFS 725: Theories and Issues in Human Development, and (4) IS 793 Research Methods. All of these courses are offered at least once a year. If you have taken similar, graduate-level courses at another university, you may not need to re-take these courses; see "Course Substitution process" below. Every graduate student needs to take the Proseminar in their first semester. It provides an introduction and orientation to our program. In this course, you will meet and learn about the scholarly interests of our faculty and get acquainted with your student cohort and learn about the field of Human Development and Family Studies and graduate work more generally.

In addition to the required courses offered within the department, one intermediate statistics course is required for the Master’s degree and additionally, one advanced statistics course is required for the PhD. HDFS 766 “Professional Development Seminar” (PDS) offered during the Spring semester features presentations by faculty and graduate students on their current research and outreach as well as various professional development topics. All students and faculty are invited to attend PDS sessions whether they are registered for credit or not. It is a course we expect students to take for credit repeatedly. HDFS also offers colloquium talks over the course of the academic year that may or may not be offered as official Professional Development Seminar sessions. The department strongly encourages you to attend department-sponsored talks as a core component of your professional development.

The rest of the credits for the degree are earned through a combination of courses, research credit, and independent study. PhD students must take at least 9 credits in a “minor” to establish breadth (see more below). The Checklists (see below) provide details on requirements and a convenient form for planning and documenting your progress:

MS, MS/PhD, and PhD Checklists can accessed and downloaded from the “Forms and Documents” section HDFS Graduate Program website.

Selecting and Registering for Classes

Graduate students new to the UW--Madison will register for Fall Semester in early July. Once you have informed the UW of your intent to enroll, the Graduate School will send you an ID number and information on how to register. We strongly recommend that you communicate with your advisor before registering. Using your check sheet and the course search available through MyUW, you and your advisor can plan a course schedule for your first semester, and begin to plan for the future.

Besides the online timetable available through MyUW, we also have an online flyer of course descriptions for HDFS courses.

Note: If English is not your native language, you may want to take an English course your first year.

Most students take HDFS 865 Family Theories during their first semester in the program, and many take HDFS 725 Theories and Issues of Human Development during their second semester. The latter is cross-listed with Educational Psychology and it is often taught by the Educational Psychology department in the fall semester.
Although many graduate-level classes do not fill early, registering early is very important. Your registration is what establishes your continuance in the program and it is essential for such things as loan deferment, immigration, disbursement of scholarship awards, assistantship eligibility, and so on.

Before you may register for Independent Study (HDFS 699 and 999) and Research & Thesis (HDFS 990) you must obtain the instructor's permission and this must be entered into the UW computer system by the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. To enroll, give the instructor your name and UW student ID number, and they will see that you are authorized to go online and register. If you have problems getting into a course, call or email the department or the instructor of the course. Be sure to note any error code that you receive while trying to register.

Any student who has a PA or TA during the previous academic year may take summer classes without paying tuition. Registration for summer courses, including Independent Study (699/999) or Research & Thesis (990), is encouraged. Indeed, if you expect to do any work with your advisor over the summer, course registration should reflect this work commitment.

Graduate Certificate Programs

While you are a graduate student in HDFS you are also eligible to obtain a variety of graduate certificates. These certificates can help you establish specific credentials that enhance your professional standing and build important skills and/or areas of expertise.

CHARTING YOUR PROGRESS AND COMPLETING REQUIREMENTS

The HDFS Checklists

The HDFS Checklist (MS, MS/PhD, or PhD) is your “snapshot” guide to the requirements in the department. It specifies the credits and courses you need to complete degree requirements. You may also access them by clicking on the links below.

- Master of Science Degree Requirements Checklist
- Master of Science/Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements Checklist
- Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements Checklist

Your checklist is your guide, your worksheet, and ultimately a departmental record. Your completed and signed Checklist becomes an official record documenting your completion of departmental and Graduate School requirements. A 3-person faculty committee (your Master’s or Prelim committee) reviews your coursework and signs the Checklist indicating that you have completed the necessary coursework and are ready for the next hurdle—in the case of the MS student you are ready to defend your thesis and in the case of the PhD student you are ready to start work on preparing for your preliminary exam. **Checklists must be completed, signed and placed on file with the department in order for the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator to order the “warrant” that is necessary for the defense of a masters’ thesis, dissertation, or prelim.**
It is recommended that your committee meet to discuss the Checklist and “sign off” during a face-to-face meeting. In the case of the MS student, the thesis proposal meeting is often a convenient time to do this; in the case of the PhD student, it is often done at the time of the initial, organizational meeting to discuss the parameters of your Preliminary Exam (see below). However, it is highly recommended that your committee meet prior to these customary “final hour” time periods to discuss your coursework and plans, and this is particularly important if you or your advisor have any questions or concerns about the potential acceptability of the courses you plan to take or use on your Checklist. Any substitutions to the requirements as specified on the Checklist require approval (see below).

In addition to required courses, all HFDS graduate students are required to complete the online CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) Human Subjects Protection training course by the end of their first semester of graduate studies.

**Course Substitutions**

In certain circumstances, a student can request that a similar course they have taken (or want to take) be substituted for a required course using the “Course Substitution Form”. The student’s committee (Master’s or Prelim), or in the event a committee is not yet formed, the student’s advisor and 2 members of GPC, will review the substitute course and determine whether the substitution is approved. The committee (or student) may also request input from other HDFS faculty—for example, the faculty member who teaches the required course, a faculty member who has expertise on statistics courses in others or the Chair of GPC who may have experience with other requests.

A syllabus may be requested to accompany the form. If a course from another University is being substituted, documentation that the student took the course (a transcript) must be in the student’s file. (Previous coursework is generally part of the student’s application materials, so it is likely that this documentation already exists in the file; if not, it should be included with the form). Approved forms are passed to the GPC Chair, a copy is given to the student, and one goes in the Departmental student’s file maintained by the School’s Graduate Program Coordinator. Only approved course substitutions should appear on the student’s completed Checklist.

**When are course substitutions possible?** Course substitutions can be requested only when a substitute course meets the objectives of the requirement. For example, if you took a graduate-level “family theory” class at another university, it would be appropriate to request a course substitution for the "HDFS 865: Family Theory" requirement. Other courses covering the “family” that do not focus explicitly on theory (e.g., Family Relationships, Families in Context, Stress and the Family, etc.) would not be seen as fulfilling the requirement, nor would theory classes that do not focus on the family (Dynamic Systems Theory, Group Theory, Community Theory, etc.). Similar standards are applied to the requirements that you have a Research Methods course and a Theories of Human Development course.

No substitutions are possible for the Proseminar (HDFS 664) and Professional Development Seminar (PDS) since a primary objective of these two courses is professional socialization within our department. Similarly, if the Checklist specifies an “HDFS” content course, content courses from other universities or departments can usually not be substituted. The purpose of the content requirement is establishment of your expertise within the HDFS field, thus HDFS courses are generally the only means
of meeting this requirement. Any course cross-listed or designated as “meets with” in HDFS automatically counts as an HDFS course and would not require a course substitution form.

Methods and Statistics. A range of courses are suggested on the Checklists for fulfilling methods and statistics requirements, however, the list of “approved” courses at any given point may not be complete as new courses are always being offered. If you find another course on campus similar to those listed, you can request a course substitution and the course will be evaluated for equivalency. (This process will allow us to gradually enlarge the list of accepted courses on the Checklist.) It is important to request this evaluation and get approval prior to taking the course.

Graduate Courses from other Universities. In general, if you want to use a graduate level course that does not appear on your UW transcript to meet a requirement (elective, minor, stats, methods, etc.) you should complete a course substitution form. However, in addition to determining whether your courses can be used to fulfill HDFS course requirements, you need to fulfill the Graduate School’s minimum credit requirements—for MS students 16 credits, for PhD students 32 credits must be graduate-level courses taken as a graduate student at the UW-Madison.

Timeline to Degree Completion

The timeline for degree completion varies considerably from student to student. Part-time students generally take longer than full-time students. There are many legitimate reasons that students take longer to complete their degree. Our job, however, is to make sure that delays in progress are not based on poor planning, avoidance, being “stuck,” or experiencing other problems that we could help with. The key is to keep in close contact with your advisor. Schedule regular meetings—your advisor may seem busy, but it is their job to make time for you! Another key is to read this Handbook cover to cover and the Graduate School’s website link to link. Know the requirements and plan accordingly. Develop a long-range schedule for yourself.

Full-Time Status

"Full-time" study is defined by the School of Human Ecology as being enrolled for a minimum of 8 credits per semester until, in the case of Ph.D. students, the preliminary examination is passed. Post-preliminary examination students (“Dissertators”) must enroll for 3 credits for full-time status.

For part time students, years/semesters toward degree can be calculated on the basis of credit hours rather than semesters or years in the program.

Monitoring of Student Progress

The department keeps an updated list of student progress towards the degree, including the passing of “benchmarks” such as proposal/defense meetings, dissertator status, and so on. Deficiencies such as incompletes are also noted. This list is monitored by both the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator and the Graduate Program Chair. An annual review is conducted (often in conjunction with the annual student merit review process, see below) to inform advisors of any problems. The advisor is asked to communicate any issues that arise during the process of this monitoring to their advisee and take steps
to help the student remedy any problems. If you do not hear from your advisor in January or February, this is an appropriate time to check-in with them and make sure you are making “satisfactory progress.” At this time, you may want to “look ahead” and determine when your “deadline” will be for finishing a "benchmark" in order to maintain your satisfactory progress status.

**Satisfactory Progress and Satisfactory Progress Toward Degree Completion - Benchmarks**

The Graduate School specifies minimum criteria for “satisfactory progress.” The requirements include maintaining a 3.0 GPA and considering Incomplete (I) grades to be unsatisfactory if they are not removed during the next fall or spring semester in which a student is enrolled. A student may be placed on probation or suspended from the Graduate School for low grades or for failing to resolve incompletes.

In rare instances, an advisor may feel that an advisee is not prepared to be successful in the HDFS graduate program. Under such circumstances, the advisor will take the lead in working with the GPC Chair to solicit feedback from relevant faculty (e.g., faculty with whom the advisee has worked as a student, TA, PA, or RA). The GPC Chair and advisor will confer with the Graduate School and meet with the advisee to discuss their concerns and decide on a plan for the student to complete or exit the program. If the advisor is the GPC Chair, another member of the GPC will serve in the Chair’s role for this process.

To encourage timely completion of degrees and to help establish guidelines for awarding merit based financial awards, the faculty has adopted an official policy on the definition of satisfactory progress toward degree completion, HDFS incorporates the Graduate School’s minimum requirements for satisfactory progress but also establishes target and maximum benchmarks for satisfactory progress toward degree completion which are defined in Tables 1 and 2:

**Table 1. Master’s Program Benchmarks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Benchmarks</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Maximum time allotted to reach benchmark to maintain satisfactory progress toward degree completion status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Subject Protection Training</td>
<td>During 1st semester</td>
<td>End of first semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required coursework</td>
<td>2 years (4 semesters) of full-time study</td>
<td>2 years (4 semesters) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis proposal defense</td>
<td>1.5 years (3 semesters) of full-time study</td>
<td>1.5 yrs (3 semesters) of full-time study**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis defense</td>
<td>Prior to beginning of 5th semester</td>
<td>3 years (6 semesters) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to Degree</td>
<td>2.5 years (5 semesters) of full-time study</td>
<td>3 years (6 semesters) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. PhD Program Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Benchmarks</th>
<th>Target time to reach benchmark from HDFS UW Masters Program (MS and MS/PHD Students)</th>
<th>Target time to reach benchmark from external Masters Program</th>
<th>Maximum time allotted to reach benchmark to maintain satisfactory progress toward degree completion status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Subject Protection Training</td>
<td>During MS or updated if needed</td>
<td>During 1st semester</td>
<td>End of first semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-member preliminary committee formed</td>
<td>During MS</td>
<td>End of 1st year</td>
<td>2 years (4 semesters) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required coursework</td>
<td>1 year (2 sem) of full-time study</td>
<td>2 years (4 sem) of full-time study</td>
<td>2.5 years (5 sem) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary exams</td>
<td>1.5 years (3 sem) of full-time study</td>
<td>2.5 years (5 sem) of full-time study</td>
<td>3 years (6 sem) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation proposal defense</td>
<td>1 semester after preliminary exams</td>
<td>1 semester after preliminary exams</td>
<td>1 year (2 sem) after preliminary exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation defense</td>
<td>2 semesters post proposal defense</td>
<td>2 semesters post proposal defense</td>
<td>6 years (12 semesters) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to Degree</td>
<td>3 years (6 sem) of full-time study</td>
<td>4 years (8 sem) of full-time study</td>
<td>6 years (12 sem) of full-time study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Note that Table 2 starts after students have obtained their M.S. degree. Thus, target time allotted starts over after a student has received their M.S. degree if they are a M.S./Ph.D. student. Target time allotted starts over between completion of the masters program and the preliminary exams.
- Maximums are open to individual appeals.
- Assumes full time status.
- Students who enrolled in the graduate program prior to the 2010-2011 academic year and believe that the revised benchmarks will substantially affect their program of study may make a special appeal to the GPC.

**Beginning with students who enter the program in Fall 2011.**

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF GRADUATE STUDENTS**

The Annual Review of Graduate Students will occur in May each year, with the submitted information to be updated with activities completed during the preceding 12-months.

**Purpose and Goals**

All enrolled students are required to participate in the ARGS. The process is designed with the following goals in mind:
The process will help communicate to students the range of types of accomplishments and learning/professional development experiences that are valued by the department and the field of study.

The review by non-advisor faculty of students' materials will increase faculty awareness of our student body and increase the sense of departmental community as well as the potential for "networking" within our department. In addition, various mentoring strategies will be modelled.

The documentation and reflection on goals that students will be asked to engage in will encourage students to be deliberate, strategic and goal-oriented in their activities.

The process of documenting accomplishments and regularly updating one’s vita will be good preparation for professional performance reviews in future career settings.

The yearly reports will provide data necessary for ongoing assessment and quality improvement of our Graduate Program.

Components of Annual Review

1. Successful and Timely Completion of Academic Benchmarks (such as prelims, coursework, proposal meetings, etc).
2. Professional Accomplishments & Products of efforts in Research, Teaching, Outreach/Practice, Service, and Learning
3. Interim or products-in-process in Research, Teaching, Outreach/Practice, Service, and Learning
4. Elements of the IDP that were accomplished during the past year, and target elements of the IDP to be addressed in the coming year.

Procedures for the ARGS

Step One: ARGS Report Form and CV

1. Students complete an updated vita and an ARGS Report Form.
2. The ARGS Report Form and updated vita are to be submitted to the student’s major advisor by the designated initial submission date.

Step Two: Faculty and Student Preparation and Advisor-Student Meeting

Student
1. The student will update their CV and complete the ARGS Form, documenting their accomplishments in the last year.
2. The student will get an unofficial PDF copy of their transcript to be submitted with their materials.

Faculty
1. The Graduate Program Coordinator will prepare a file of HDFS Departmental Summary Of Student Information that will be available on the SoHE server (S:drive/GPC folder), accessible to faculty
only. (See Annual Review: Monitoring Rate of Student Progress approved May 22, 2000). This database will provide data on each student's cumulative GPA, accomplishment of major benchmarks (date passed prelims, proposal approved, etc), semesters elapsed since entering degree program, major advisor, and so on).

2. Each faculty member will have access to the file with the HDFS Departmental Summary of Student Information prior to the submission of student materials. Faculty should carefully review the data relevant to each of their own advisees and inform the Department Administrator of any suspected inaccuracies.

3. Advisors will review their own students' self-report materials (annual report form and vita) and his or her progress as documented on the HDFS Departmental Summary of Student Information. Advisors will provide feedback to the student on their vita and the documentation of their accomplishments. This task should be seen by advisors as an opportunity for mentoring each of their advisees with respect to professional development, specifically:
   a. Development of an effective vita,
   b. Development of presentation skills related to documentation of professional experiences and accomplishments. (This advising task is often not addressed until the student is ready to "go on the job market". This annual reflective review process should be invaluable to both the student and the faculty-letter-writer at the time the student seeks employment or other professional experiences),
   c. Advisors are encouraged to also use this opportunity to review student progress and goals in 1:1 meetings with advisees around wider objectives than the narrow goals delineated here.

4. The Advisor will sign the cover sheet indicating approval of the materials and the form documenting their assessment of progress.

**Step Three: Submission of Signed Forms to Graduate Program Coordinator**

1. Students will upload electronic copies (PDF preferred) of their materials, including CV, ARGS Forms (signed copies) and Unofficial Transcript to the designated ARGS folder in BOX.

2. Graduate Program Coordinator will organize materials and GPC Chair will assign each student to a 2 person faculty committee, not including their advisor, with one member designated as the primary reviewer and the other as secondary reviewer.

**Step Four: Faculty Review Process**

1. The student’s 2 person review team will read the materials and together create a draft statement of feedback for the student to bring to the annual review meeting. Guidelines for the feedback will be provided and will include:
   a. Statement of progress and performance in the program
   b. Fit between student activities and student goals
   c. Perceived strengths
   d. Perceived weaknesses
   e. (optional) Suggestions or guidance

2. At the annual meeting for student reviews (conducted at the April or May HDFS faculty meeting), each student will be discussed briefly in order of cohort, with first years first.

3. The primary reviewer presents the student and short discussion occurs as necessary. Additions or changes to the drafted feedback statement are suggested by faculty. The primary faculty reviewer
Step 4 Notes taken and final feedback sent to the student.

4. The primary reviewer sends finalized feedback to the GPC chair who oversees the process of sending out formal letters to each student, assuring compliance of reviewers and some consistency in the feedback.

5. Graduate Coordinator sends confidential letter to student and to the student’s advisor.

**Step 5 Student meets with their Faculty Advisor**

After the student and advisor receive the letters, they specifically meet to discuss the feedback.

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**THE MASTER’S THESIS**

To carry out your thesis project, you will work hand-in-hand with your advisor, and closely with your Committee. Your advisor may suggest you read the “Guidelines for Proposals: Quantitative Research” or “Guidelines for Proposals: Qualitative Research” to help you structure your proposal writing—or your advisor may suggest an alternate structure for you. Work with your advisor to create a format that works best for your thesis. At the suggestion of your advisor, you may wish to share drafts (or a section) of your proposal with other committee members, especially if they have expertise in the content or methods. In most cases, however, your advisor will provide most of the feedback for your proposal revisions. You may need to write several drafts before the advisor considers it ready for your committee to read.

**The Proposal Meeting**

When you and your advisor feel ready, schedule a formal proposal meeting. Advance scheduling is useful because it is often difficult to find available dates on short notice. Scheduling in the summer can be particularly difficult because most faculty are on 9-month appointments and may not be available during the summer.

It is customary to give your committee at least two weeks before the meeting to read your proposal although other timelines may be negotiated with your particular committee. Students should send committee members an electronic version of the thesis and ask whether any member would like a hard copy. If the faculty member would like a hard copy, the student should provide one, using the 2nd floor copy service or their own printer.

Before the meeting your committee needs to review your coursework to make sure that you’re on track for graduation upon completion of your thesis. They must approve and sign your MS Checklist. This form is submitted to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.

Bring the “Proposal Approval Form” to your meeting. When your committee approves and signs off on your research plans, submit the signed form to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. If your committee has suggested changes in your research protocol make sure to submit these changes to your Institutional Review Board (IRB) before proceeding, or if you have not yet submitted an IRB protocol, do so now! Before beginning data collection, you must have a Human Subjects Approval Form submitted and approved or exempted. You will also need to have passed the CITI Human
Subjects Protection Training course. Learn more about the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) here.

After your meeting, expect to make corrections and provide the committee with an update of any crucial changes in your research plan.

**Graduate School Policies and Deadlines**

As you approach the completion of your thesis work, it is time to review the Graduate School policies and make sure you are on track for graduation. Advance planning is required. For example, you need to be registered for at least 2 credits during the semester you plan to graduate (including summer). Make sure you have maintained a GPA of at least 3.0 and have no incompletes before proceeding to your final orals!

See the Graduate School website: “**Expecting your Masters Degree— Procedures to Help**” for deadlines and policies on completing your master’s degree.

**MS Checklist Completion and Warrant Request**

At least 3 weeks prior to your oral defense meeting, you must contact the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator, who will fill out the paperwork to order your Final Defense Warrant. **You must have a completed and signed MS Checklist on file to order your Warrant.** If your committee did not review and sign the MS Checklist at your proposal meeting, you will need to obtain the signatures of all three of your committee members prior to ordering your warrant.

Each semester, the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator contacts current graduate students by email to ask who plans to graduate, and notifies students of Graduate School deadlines (for ordering warrants & commencement information). You have the option to walk in commencement in May and December. Since there is no summer commencement ceremony, August graduates have the option of attending the previous May or following December ceremony. For more information on commencement visit: [http://www.commencement.wisc.edu/](http://www.commencement.wisc.edu/)

If you plan to continue on in the PhD program let your advisor know and discuss plans for your advisement in the PhD program. At the time you request the Warrant, you should also begin the process of “applying” to the doctoral program (see below, Transitioning to the PhD Program).

**Oral Defense Meeting**

When you and your advisor feel you have a satisfactory draft of your thesis, you should set up a meeting of your committee for your “Oral Defense” meeting. It is your responsibility to schedule this meeting and arrange for a room. In addition to the Warrant, you should bring to the defense a copy of the “Degree Completion Form” to be signed and submitted to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator for department records and copies of the “Master’s Thesis Evaluation Form” for each of committee member to be completed separately and collected by your committee chair and then given to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. You can access these forms by clicking on the embedded hyperlinks.
They are can also be accessed on the HDFS Graduate Program website, in the section entitled “Forms and Documents”.

At this meeting, you’ll present your research and defend your findings. It’s similar to the proposal meeting, but now focuses on the actual conduct of the study, the results, and your discussion of your findings. Your committee will ask questions about your thesis, and the questions can cover any part of it. The questions will critique the thesis in the same way that editors and reviewers critique journal article submissions, and your reply to the committee should be much like a good reply to a journal editor: you should defend and explain your research to the committee if, for example, they have misinterpreted something you wrote, or if you disagree with the committee member; but you should be able to admit weaknesses in your thesis when they are identified, and modify your position as necessary. This is one of the tests of a scholar: to be able to both defend your position and change your position, and to have the good judgment to know when to do each. Even though defending the thesis is your responsibility, your committee will help you as needed. They will be happy to restate questions, and may even suggest possible answers. Sometimes they will argue with each other about the best answer, and then ask you to join in the argument! Even though they ask very difficult questions, they are committed to your success. When they identify weaknesses (and they always do), they will make recommendations to make your final, revised thesis the best it can be.

At the end of the defense hearing, you will be asked to step outside the meeting room so that the committee can meet briefly in private to settle on a set of recommended and/or required changes and decide whether or not you have passed. When you return to the room you will learn the results of this brief meeting. You may need to do some additional work, so you may need an additional meeting before your committee members will sign the warrant. Or they may only request some minor changes and sign at the meeting. It is common that your advisor does not sign the Warrant and the Degree Completion Form until all of the requested changes have been made. It is highly unusual to have your thesis accepted with no changes at all.

To officially complete your MS degree, the Warrant must be signed by all members of your committee. It is your responsibility to see that the Warrant is ordered (through the School’s Graduate Program Coordinator), brought to the meeting, and submitted to the Graduate School for processing. After you deliver the signed Warrant to the Graduate School Office (217 Graduate School), they document your official graduation. Also submit the "Degree Completion Form" to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator at that time.

If you plan to continue from the MS to our PhD program, you should initiate the application process and let your advisor know before your meeting that you need the “Transition from MS to PhD Recommendation form completed at your final defense meeting (see more below on transitioning). Be sure to bring this form to the defense. This form will also be completed while you are briefly out of the room, and your advisor will forward it to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.
The Final Thesis

Although the department does not require that you deposit your Master’s Thesis with the Graduate School to be placed in Memorial Library you may choose to do this. For information about submitting your thesis, see the Graduate School website: “Guide to Preparing Your Master’s Thesis”:

The department does require that you provide the us with an electronic copy of your thesis. This should be the final, fully-approved version. You should also provide your advisor and committee members with a copy of your final, fully-approved thesis.

Transitioning from the HDFS Master’s Program to the PhD program

Transitioning to doctoral level work from our Master’s program is generally an easy and smooth process. You will find that you have already completed many of the requirements on the PhD checklist and should be well on your way to a Doctorate in HDFS!

You do not need to re-apply to the Graduate School and you do not need to go through our regular departmental admissions process. You do, however, need to complete a Doctoral Program Transition Application, be recommended for the program by your Masters Committee, have a willing advisor, and be approved by the GPC Chair and/or Committee.

Advisor

The first step is for you to think about the type of dissertation work you want to do and who would be an appropriate advisor for you. Many students continue with the same advisor they had in the MS program, while other students transition to a new advisor. In either event, to enter the PhD program you need to have a willing advisor; if you want your M.S. advisor to continue as your PhD advisor, ask—it is not automatic. The willing advisor needs to sign your Doctoral Program Transition Application, indicating his/her willingness to supervise your doctoral work. (Remember that you can change advisors once you are in the program, but just as in the case of your entry to the MS program you cannot count on being able to change advisors—with entry to the program, an advisor needs to make a commitment to work with you.)

Committee

You also need to have a 3-person committee (usually the same as your 3-person Master's Thesis Committee) make a recommendation to the GPC on your transition to the PhD. The “Transition from MS to PhD Recommendation Form” is usually completed at the time of your final defense. Your advisor will collect the signatures of the 3-person committee and give the form to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator to add to your file.

Process

The Doctoral Program Transition Application is available from the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator, and our HDFS website. In addition to filling out some general questions, you will need to
verify that you have a completed and signed MS Checklist on file and a signed Degree Completion Form. These forms, along with the "Transition from MS to PhD Recommendation Form" (from your advisor) should be submitted to the GPC Chair. S/he will act on your application and send you a letter to let you know that you have approval to continue.

You should begin the application process in the final stages of preparing your thesis. The process is expedited if the recommendation form can be completed at the time of your final thesis defense. You must complete the process prior to the semester you want to begin PhD work.

THE PhD MINOR

The Graduate School requires that you take a minimum of 9 credits in a minor area of study. The purpose of the Minor is to add breadth to your PhD Major, thus it is important that the Minor is not in the same substantive area as your PhD work. For example, if your thesis examines couple relationships, it would not be appropriate to declare your minor to be “Close Relationships.” Cross-listed courses are permitted if they are distinct from the major area of study. See the Graduate School website for additional detailed information on Minors:

Two Options for the Minor

Option A (external)

Option A (external): Requires a minimum of 9 credits in a single department or program area. Selection of this option requires the approval of the minor department/sponsor/program and following the specific requirements of the minor department/sponsor/program (many require more than 9 credits). A list of approved external minors can be found in the Graduate Catalog. HDFS participates in the joint administration of an Option A minor that is often of interest to our students, the "Prevention and Intervention Science" Minor. For more information see: http://grad.wisc.edu/catalog/degrees_preventionscience.htm

Option B (distributed)

Option B (distributed): Requires a minimum of 9 credits in one or more departments and can include course work in the major department. Selection of this option requires the approval of the major department. This approval is generally granted through your 3-person prelim committee.

The Graduate School's minimum course requirements for the minor include:

- An average GPA of 3.00 on all minor course work.
- Course work must be graduate level (the equivalent of UW-Madison courses 300 level or above; no audits or pass/fail).
- Maximum 3 credits of independent study (e.g., 699, 999).
- Research and thesis cannot be used to satisfy the minor (e.g., 990).
- No more than 5 credits of course work completed more than five years prior to admission to the Ph.D.; course work taken ten years ago or more may not be used.
If you have selected Option B, you should create an official name for your minor to be approved by your committee. It can be a significant “selling point” on your vitae to have a minor name that accurately reflects your expertise (e.g., “Qualitative Methods” or “Family & Community Development”)—so if you choose Option B, take time to find an appropriate title.

COMPLETING YOUR MINOR/MAJOR COURSEWORK, AND THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Prelim Planning Meeting

You determine your minor with the help of your advisor and take all your coursework, including minor coursework, prior to taking your Preliminary Examination. At the time you are preparing for your Preliminary Examination you should have a meeting with your Prelim Committee and review your PhD Checklist making sure you have completed the minor and all coursework.

The Prelim Warrant

The SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator must obtain your Prelim Warrant at least 3 weeks before you defend your prelims. So about the same time you receive your questions, submit to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator the signed “Instructions to obtain the PhD Prelim Warrant & Minor” form, and your signed PhD Checklist. The SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator will fill out the paperwork to order your Prelim Warrant, and will contact you (by email) when it arrives. This Warrant is signed by your committee at your prelim defense. When you deliver the signed Warrant to the Graduate School (217 Bascom Hall), you will be granted dissertator status by the Graduate School.

Departmental Policies on the Prelim Examination

**Human Development & Family Studies Doctoral Preliminary Examination** Accepted by the HDFS Faculty on Oct. 12, 1992; revised by GPC 1/14/99; revised by GPC 11/17/03; approved by HDFS Faculty 12/1/03; revised by HDFS GPC Committee, April 19, 2010; adopted by HDFS Faculty 5/3/10. Notations about the new review forms added Aug 2013

**Purpose**

The doctoral preliminary examination is designed to assess the student's knowledge and competencies in the core areas of the field of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS). The aim is to ensure that, before beginning independent Ph.D. research, the student has mastered the substantive content and analytic methods of HDFS as well as the intellectual skills for conducting a dissertation. The student is responsible for the breadth and depth of our field. For breadth, the exam may cover any part of the core content of the HDFS field. For depth, we aim to test the student’s highest level of performance in the parts of the field in which the student is specializing. In a cross-disciplinary field such as HDFS, this will often require the synthesis of knowledge from one’s specialty area with knowledge from other fields of study.
Content of the Prelim Exam

1. All prelim exams must cover the areas of theory, content or substantive knowledge, and research methods in human development and family studies as well as the intellectual skills of doctoral-level scholarship.

2. Some questions will be broadly integrative within the field of HDFS, whereas other questions may be tailored to the student's specific scholarly interests.

3. There will be approximately 3-5 questions; each question will have a suggested maximum length, with a total exam length maximum of about 100 pages. The usual time limit for the take-home examination will be no more than 28 days, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Procedure for Setting and Evaluating the Preliminary Examination

1. Before beginning the prelim, check the Graduate Student Handbook for information on when students can take the prelim exam, forming the prelim committee, obtaining the warrant, and so forth.

2. The entire 3-person advisory committee must approve all questions.

3. The prelim committee chair will coordinate the prelim process and will be responsible for ensuring that the exam has adequate balance, breadth, and depth.

4. Students may use any references or handbooks, published articles, or drafts to answer prelim questions, but are not permitted to receive direct assistance from other individuals in the completion of this examination. However, to clarify any of the prelim questions, a student may contact the prelim committee chair, who will then get consensus from the entire committee.

5. All committee members must evaluate all answers using the “HDFS Preliminary Examination Assessment Form” prior to the preliminary exam oral defense. These forms should be given to each prelim committee member by the student. The student will not receive completed copies of these assessment forms, but will get feedback about their performance during the meeting and from his/her advisor.

6. Students will learn of the prelim questions on the first day of the exam. If necessary, the prelim committee may suggest preparatory readings to the student in advance.

7. Potential competencies that may be evaluated in the theory question include, for example, the ability to describe, contrast, and compare theories and conceptual frameworks across the field of human development and family studies. In addition, students may be asked to use these theories to conceptualize studies, formulate questions, and develop analytic plans. Students with an applied focus may be asked to use theory to design and evaluate outreach and intervention programs.

8. Potential competencies that may be evaluated in the content question include, for example, the ability to demonstrate understanding of a human development perspective and the role of the
context in which people live. In addition to a general command of the substantive content of HDFS, the student may be asked to synthesize patterns across multiple studies, use studies to tell a coherent story (rather than reviewing studies without narrative to order and link them), explain not only what we know but how (and how well) we know it, and explain why some studies should be believed or emphasized more than others.

9. Potential competencies that may be evaluated in the methods question include, as in other parts of the exam, both breadth and depth. For breadth, doctoral candidates may be asked, for example, to critically evaluate the quality and meaning of the various methods used in the field (e.g., quantitative and qualitative methods). In terms of depth, doctoral candidates must demonstrate some particular expertise usually in the analytic methods most appropriate to their own research.

10. Skills germane to passing a doctoral preliminary examination include conceptual reasoning, critical and integrative thinking, and scholarly writing. Likely areas of evaluation include breadth of coverage, depth of coverage, level of organization, and writing ability. Answers are expected to be typed, double-spaced, and prepared using a standard academic writing style (e.g., APA Style, ASA Style).

11. A doctoral candidate may use a copy editor only under special circumstances and with the approval of the committee. The copy editor must be from outside the field. If copy editing is approved, the doctoral candidate must turn in the written prelim on time and then be granted additional time for copy editing before the committee reads the prelim.

12. A meeting of the committee and the doctoral candidate will follow the completion of the written exam. This will serve as an oral exam and feedback session. Its purposes are (a) to clarify possible shortcomings in the written exam, and (b) to initiate in-depth discussions to move forward student's thinking. The oral meeting will take place no sooner than two weeks after the written exam is due.

13. Each member of the prelim committee will give feedback to the committee chair for the purposes of planning the meeting. The decision to pass or fail particular questions will be made at the end of the oral meeting, after the student has had the opportunity to respond to questioning, and following committee discussion. The decision is not based solely on the written exam, but on the written and oral exams together. In consultation with the committee, the student’s advisor will complete the “Preliminary Examination Outcome Summary Sheet” at the end of the preliminary exam oral defense. The student’s advisor will discuss the outcome and feedback with the student. A copy of the form will be kept in the student’s departmental file.

14. If the student fails all questions on the exam, the committee has the option to terminate the student from the program following this first exam. However, if the student fails only part of the exam, the committee has the option to allow one re-examination of the part of the exam that is failed. In this scenario, the prelim committee is responsible for setting the time-line for completing the re-examination, which must occur before the end of the following semester. Under exceptional circumstances, the prelim committee may allow additional re-examinations and/or a longer time-line for completing the re-examination.

15. All prelim questions will be kept on file by the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator, and will be available to all faculty and students. Answers will be kept in the advisor's file for the student.
If you’d like to see past prelim questions, there is a folder you can check-out from the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. However, answers are not available.

Most faculty are on 9-month appointments and they are not required to read/write prelims during the summer months, so be sure to check with your committee about the timing of your exam to be sure it fits with their schedules as well as yours.

**DISSERTATOR STATUS**

As mentioned earlier, to achieve dissertator status, you must have completed the major and minor coursework, passed the prelim exam, and deposited the signed Prelim Exam Warrant at the Graduate School. The Graduate School will notify you by email when you have dissertator status.

There are some financial benefits for dissertators related to tuition—dissertators are considered full-time when registered for only 3 credits. Useful information can be found on the Graduate School website under “Completing Your Degree”:

- Dissertator status: [http://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#dissertationstatus](http://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#dissertationstatus)
- Continuous Enrollment Requirement: [http://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#continuousenrollmentrequirement](http://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#continuousenrollmentrequirement)
- Ph.D. Dissertation Preparation Guidelines: [http://grad.wisc.edu/currentstudents/doctoralguide](http://grad.wisc.edu/currentstudents/doctoralguide)

**Leave of Absence/Continuous Registration after Prelims**

It is important to realize that you must be continuously registered as a dissertator each fall and spring semester until the completion of your degree. If you do not maintain continuous enrollment once you are a dissertator, you will be assessed a degree completion fee equal to twelve times the current per-credit rate in effect at the time you bring your dissertation to the Graduate School for final review. (See the link to Continuous Enrollment Requirement above.)

Also realize that you have a clock running from the time you gain dissertator status to the time to graduate. A student who fails to have their final defense and deposit their dissertation within five years after passing their prelim exam may be required to take another prelim exam. Your advisor may appeal these time limits through a written request to the Graduate School Office of Admissions and Academic Services (217 Bascom Hall). See their website for information: [https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#grievancesandappeals](https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#grievancesandappeals)
THE DISSERTATION

Having completed research at the MS level you should have a fairly good idea how to begin your dissertation work. Preparing a quality dissertation proposal takes time, hard work, patience, and perseverance! Support and encouragement from your advisor, your committee, and fellow students will make the process more bearable, even fun!

You may also want to find other resources to support your dissertation work—suggested resources are available here:  http://grad.wisc.edu/pd/dissertation/

For example, a dissertator support group composed of fellow dissertators is available on campus though the University Health Services, as are other supportive resources.

Your advisor may suggest you read the “Guidelines for Proposals: Quantitative Research” or “Guidelines for Proposals: Qualitative Research” to help you structure your proposal writing—or your advisor may suggest an alternate structure for you. Work with your advisor to create a format the works best for your thesis. At the suggestion of your advisor, you may wish to share drafts of your proposal or a section of your proposal with your other Dissertation Committee members (see above for committee composition), especially if they have expertise in the content or methods. In most cases, however, your advisor will provide most of the feedback for your proposal revisions. You will probably need to write several drafts before the advisor considers it ready for your committee to read and for you to schedule your proposal meeting.

The Proposal Meeting

In scheduling your proposal meeting, you should plan far enough in advance to accommodate everyone’s schedule, and be sure to give your committee at least two weeks to read your proposal before the meeting, unless you negotiate a different timeline. Students should send committee members an electronic version of the thesis and ask whether any member would like a hard copy. If the faculty member would like a hard copy, the student should provide one, using the 2nd floor copy service or their own printer.

The “Proposal Approval Form” should be taken to the meeting, signed by your committee, and submitted to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.

After your meeting, expect to make corrections and provide the committee with an update of any crucial changes in your research plan. Before beginning data collection, be sure to get your Human subjects Approval Form submitted and approved to the appropriate campus IRB. See Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). Any research using human subjects must have IRB review before it can be conducted. You will also need to have taken and passed the CITI Human Subjects Protection Training.

The next steps are up to you—conduct your study! This process varies from student to student, so there are no “rules”. Just make sure you stick with it, and find ways to motivate yourself if you are feeling frustrated or overwhelmed—and keep in touch with your advisor! Most students feel that this
process requires a lot of self-direction, high level of organizational skills, perseverance and discipline, but the joy of discovery and completion is not to be missed!

The Dissertation Defense

When you and your advisor feel you have a satisfactory draft of your complete dissertation, you should set up a meeting with your committee for your “Oral Defense” meeting. At this meeting, you’ll present your research and defend your findings. It’s similar to the proposal meeting, but now focuses on the actual conduct of the study, the results, and your discussion of your findings. You should consult with your advisor about what to expect, and how to prepare for the defense. In some departments other students attend the oral defense meeting, although this has not been customary in HDFS.

Although there are variations in how the defense is conducted, typically you will be asked to make a brief presentation of your study to the committee. Sometimes questions begin before the presentation is finished, other times they begin once the formal presentation is completed. Your committee will ask questions about your dissertation work; questions can cover any part of the project (e.g., theory, literature review, methods, analysis, application of findings). The questions will critique the dissertation in the same way that editors and reviewers critique journal article submissions, and your reply to the committee should be much like a good reply to a journal editor: you should defend and explain your research to the committee if, for example, they have misinterpreted something you wrote, or if you disagree with the committee member; but you should be able to admit weaknesses in your thesis when they are identified, and modify your position as necessary. This is one of the tests of a scholar—to be able to both defend your position and change your position, and have the good judgment to know when to do each. Even though defending the thesis is your responsibility, your committee will help you as needed. They will be happy to restate questions, and may even suggest possible answers. Sometimes they will argue with each other about the best answer, and then ask you to join in the argument! Even though they ask very difficult questions, they are committed to your success. When they identify weaknesses (and they always do), they will make recommendations to make your final, revised thesis the best it can be.

At the end of the defense hearing, you will be asked to step outside the meeting room so that the committee can meet briefly in private to settle on a set of recommended and/or required changes and decide whether or not you have passed. When you return to the room you will learn the results of this brief meeting. You may need to do some additional work, so you may need an additional meeting before your committee members will sign the Warrant. Or they may only request some minor changes and sign at the meeting. It is common that your advisor does not sign the Warrant until all of the requested changes have been made. It is highly unusual to have your dissertation accepted with no changes at all.

After passing your final oral—Celebrate! Then go through the finishing steps outlined below. For more information, see the Graduate School website publications under “Completing Your Degree”.
Paperwork (PhD Warrant) and Final Steps

Each Semester the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator contacts the current graduate students to ask who plans to graduate. She will inform you of Graduate School deadlines, including ordering your warrant. At least 3 weeks prior to your final oral defense meeting, you must contact the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator to fill out the paperwork to order your Final Defense Warrant. You must have a completed and signed PhD Checklist on file. If your committee did not review and sign the PhD Checklist earlier, you will need to obtain the signatures of your committee. When your Warrant arrives, the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator will contact you by email.

The Warrant is signed by your committee at or after your final oral defense meeting. All members of the examination committee must sign the Warrant. Your advisor may withhold her or his signature until all required revisions to the dissertation have been completed to her or his satisfaction. The advisor also must sign the UMI abstract page of the dissertation. After your defense, you must deliver your signed Warrant to the Graduate School office (217 Graduate School) to officially graduate.

You need an appointment with the Graduate School to submit your forms. Call the Graduate School PhD Office in Bascom Hall (262-3011) to set up your appointment.

You should supply a “PhD Dissertation Evaluation Form” to each of your committee members at your dissertation defense. These forms should be completed separately by each member of your committee and collected by your committee chair to give to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator. In addition, the department has an “HDFS Degree Completion Form” you also need to have signed by your committee at your defense. It is the student’s responsibility to submit the signed form to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator.

The Final Dissertation

Although the department does not require that you deposit your Dissertation with the Graduate School to be placed in Memorial Library you may choose to do this. For information about depositing your dissertation, see http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/education/completedegree/ddd.html

The department does require that you provide us with an electronic copy of your dissertation. This should be the final, fully approved version. You should also provide your advisor and other members of the committee with a copy of your final, fully approved dissertation.

Students should give their forwarding address and pertinent information to the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator when they present the department with their final copy of the dissertation.

Commencement

So you’ve made it! Some students choose to “walk” in the graduation ceremony, others choose to skip the pomp and circumstance. Early each semester, the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator contacts current graduate students by email to find out who is planning to graduate, and then notifies these graduating students of the Graduate School deadlines (for ordering warrants, degree warrant request, submission, etc.) and enters their commencement information online. Commencement occurs each
May and December, so August graduates have the option of attending the previous May or the following December ceremony. Because the SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator also enters names of doctoral graduates into the commencement system, he/she will need to know whether you want to participate, and if so, the name of your faculty escort. Typically, your advisor (major professor) serves as your escort. But if your advisor is unavailable you may ask any other faculty member to serve this function. For more information on commencement visit: http://commencement.wisc.edu/

FORMS AND DOCUMENTS (UPDATED OCT. 2014)

The creation of the role of SoHE Graduate Program Coordinator (replacing the HDFS Dept. Admin.) at the beginning of AY14-15 required the updating of most forms and documents. The updated versions appear below. Forms may also be accessed via the HDFS Graduate Program website.

Graduate Committee/Advisor
  ▪ Change Graduate Advisor OR Change/Form Graduate Committee
  ▪ Request to Appoint a Non-Graduate Faculty member to a Master’s/Doctoral Committee

Degree Checklists
  ▪ Master of Science Degree Requirements Checklist
  ▪ Master of Science/Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements Checklist
  ▪ Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements Checklist

Course Substitutions
  ▪ Request Form for Course Substitutions

Merit and Progress Reports
  ▪ Annual Merit Report (Word doc format)
  ▪ Annual Progress Report – Grad Student Progress Checklist

Doctoral Program Prelim Examination
  ▪ Obtaining the PhD Prelim Exam Warrant
  ▪ Preliminary Examination Assessment
  ▪ Preliminary Examination Outcome

Transition from Master’s to PhD Degree
  ▪ MS to PhD Degree Transition Application
  ▪ Transition from MS to PhD Recommendation (Faculty only)

Thesis and Dissertation
  ▪ Guidelines for Proposals: Qualitative Research
  ▪ Guidelines for Proposals: Quantitative Research
  ▪ Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Approval
  ▪ Master’s Thesis/PhD Dissertation Evaluation

Degree Completion
  ▪ Degree Completion – Human Ecology: Human Development and Family Studies

Misc.
  ▪ Graduate Scholarship Response