

Assessment Plan and Assessment Mapping: PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric

We have instituted five points of assessment that all TPPC doctoral students must participate in. These are:

- A. Coursework (including seminar papers, projects, and presentations)
- B. Qualifying Exam
- C. Comprehensive Exam
- D. Annual Reviews
- E. Dissertation Proposal Defense
- F. Dissertation Defense

A. Coursework

Students in the TPPC program must complete a minimum of 60 approved semester credits beyond their Master's degree. This program is designed to be completed in 4 years.

Coursework falls into x categories: Rhetoric and Theory (6 credits), Research (12 credits), Technology and Design (9 credits), Pedagogy (9 credits), an "English Cognate" (3-credit 6000-level course in English outside of TPPC, an "External Cognate" (3-credit course at the 6000 or 7000 level in a department outside of English, Dissertation (18 credits), and Electives.

In 2016, the Graduate English and American Studies Curriculum Committees and faculty reviewed the coverage of the program learning objectives across courses for the English programs. Coverage is ranked as high (H), medium (M), or low (L). The result of this ranking is presented in the following table. The Graduate Advisory Committee will review the assessment mapping every spring to update, amend, and correct it.

Course	L1: Demonstrate mastery of major theoretical and rhetorical contributions to the field.	L2: Demonstrate field-expertise skills in technology and design.	L3: Demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and defend pedagogical practices.	L4: Develop and apply a research method(s) in research projects and dissertation.
ENGL 7000	H	L	L	H
ENGL 7400	M	H	L	L
ENGL 7410	H	M	M	H
ENGL 7420	H (depends on topic)	H	L	M
ENGL 7430	M	H	L	M
ENGL 7440	H	L	L	H
ENGL 7450	H	M	L	M
ENGL 7460	H	H	L	M
ENGL 7470	M	H	L	M
ENGL 7480	H	H	L	M
ENGL 7800	H	M	H	M
ENGL 7830	H	L	L	H
ENGL 7860	H	M	H	M
ENGL 7890	H	L	L	H
ENGL 7900	Depends on topic	Depends on topic	Depends on topic	H
ENGL 7920	Depends on topic	Depends on topic	Depends on topic	Depends on topic

ENGL 7970	H	Depends on topic	Depends on topic	H
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B. PhD Qualifying Examination

At the end of students' first year in the PhD program, they must pass a Qualifying Exam, which is a formal evaluation of their progress by the Qualifying Exam committee. [The Qualifying Exam committee consists of the entire TPPC faculty, the Writing Program Director (if students are employed as Graduate Instructors), and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who all evaluate and comment on the student's entire body of written and oral work up to that point in the program.

In Fall 2014, the Technical Communication Curriculum Committee redesigned the Qualifying Exam to include a wider variety of measures. Before Fall 2014, the Qualifying Exam asked students to prepare a portfolio of their best work from courses in their first year. Since the inception of the doctoral program, every student has passed the Qualifying Exam, including those who proved unable to successfully complete the program. Starting in Spring 2015, students were asked to submit other materials including a written biographical statement, a Curriculum Vitae, teaching evaluations, and a detailed written form (the "Annual Progress Report Form") which they reflect on their accomplishments and project their plans for the coming academic year. The measures also include feedback from faculty who've taught and/or mentored the student. Students then meet with the above-mentioned faculty for an hour-long oral examination and discussion of their materials and their research trajectory. Students are expected to answer detailed questions about their upcoming dissertation project and internship, as well as to offer frank assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses regarding written and oral work. The TPPC faculty have determined that this oral examination and evaluation of a student's entire performance in the first year of his/her program provide a much more useful and effective evaluation than a single written examination or portfolio review.

Below is a table that displays the priority given in the qualifying exam to the program's learning objectives.

Event	L1: Demonstrate mastery of major theoretical and rhetorical contributions to the field.	L2: Demonstrate field-expertise skills in technology and design.	L3: Demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and defend pedagogical practices.	L4: Develop and apply a research method(s) in research projects and dissertation.
PhD Qualifying Exam	H	M	M	H

Assessment method for Qualifying Exam: Students are evaluated on the criteria listed below, based on the evidence of their transcript, their Curriculum Vitae (CV), their Program of Study worksheet, and their Annual Progress Report Form. They will also be evaluated based on testimony from the faculty who have observed their performance as a graduate student and Graduate Instructor.

Criterion Examples	Examples	Source of Evaluation
Quality of written work in class	Writing strong seminar papers and other class assignments	Transcript, faculty observation
Quality of contributions to oral or online class discussions	Participating frequently and well in class discussion, either face-to-face or online	Transcript, faculty observation
Scholarly activity	Submitting proposals and presenting conference papers; submitting journal articles; participating in grant proposals	CV, annual review form, faculty observation
Evidence of taking initiative and making progress towards the degree	Completing a steady, committee-approved coursework load; approaching faculty members with ideas for research projects for the dissertation; actively working towards forming a Dissertation Supervisory Committee	CV, annual review form, faculty observation
Participation in civic life of the department	Attending workshops, guest speaker presentations, meetings, committees, and other events that PhD students are encouraged to attend	CV, annual review form, faculty observation
Evidence of professional conduct	Listening to advice from faculty, following suggestions, collaborating respectfully with faculty, fellow students, and staff	Faculty observation
Ability to deliver on required tasks	Completing assignments; meeting class and program deadlines; attending class; fulfilling teaching duties; avoiding Incomplete grades or completing them in a timely manner	Transcript, faculty observation

Based on the criteria listed above and a meeting with the students, the Qualifying Exam committee will make one of the following assessments:

Pass with distinction	Student is excelling in all areas.
Pass	Student is performing satisfactorily, though there may be a few areas for improvement.
Pass with probation	Student has underperformed significantly in some or all areas. The committee will provide a remediation plan—a list of needed improvements that student must make during the second year in order to advance to a third year in the program.
Dismiss	Student has failed to make adequate progress during the first year. The committee will recommend to the DGS that student be dismissed from the program.

If the student receives a “pass with probation,” he/she will be evaluated again by the Qualifying Exam committee the following year. If the student fails to meet the conditions of the remediation plan after a year of probation, the committee will recommend that the student be dismissed from the program.

Once the student has passed the Qualifying Exam, he/she will be reviewed each spring semester by the Supervisory Committee. If the student has performed poorly since the previous review, the committee may recommend to the Qualifying Exam committee that he/she be put on probation or dismissed.

C. PhD Comprehensive Examination

At the end of students’ formal course work (usually the fourth semester), student must write a Comprehensive Exam, which consists of two essays that are evaluated by the students’ advisory committee. The first essay asks students to demonstrate a breadth of knowledge in the field of rhetoric and professional communication and requires that they demonstrate a good understanding of foundational theories, chronologies, and methodologies. The first essay requires that students synthesize knowledge by reflecting on their coursework and study. The second essay requires that students project forward. In this essay, students are asked to demonstrate depth of knowledge in a specific aspect of rhetoric and professional communication, the area in which they will be conducting their dissertation work. If the first essay provides context, the second should articulate clearly how the specific area of interest extends the conversations in the field and furthers a line or series of questions.

To complete the exam, students are responsible for generating a reading list (approximately 100 texts in length) and four contextualizing paragraphs from which exam questions will be formulated. Given the scope of the Comprehensive Exam, the reading list should equally exemplify breadth and depth in the field. Students work their Supervisory Committee chair to develop a Comprehensive Exam reading list around four themes central to technical communication and rhetoric: Theory & Rhetoric, Technology & Design, Pedagogy, and Research Methods.

After submitting their reading list, students should meet with the members of their Supervisory Committee to discuss their readings. From these conversations the exam questions will be drawn. For each essay, students will be given two questions and asked to answer one. The average exam length is 15 pages per essay. In addition, each essay must also include a references list in APA format. Students have 72 hours from the time they are given the exam questions to complete both essays.

The students' Supervisory Committee will be responsible for reviewing the completed Comprehensive Exam. Within one week of completing the exam, the chair of the Supervisory Committee will notify the student of the results, and the Supervisory Committee may ask to meet with the student. At this time the student will be told whether she/he is ready to proceed to the dissertation research phase of the TPPC program. If a student does not pass the Comprehensive Exam, she/he will be allowed to retake the exam within one calendar year. If he/she does not pass the exam the second time, she/he will be asked to discontinue the program.

Below is a table that displays the priority given in the comprehensive exam to the program's learning objectives.

Event	L1: Demonstrate mastery of major theoretical and rhetorical contributions to the field.	L2: Demonstrate field-expertise skills in technology and design.	L3: Demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and defend pedagogical practices.	L4: Develop and apply a research method(s) in research projects and dissertation.
PhD Comprehensive Exam	H	H	H	H

Method of assessment:

The comprehensive exam has four possible outcomes.

Pass with distinction	Written exam excels in all four objectives
Pass	Written exam meets expectations of mastery in all four objectives
Low Pass	Written exam does not meet expectation of mastery in all four objectives
Fail	Written exam display performance far below expectations of mastery in one or more of four objectives

D. PhD Annual Reviews

Students in years two through the end of the program must meet every spring with their Supervisory Committee for their annual review. Students prepare written documentation to submit to their Supervisory Committee ahead of the meeting. Students must provide information on completed coursework, grades, and degree and residency requirements, including information on any incomplete grades received. Students must also describe teaching, scholarship, and service commitments, including any presentations, articles, book reviews, and committee service completed in the last year. Lastly, students describe their plans for the upcoming year, identifying coursework; degree or residency requirements; and presentations, articles, book reviews, and committee service they expect to complete.

Below is a table that displays the priority given to the four learning objectives in the annual reviews.

Event	L1: Demonstrate mastery of major theoretical and rhetorical contributions to the field.	L2: Demonstrate field-expertise skills in technology and design.	L3: Demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and defend pedagogical practices.	L4: Develop and apply a research method(s) in research projects and dissertation.
PhD Annual Review	H	M	M	H

Method of Assessment:

The annual review has four possible outcomes.

Pass with distinction	Student excels in all four objectives
Pass	Student meets expectations of mastery in all four objectives
Pass with probation	Student does not meet expectation of mastery in all four objectives
Fail	Student performs far below expectations of mastery in one or more of four objectives

If the student receives a “pass with probation,” he/she will be evaluated again by the TPPC committee the following year. If the student fails to meet the conditions of the remediation plan after a year of probation, the committee will recommend that the student be dismissed from the program.

E. and F.: Dissertation Proposal Oral Defense and Dissertation Defense.

The two sections that follow describe the assessment plans related to the dissertation. The PhD dissertation is a book-length written project based on original research undertaken by the student. It serves two purposes: 1) Expand the knowledge of the field, and 2) Demonstrate that the student is capable of original and meaningful research.

Event	L1: Demonstrate mastery of major theoretical and rhetorical contributions to the field.	L2: Demonstrate field-expertise skills in technology and design.	L3: Demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and defend pedagogical practices.	L4: Develop and apply a research method(s) in research projects and dissertation.
Dissertation Proposal Oral Defense	H	M (depends on topic of research)	M (depends on topic of research)	H
PhD Dissertation Oral Defense	H	M (depends on topic of research)	M (depends on topic of research)	H

E. PhD Dissertation Proposal Oral Defense

The dissertation proposal is usually 20-30 pages in length. In it, students must:

- Define the scope of the research
- Convince the Supervisory Committee that their research project will produce knowledge valuable to the field
- Demonstrate that the research methods are valid and appropriate to the question at issue

Method of assessment:

The dissertation proposal oral exam has four possible outcomes.

Pass with distinction	Written proposal and oral exam excel in all four objectives
Pass	Written proposal and oral exam meet expectations of mastery in all four objectives
Low pass	Written proposal and oral exam do not meet expectation of mastery in all four objectives
Fail	Written proposal and oral exam display performance far below expectations of mastery in one or more of four objectives

F. PhD Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense consists of a public component followed by a closed component. All members of the department are formally invited to the public component, but it is open to all. The public component lasts 45 minutes, including a question and answer session. The candidate presents his/her research in summary (research problems, questions, methods, findings, implications). In the closed portion of the defense (90 minutes), the Supervisory Committee first meets without the candidate to discuss any issues or concerns. The candidate then joins with her/his Supervisory Committee, and the committee shares feedback and asks questions. If necessary, the committee and the student develop a revision plan. The candidate leaves the room while the committee reaches a consensus on one of the four outcomes listed below.

The PhD Dissertation Defense results in one of four outcomes:

Pass with no revisions	Dissertation and oral exam excel in mastery of all four learning objectives and requires no revision.
Pass with minor revisions	Dissertation and oral exam meets or exceeds expectations of mastery in all four learning objectives and requires minor revision.
Pass with major revisions	Dissertation and oral exam meet expectation of mastery in at least three of four learning objectives but requires extensive revision to meet expectations in all four.
Fail	Dissertation and/or oral exam fall far below expectations of mastery of one or more of the learning objectives.

G. Student Presentations and Publications

Although not a requirement of the PhD program, students are strongly encouraged to participate in public professional presentations and to disseminate their research in professional publications. Students also submit evidence of engagement with scholarship and the dissemination of that scholarship in their annual reviews. Depending on the topic of research, the public presentations and/or publications also directly demonstrate that students are mastering the program's learning objectives.

Below is a table that displays how a presentation or publication addresses the program's learning objectives.

Event	L1: Demonstrate mastery of major theoretical and rhetorical contributions to the field.	L2: Demonstrate field-expertise skills in technology and design.	L3: Demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and defend pedagogical practices.	L4: Develop and apply a research method(s) in research projects and dissertation.
Professional Presentations	H, M, or L (depending on topic)	H, M, or L (depending on topic)	H, M, or L (depending on topic)	H, M, or L (depending on topic)
Professional Publications	H, M, or L (depending on topic)	H, M, or L (depending on topic)	H, M, or L (depending on topic)	H, M, or L (depending on topic)