

ICR Student Handbook

Please note that all graduate degrees are overseen by the Graduate College, so most ICR policies are derived from and superseded by Graduate College policy. Please familiarize yourself with the [Graduate College Handbook](#) and consult it when questions come up about policies and procedures. Theresa Harris, our ICR Office Administrator, is an excellent starting point for questions. Her email is tharris@illinois.edu.

Degree Requirements

Credit Hour/Coursework Requirements

The tables below contain coursework requirements for students entering the ICR with and without an approved Master's degree in hand. ICR students typically complete Proseminar 1 and 2 during their first year in the program. The research methods course requirement may be satisfied at any time and by any graduate-level research methods course. If you have questions about whether a specific course will satisfy the research methods requirement, please consult the DGS. There are similarly no requirements regarding elective courses – any course that offers graduate-level credit can be counted towards the credit hour requirement.

For students entering with a Master's degree in hand:

MDIA 571	Proseminar I	4
MDIA 572	Proseminar II	4
Two research methods courses, 1 quantitative and 1 qualitative		8
Elective Hours		32
MDIA 599	Thesis Research (min/ max applied toward degree)	16
Total Hours		64

For students entering with a Bachelor's degree in hand:

MDIA 571	Proseminar I	4
MDIA 572	Proseminar II	4
Two research methods courses, 1 quantitative and 1 qualitative		8
Elective Hours		64
MDIA 599	Thesis Research (min/max applied toward degree)	16
Total Hours		96

Annual Review

The Graduate College requires all graduate programs to conduct annual academic progress reviews of all graduate students enrolled in degree-seeking programs (such as the ICR). Near the end of each academic year (in April/May), the DGS will ask each student to complete an [annual review form](#), which chronicles your progress and accomplishments over the course of the year. Students need to complete the form and have their advisor sign it before submitting it to Theresa Harris, ICR Administrative Assistant. Students are encouraged to identify their advisor as soon as possible; those who have not yet declared an advisor should designate the DGS as their advisor where indicated on the form.

Advancement to Candidacy

The Advancement to Candidacy ([ATC form](#)) is typically submitted by the end of the second year in the ICR (third year for those students entering without a Master's degree). The ATC form accomplishes many important tasks: It gives you the opportunity to briefly articulate the areas of focus for your dissertation and the coursework that you've taken in preparation for your dissertation. It also gives us (faculty) the opportunity to review your coursework to date and evaluate whether it will sufficiently prepare you for the dissertation idea you've described on the form.

The DGS will send out a call for ATC submissions every semester, with the submission deadline typically on the campus-designated "Reading Day" at the end of each semester. Review of the form is typically completed before the start of the subsequent semester.

Preliminary Examination

Once your ATC form has been approved, you may begin formal preparations for the preliminary exam (“prelims”). Prelims are ideally completed during years 3-4 of the doctoral program. They consist of two written components, the written exam itself and the dissertation proposal. Both the written exam and the proposal will be subject to an oral examination. Some faculty prefer to hold one oral examination meetings for both the exam and the proposal, others prefer to hold separate examination meetings for each. Specific ICR prelims guidelines may be found [here](#), with a condensed checklist [here](#). Guidance from the Graduate College regarding prelims is [here](#).

Dissertation

The dissertation is the culmination of your doctoral student experience and represents your unique contribution to the scholarly literature. Your dissertation advisor is your primary source of guidance through this process. An administrative checklist for both students and faculty can be found [here](#).

Enrollment

Enrollment Status

The [Graduate College handbook](#) (section 2.2) provides guidelines on what constitutes full-time enrollment. The Graduate College definition of full-time enrollment is particularly important for international students, as maintaining full-time enrollment status is a required by F-1 or J-1 visa holders. Essentially, full-time enrollment is 8 hours per semester for those students on waiver-generating appointments and 12 hours per semester for those students not on waiver-generating appointments. The vast majority of Assistantships provided to ICR students are waiver-generating appointments, which just means that they come with a tuition waiver.

Courses numbered 500 and above are typically open only to graduate students and will count for graduate credit. Courses numbered 400-499 may be available for graduate student credit, but it is up to you (the student) to ensure that this is the case by consulting the instructor. Courses numbered below 400 cannot be taken for graduate student credit. You are allowed to take courses below the 400-level, but they will not count towards the credit hour requirement described above.

Independent Study (MDIA 590)

ICR students are able to register for formal Independent Study (MDIA 590), in which they engage in a planned learning or research activity under the guidance of an ICR faculty member. To register for MDIA 590, you need to fill out and follow the

instructions on [this form](#). Once the form has been approved and signed by the guiding faculty member, it needs to be submitted to Theresa Harris for approval by the DGS no later than the 10th day of the semester the independent study work is being completed.

Dissertation Credit (MDIA 599)

Upon approval of the Advancement to Candidacy form, students may register for dissertation credit (MDIA 599 – “Thesis Research”). MDIA 599 registration requires the same [form](#) and procedures as Independent Study, described above.

Funding and Resources

Assistantships/Fellowships

Incoming ICR students are currently given 5 years of guaranteed funding, via some combination of Assistantship and Fellowship support. Assistantships are either Teaching or Research Assistantships and are further defined by a percentage appointment derived from a 40-hour work week. For example, the most common Assistantship held by ICR students is considered a 50% appointment, which means that the student holding the Assistantship is expected to devote 20 hours per week to their Assistantship duties. Sometimes students hold 25% appointments, which means that the work expectation is 10 hours per week.

Fellowships typically do not carry the same expectation of labor as Assistantships, which makes them highly sought after. The Graduate College maintains an excellent “[Fellowship Finder](#)” database that is open for all students to use.

Assistantship appointments are generally made annually during the late spring and summer months. The specific assignments are determined jointly by the Department Heads and DGS based on a variety of factors (e.g. student needs, curriculum and enrollment demand, etc.).

Students who’ve exhausted the funding that was guaranteed in their offer of admission (typically 5 years) may still receive an Assistantship appointment from the College of Media if there are positions available for which the student is qualified. Students beyond their guaranteed funding are encouraged to regularly check the [Graduate College’s Assistantship Clearinghouse](#) for available opportunities across campus.

Assistantship appointments are processed by the College of Media’s Human Resources office. If you have administrative questions about your appointment, please contact the DGS and Jane Dowler (dowler@illinois.edu).

Travel Support

ICR students annually present their work at the most prominent scholarly conferences in our field. The ICR is able to provide limited financial support for those students who've had their work peer-reviewed and accepted for presentation at a scholarly conference. The DGS will send out an announcement every semester with a deadline for travel funding requests, which can be made by filling out [this form](#) and submitting it to Theresa Harris via email. The amount of funding varies as a function of supply and demand but has averaged \$500 per conference in recent years. Students are permitted to apply for multiple conferences per year but may receive less funding for subsequent requests in the same year.

Facilities

Armory 213 Commons (off-limits until further notice due to COVID-19 guidance)
 Armory 213 is a designated common space for all ICR students. There are cubicles for individual study, tables for group meetings, and furniture for lounging. Please contact the DGS and Linda Franklin (lfrankli@illinois.edu) to get a key to this space.

Teaching Assistant Offices

ICR students with Teaching Assistantships are eligible for assignment to shared office space in Armory 235 A/B/C/F/G/H. Office assignments are updated annually by the DGS.

Research Laboratories

College of Media faculty oversee a variety of research facilities designated to facilitate graduate student research. The capabilities of and available equipment in each lab often changes so please contact the faculty Principle Investigators overseeing each lab for more specific information.

Lab	Location	Faculty PI(s)
Immersive and Future Media Lab	Armory 209	Christopher Ball
Illinois Lab for Computational Analytics	Armory 211	Margaret Ng
Technocultures and Qualitative Research Lab	Armory 221	Anita Chan, John Wirtz
Advertising Lab	Armory 222	Ewa Maslowska
Media Psychology Lab	Gregory Hall 043	Kevin Wise, Brittany Duff
Technology and Social Behavior Lab	Gregory Hall 043	Mike Yao

Graduate College

The Graduate College provides an extensive range of resources and programming that are free and available to all Illinois graduate students. Many of these opportunities are described in weekly emails sent to all students, so please pay attention to these. The [Graduate College website](#) is also an excellent gateway to graduate student resources. Here are some links to more specific content areas at the time of this writing:

[Mentoring](#)

[Career Development](#)

[Well-Being](#)

International Students

We are proud to be the home of many international students. Our [International Student and Scholar Services \(ISSS\)](#) office is the place to go for advising, immigration services, visa status, programming, advocacy, and outreach.

Condensed Path to a Ph.D. from the ICR

Years 1-2:

- Enroll in 12 credits of graduate courses per semester.
- Complete the required courses (Proseminars 1 and 2, quant and qual methods courses) as soon as possible.
- Choose an advisor and submit your Advancement to Candidacy application by the end of your 2nd year.

Years 3-4:

- Prepare for, complete, and defend the preliminary exam.

Years 4-5:

- Conduct, complete, defend, and deposit dissertation.