



PennState
College of Information
Sciences and Technology

Office of Graduate Programs

2026–2027

Ph.D. Degree Roadmap



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About the College of Information Sciences and Technology

Solving society's most challenging problems – from responding to natural disasters to improving human health and well-being; from protecting national security to developing and integrating AI into scientific and online community settings; from exploring the connections between health and technology to finding novel ways to use AI in socially responsible ways-calls for approaches that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Precise computational models and algorithms are needed to learn from the vast datasets available. Scientific theory is needed to describe the complex relationships between technology and society, including complex and overlapping networks of virtual relations, collaborators, and customers.

At Penn State's College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST), you will receive a multidisciplinary education that prepares you to address complex issues arising from rapid technological change. Our graduate students come from a variety of backgrounds, including computer science, engineering, psychology, sociology, economics, philosophy, visual arts, and math. The students work with graduate faculty distributed across three areas: Human-Centered Computing and Social Informatics; Informatics and Intelligent Systems and Privacy and Cybersecurity Informatics.

The College of IST's faculty and graduate students engage in cutting-edge research in areas such as human-centered design of applications, devices and platforms; artificial intelligence and data science; computer security and information privacy; health- and bio-informatics; and technology use by children, to name just a few. We excel in cybersecurity research, exploring how we can better protect companies from cyber-attacks and nations from cyber war. We develop and apply AI algorithms to more quickly diagnose disease as well as improve outcomes for patients. We study youth as both developers and consumers of technology and how their experiences can inform designs of the future. To succeed in all of these areas, as a graduate student in IST you will develop important skills in the computer and data sciences, as well as in the social and behavioral sciences. You will learn how to analyze qualitative and quantitative data, and be able to understand, test, and contribute to scientific theory.

Rankings

Penn State is recognized worldwide for its impact. The university is ranked by the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025 as No. 3 in the U.S. and No. 64 globally. We are proud to have a major impact on the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. Penn State's graduate programs also consistently rank highly in disciplines relevant to IST by U.S. News & World Report. Among iSchools, a consortium of information schools dedicated to advancing the interdisciplinary information sciences field, IST at Penn State is unique in its breadth and depth in areas such as human-centered design, social informatics, cybersecurity, AI, and data and computational sciences.

The Graduate Student Roadmap summarizes the graduate program requirements, recommendations, and policies of the college.

Penn State Policies on Graduate Education

Requirements of the Graduate School, apply to all graduate degrees and procedures of the college. The complete listing of Graduate School policies and resources for students can be found on the following links:

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/academics/graduate-education-policies>

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/student-support/resource-library>

In case of conflicts between the program roadmap and Graduate School policies, the latter take precedence.

Students should be familiar with the Penn State academic calendar (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/academic-calendars/>) and with deadlines periodically announced by the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/academics/academic-dates-and-deadlines>).

Department Facilities

Departmental programs and activities are housed in the Westgate Building and Eric J. Barron Innovation Hub (EBIH). These facilities contain administrative and faculty offices, instructional facilities, conference, theses/dissertations, and reading rooms.

Grad Lab Seating

Students on assistantships or fellowships have priority for graduate student office space. Graduate students not receiving departmental or University financial support are provided with office space as available. Space limitations generally make it impossible to provide office space for students, not on assistantships.

Graduate students are expected to maintain a tidy and clean workspace, individually and collectively in their lab space. Personal effects should be kept to a minimum, limited to objects necessary for effective work. Regular (semesterly) disposal of outdated and unused materials help maintain a tidy work environment for all.

Student Expectations



ACADEMIC
STANDARDS

Satisfactory Scholarship

Maintain minimum cumulative GPA (3.0) and degree milestones; unsatisfactory grades or progress can lead to academic warning or termination

Policy: [GCAC-404 - Satisfactory Scholarship](#)

Continuous Enrollment

Stay continuously enrolled and meet credit requirements



INTEGRITY
STANDARDS

Academic Integrity

Avoid plagiarism, data falsification, and unauthorized collaboration

Research Integrity

Complete Responsible Conduct of Research training and follow best practices in data management



CONDUCT
STANDARDS

Code of Conduct

Adhere to the Penn State Student Code of Conduct and University Policies

Respectful Behavior

Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated. Foster an inclusive environment

Professionalism

Conduct yourself professionally



ENGAGEMENT
EXPECTATIONS

Active Participation

Engage in coursework, seminars, and meetings

Respectful Behavior

Maintain regular contact with advisors, committees, and program staff

Program Emails

Check PSU email for important deadlines, requests and updates. Respond to program emails promptly.

Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI) Training

All graduate students are required to complete Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI) training as outlined by their college. Penn State's SARI@PSU program provides multilevel training in the responsible conduct of research (RCR), tailored to address the issues specific to each discipline.

The training program includes two core components:

Online RCR training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

Five hours of interactive, discussion-based RCR education (IST 590)



The College of IST requires all students to complete the following during their first semester:

- Human Subjects Research (IRB) Training
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training
- Five hours of discussion-based training, integrated into IST 590: Graduate Colloquium

Detailed instructions for completing SARI training will be distributed to incoming students before the start of their first semester.

A record of each student's participation and training plan is maintained and available upon request from the Office for Research Protections.

Faculty Adviser

In the Informatics Ph.D. program, each student is recruited/matched with a member of the IST Graduate Faculty who serves as their faculty adviser. This adviser plays a vital role in guiding the students throughout their academic and research journey.

Role of the Faculty Adviser

The faculty adviser supports and mentors the Ph.D. student across several key areas:

- **Research Development:**

In the first year, the adviser helps the student explore research interests, identify potential topics, and begin reviewing related literature. As the student progresses, the adviser provides guidance on specific research projects—either individual or collaborative—and offers continuous feedback on research ideas, progress, and results.

- **Academic Support:**

The adviser assists with academic planning, helps the student navigate program requirements, and supports the formation of the doctoral committee following successful completion of the qualifying examination.

- **Annual Review:**

Each year, the faculty adviser compiles an annual evaluation summarizing the student's academic and research progress. This review provides constructive feedback and helps ensure students stay on track toward degree completion.

- **Dissertation & Career Guidance:**

From developing the dissertation proposal to planning future career steps, the adviser plays an essential role in the student's academic and professional development.



Assistantships

Assistantships Overview

Ph.D. students may receive funding through two types of assistantships:

- Research Assistantships (RA)
- Teaching Assistantships (TA)

Assistantships are typically half-time appointments requiring approximately 20 hours of work per week. Appointments include tuition support for 9–12 credits per semester. Funding is not guaranteed beyond the first year, but students in good academic standing have typically been funded through at least the fourth year. Appointments are semester-based and not automatically renewed.

Continuation of funding depends on both academic progress and satisfactory performance of assigned duties.

Policy Note:

Assistantship terms are governed by university policies, including GCAC-804, which addresses the rare circumstances in which an assistantship may be terminated mid-semester for failure to meet responsibilities.

Travel Restrictions:

All assistants (RA and TA) must remain available:

- The week before classes begin
- The final week of the semester
- The week immediately following the end of classes

Any exception requires advance approval from the supervisor and must be documented through the Graduate Programs Office. Failure to comply may result in a loss of funding.

Research Assistantships (RA)

RAs typically work under the supervision of their faculty adviser, who often funds the position. RA responsibilities may overlap with dissertation research, and workload expectations should be reasonable when combined with coursework or research credits.

Typical Responsibilities

- Conduct research, including data collection, analysis, and literature reviews
- Develop software, tools, or experimental designs
- Prepare reports, presentations, and manuscripts

- Assist with IRB submissions, funding proposals, and lab activities
- Attend meetings and collaborate with research teams

Supervision

The RA's supervisor will define expectations, oversee progress, and evaluate performance. Responsibilities may evolve as the RA demonstrates readiness for more advanced tasks.

Teaching Assistantships (TA)

Policy: [Fox Graduate School Policy GCAC-901](#)

TAs support the College's instructional mission by assisting with course delivery. Assignments are made each semester based on departmental needs and are supervised by the course instructor.

Initial Requirements

- Meet with the assigned supervisor the week before the semester starts
- Review and sign a TA Responsibility Agreement
- Obtain syllabus, course materials, and expectations

Typical Responsibilities

- Attend lectures/labs and support instruction
- Grade assignments, exams, and projects
- Hold office hours or review sessions
- Prepare materials, assist with exams, and process grades

Performance Evaluation

- Meet regularly with the supervisor throughout the semester
- Mid-semester and end-of-semester evaluations are conducted by the supervisor and course students.

Absences

Notify your supervisor immediately in case of illness or emergencies and arrange for coverage of duties.

Training Requirement

Enrollment in IST 602: Supervised Experience in College Teaching is mandatory during the first semester serving as a TA. This course, offered every fall and spring, helps IAs develop effective teaching practices and address classroom challenges.

AEOCPT Requirement for International Students

Timeframe: First year

International students assigned to teaching assistantships must take the American English Oral Communication Proficiency Test (AEOCPT) upon arrival.

Per Pennsylvania law, no international student may begin TA duties until the AEOCPT is passed or required remedial English language coursework is completed. English courses taken for this purpose will not count toward degree requirements.

For details, contact the Department of Applied Linguistics.

IST TA Assignment Guidelines

The primary reason that the College of IST awards Teaching Assistant (TA) positions is to support its instructional mission and expose students to the educational process; an important secondary reason is to support Ph.D. students in good academic standing whose advisers are currently unable to support them with a Research Assistant (RA) position (gap funding). TA positions are not intended to be the sole or even primary form of financial support for the Ph.D. program. TA positions are tentative and competitive.

Under our current guidelines, the College of IST will generally only support a student for a semester with a TA position if the student meets all the following criteria:

- The student is within 5 years of entry into the Ph.D. program.
 - The student has already received 5 semesters of TA funding or fewer.
 - The student is in good academic standing (i.e., rated “satisfactory” or higher on annual evaluations).
-

Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTF)

The Graduate Teaching Fellow program allows advanced Ph.D. students to teach a course independently. This experience is valuable for those pursuing academic careers.

Eligibility:

- Completion of comprehensive exam OR prior teaching experience
- Course availability and qualifications considered

All GTFs are assigned a faculty mentor to provide support and feedback throughout the teaching experience.

Health Insurance Requirements

All graduate assistants (RAs and TAs), as well as any accompanying dependents, must have health insurance coverage.

Students may either:

- Purchase their own health insurance and submit proof that it meets Penn State's standards, or
- Be automatically enrolled in the Penn State student group insurance policy

For assistance or more information, contact the Graduate Student Association or the Graduate Student Insurance Office.

Stipend Payment Schedule

Graduate assistants (RAs and TAs) receive stipends electronically, deposited into their designated local bank account. Payment is made:

- Five times per semester (on the last business day of the month)
- Twice during the summer, if appointed for summer employment

Important Note:

Newly appointed graduate assistants arriving in August may not receive their first paycheck until the end of September.

International Student Registration Guidelines

(F-1 and J-1 Visa Holders)

Full-Time Enrollment Requirements

To maintain lawful immigration status, **F-1 and J-1 students** must be enrolled full-time each fall and spring semester.

- **Graduate students:** Required to enroll in at least **9 credits** per semester, with a maximum of **15 credits**.

Exceptions to Full-Time Enrollment

Exceptions to the full-time enrollment requirement must be **approved in advance** by the Penn State Global International Student Adviser.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Full-time enrollment exclusively in online or web-based courses is not permitted while in the U.S. under F-1 or J-1 status.
- Students on a reduced course load or in their final semester must include at least one resident instruction class.
- Students outside the U.S. may take online courses without needing F-1 or J-1 status.



- Submit the **Reduced Course Load (RCL) eForm** in **iStart** for consideration.
- Approved exceptions must be reported to the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** within 21 days.
- Upon resuming full-time enrollment, DHS must also be notified within 21 days.
- **Limits on exceptions:**
 - **Academic difficulties:** Limited to **one semester** during the entire program.
 - **Medical conditions:** Limited to a total of **12 months** throughout the program.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**FAILURE TO MAINTAIN
FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT
OR TO OBTAIN PRIOR
APPROVAL WILL RESULT IN
A VIOLATION OF VISA STATUS.**

 Failure to maintain full-time enrollment or to obtain prior approval will result in a violation of visa status.

Distance and Online Education Restrictions

F-1 Students

- May count **only one 3-credit** online or distance education course per semester toward full-time enrollment.
- May take up to **10 total credits** through Penn State **World Campus**, but **not** for full-time fulfillment.
- Cannot change campus designation to World Campus.
- **At least one resident (in-person) course** is required each semester to maintain status.

J-1 Students

- Must enroll in **resident instruction** courses only.
 - Online or distance education credits do **not** count toward full-time enrollment.
-

Summer Enrollment Policies

Required Summer Enrollment

Students must enroll in **summer session** if they:

- Intend to **graduate** or complete their program in the summer.
- Are not returning for the **fall semester** (i.e., summer is the final term).

Enrollment requirements:

- Must include at least one **resident instruction course**.
- May take up to **3 credits of online coursework**, but it must be **in addition to** the in-person class.

Optional Summer Enrollment

Students who:

- **Continue** their program in the **fall semester**, and
- **Do not graduate** in summer

...are **not required** to enroll in summer. It is considered a **vacation period**.

Annual Review

Each Ph.D. student will participate in an **annual review** during **September or October** to assess academic progress and ensure timely advancement through the program.

Review Process

- **Student Preparation:** Each student must complete an online Annual Evaluation Form and update their curriculum vitae (CV).
- **Adviser Meeting:** Students will meet with their faculty adviser to review completed and planned coursework, research progress, and goals for the upcoming year.
- **Adviser Evaluation:** After the meeting, the adviser will assign a performance rating and provide written feedback.
- **Results:** Students will receive **formal written notification** of their evaluation results and any required actions.

Committee Oversight

The **Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC)** will review the evaluation materials submitted by both students and advisers to confirm that students are progressing appropriately within the program.

Addressing Concerns

If a student's progress is found to be unsatisfactory:

- The adviser and/or GAC will identify the concern and develop a plan for improvement.
- The student will receive **formal written notification** outlining required actions and associated timelines.
- In some cases, a **change of adviser** may be recommended; in others, the student may be required to complete specific tasks on a stated timeline.

Academic Standing and Program Continuation

In cases of significant or continued academic difficulties:

- The student may be **terminated** from the program.
 - Prior to termination for academic reasons (e.g., unsatisfactory scholarship), the student will receive written notice of the deficiencies, in accordance with **Fox Graduate School policy GCAC-803**. This allows for the opportunity for appeal and/or corrective action.
 - In certain circumstances (e.g., failure of a major milestone), the student may be advised to **transfer to the master's program** in lieu of continuing the Ph.D. studies.
-

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Informatics

The Ph.D. in Informatics provides foundational training that will prepare you for a career in information science, related sciences, and technology research. The program begins with a core curriculum designed to develop interdisciplinary technology research skills followed by customizable electives aligned with individual research interests.

In the first two years, students' complete coursework and begin research. This is followed by the comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, and final dissertation defense. Most students complete the program within 4–5 years.

From the outset, students actively engage in research, often co-authoring publications with faculty and peers for international conferences and journals. As they advance, students are expected to take increasing responsibility for their academic development, fostering autonomy and a deeper research focus.

This handbook outlines program structure, expectations, and relevant university and college policies to guide your time at Penn State.

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

Program Overview and Credit Requirements

The Ph.D. in Informatics requires **a minimum of 32 course credits** plus dissertation research credits (IST 600/601). The curriculum includes:

- **Core curriculum** (14 credits)
- **Foundation courses** (9 credits)
- **Research methods/specialization** (18 credits)

Note: A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required, with no grades below a C. English language courses do not count toward degree requirements. Up to 6 credits may be at the 400-level.

Full-Time Matriculation

Ph.D. students must enroll full-time and attend in-person at the University Park campus during fall and spring semesters. Most students begin in the fall. Summer enrollment is not needed if registered in the previous fall and spring semesters.

First-Year Core (14 credits)

Designed to build a multidisciplinary foundation and prepare for the Qualifying Exam:

- **IST 501 (3 credits):** Interdisciplinary Research Methods (first semester)
- **IST 590 (2 credits):** Graduate Colloquium (1 credit per semester in Year 1)
- **Foundation Courses (9 credits):** Three graduate-level courses chosen from a department-approved list, providing breadth across computational, human-centered, and social informatics domains

Substitutions are not permitted. Students with prior mastery in one area are expected to broaden their expertise in others.

Foundation Courses (9 credits)

All Ph.D. students must select one foundation course from each area in the first year, totaling 9 foundation credits. Any additional foundation courses taken may count toward specialization requirements.

Foundation Courses:	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
CPI: Cybersecurity and Privacy Informatics	<i>IST 543 – Foundations of Software Security</i>	<i>IST 597 – Foundations of Data Privacy</i>
IIS: Informatics and Intelligent Systems	<i>IST 557 – Data Mining: Techniques and Applications</i>	<i>IST 510 – foundations in Computational Informatics</i>
HCCSI: Human-Centered Computing and Social Informatics	<i>IST 520 – Foundations in Human-Centered Design</i>	<i>IST 530- Foundations in Social Informatics</i>
Note: Courses subject to change each year		

Research Methods and Specialization (18 credits)

Six courses selected in consultation with your adviser to support dissertation research. These may include research methods courses or advanced topics in your area of specialization. Up to 6 credits may be at the 400-level.

600-Level Research Credits

In addition to the required 32 course credits, all Ph.D. students must register for **research credits** to reflect their ongoing scholarly work.

- **Before passing the comprehensive exam**, students enroll in **IST 600 (Thesis Research)**.
- **After passing the comprehensive exam**, students shift to **IST 601 (Dissertation Research Full-Time)**.

Research credits are graded as **“R” (research)** and do not impact GPA. Enrollment in the appropriate 600-level course depends on both **research activity level** and **location** (on or off campus):

Course	Status	Location	Description
IST 600	Pre-Comps	On Campus	Thesis research prior to the comprehensive exam
IST 601	Post-Comps	On Campus	Full-time dissertation research
IST 610	Pre-Comps	Off Campus	Thesis research conducted off-campus
IST 611	Post-Comps	Off Campus	Part-time dissertation research conducted off-campus

Time to Degree Limit

Fox Graduate School Policy: [GCAC-610 - Time Limitation - Research Doctorate](#)

Doctoral students must complete all degree requirements—including the dissertation defense and final approval—within eight years of passing the Qualifying Examination (typically completed at the end of the first year). Extension requests must be submitted by the IST Graduate Programs Office via a memo from the Graduate Programs Director to the Director of Graduate Enrollment Services. Extensions may be granted under appropriate circumstances.

Language and Communication Requirements

All doctoral candidates must demonstrate proficiency in English and the ability to communicate ideas effectively in both oral and written form, consistent with professional standards. The Qualifying Examination includes an assessment of English language skills. If deficiencies are identified—either through coursework or the exam—students may be required to complete remedial work. Those experiencing ongoing language challenges must develop a remediation plan in consultation with their adviser.

Qualifying Examination

POLICY: [Fox Graduate School Policy GCAC-604](#)

Timeframe: Within first year – no later than the end of the third semester

The Qualifying Examination is a key milestone in the Ph.D. program, designed to assess a student's readiness to conduct doctoral-level research and demonstrate competence in communication and interdisciplinary thinking.

Purpose

The exam evaluates the student's ability to reason about a self-chosen research topic from multiple disciplinary perspectives and to communicate effectively in written and oral English. It ensures alignment with both IST and Graduate School standards for doctoral study.

Committee Structure

The exam is administered by a College-assigned committee, typically composed of three IST graduate faculty members from different disciplinary areas representing the breadth of research in IST and the corresponding foundational courses. Students in dual degree programs will have a faculty member from the corresponding program. Committees usually assess 4–6 students at a time.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, students must:

- Be enrolled in the Informatics Ph.D. program at Penn State
- Complete at least 18 graduate credits at Penn State (excluding transfer credits and ESL courses) by the end of your first year (typically spring)
- Have a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Complete IST 501 and three departmental foundational courses
- Submit a letter of support from their adviser

Exam Components - The exam consists of three parts: Portfolio, Written and Oral Portfolio

Students submit a **single PDF** containing, in order:

- **A current CV** (including submitted or under-review publications)
- **A comprehensive table of all IST graduate courses completed**, including grades. Courses currently in progress should be listed with an estimated grade. Foundation courses should be indicated in bold.
- **A 500-word independently written Abstract** on a proposed research topic with references – abstract guidelines:

Abstract Guidelines

Students are encouraged to consult with their adviser or mentors to identify a research topic of interest, including possible approaches and methods. Once selected, the student must independently write a 500-word abstract introducing the topic and proposed approach.

The 500-word limit excludes the bibliography of scientific research cited in the abstract. Relevant research should be cited with complete and correct bibliography entries; citations should follow a standard academic style (e.g., APA, Chicago). While topic discussions with advisers are encouraged, the abstract must be the student's original work.

Collected Separately

A letter of support from the adviser – Each student's advisor must submit a confidential letter to the qualifying committee evaluating the student's readiness and potential for research. The letter may be sent as an email memo or attached document and must be emailed to Graduate Programs no later than the Friday following final exams.

Instructor feedback from IST 501 and foundational courses (collected by the department) - Instructors will be asked to provide qualitative feedback on first-year Informatics Ph.D. students enrolled in their courses, along with a copy of their syllabus outlining the topics and activities covered. This information will help examiners develop appropriate exam prompts.

Written Examination

Timeframe: Typically, these will take place the week **AFTER** final exams.

Question Writing and Proposal Guidelines

Based on each student's submitted research abstract and coursework list, committee members will create a custom prompt. All students will meet the same core requirements:

1. **Expand the abstract** into a full research proposal that:
 - a. Frames the research problem or opportunity using relevant literature,
 - b. Justify the chosen methods, and
 - c. Describes the expected outcomes.
2. **Demonstrate interdisciplinary thinking** by integrating two perspectives beyond the abstract's core focus, drawn from coursework the student has completed or is currently taking.

The final proposal should be approximately **10,000 words** (excluding references, figures, and tables) and must show the student's ability to:

- Analyze and synthesize research literature both within and outside their primary area of study, and
- Apply these insights to advance their own research agenda.

Students must adhere to standard formatting and citation practices, including proper labeling of figures, tables, and captions.

No external assistance is permitted in conducting the literature review or writing the proposal. This exam is intended to evaluate each student's individual research and communication skills.

Question Answering and Proposal Submission

Timeframe: Monday morning that immediately follows final exams week.

Research proposal prompts will be distributed on Monday morning immediately following finals week. Students will have **24 hours** to email any requests for clarification to the **Director of Doctoral Programs**, who may consult with the committee that wrote the prompt.

Clarification requests must be **brief** and limited to questions about **terminology or phrasing**—they may not include intended arguments or literature search plans. If a request exceeds these limits, the Director will reply that no further clarification can be provided. All responses will be sent within 24 hours of the request.

Proposal Submission:

Timeframe: Students must submit their research proposal as a **PDF** via email to Graduate Programs by **8:00 a.m. on the Friday** following prompt distribution (allowing four full days for writing). Late submissions will receive a Fail grade.

Written Exam Grading

Written exams will be graded promptly after submission. Each committee member will receive all assigned students' proposals and individualized rubrics for both the written exam and portfolio. Members must complete **and upload their evaluations by midnight the day before** the oral exams.

Oral Examination

Timeframe: Typically, these take place the Tuesday week **AFTER** final exams. With the goal to allow at least two full business days (plus the weekend) for exam review and evaluation.

The Qualifying Committee will meet with each student for 60 minutes, followed by an additional 30 minutes to develop a shared evaluation. An oral exam will be held even if a majority of the committee recommends failing the student's portfolio and/or written exam. During the oral exam, the student will first present their research proposal (15 minutes; this presentation must be prepared solely by the student). Committee members may then ask questions about any part of the exam, including the portfolio, course history, written exam, or presentation.

Oral Exam Grading

Immediately after the oral exam, the committee will take up to 30 minutes to discuss the student's oral exam performance and prepare consensus rubrics for the portfolio, written exam, oral exam, and overall recommendation. These rubrics will be provided to the student as feedback and must be uploaded to the student exam folder **by midnight on the day of the oral exam**.

Exam Results - Recorded Outcomes

At the conclusion of the Oral Examination and committee deliberation, one official exam outcome will be recorded in the student's academic roadmap. Outcomes are based on the committee's overall evaluation of the portfolio, written exam and oral exam.

Possible Exam Outcomes

- **Pass** – The student has successfully met all requirements of the Qualifying Examination and is approved to continue in the Ph.D. program and proceed to the next milestone.
- **Fail – Retake Permitted**– The student has not met the requirements of the Qualifying Examination but is permitted one retake under specific conditions

Retake parameters:

- Maximum number of retakes allowed: 1
 - Required timing of retake: Fall following QE (2nd fall semester in program)
 - The Fall retake will follow the same structure as the initial (Spring) QE. That is, the student will be required to submit an abstract, prompts will be generated, and the student will be asked to prepare both a written and oral exam. The exact dates/timeline for these steps will be determined by the QE committee.
- **Fail – No Retake Allowed** – The student has not met the requirements of the Qualifying Examination and is not permitted to retake the exam. The student will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program following notification to the Graduate School. Academic counseling will be offered to explore whether a transition to the Master's program is appropriate or whether the student should discontinue graduate study. Note that this transition is not automatic—it requires the student to complete and submit the necessary paperwork.

Failed Exams

- Students who fail the exam will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program by the Graduate School following notification from IST Graduate Programs.
- To continue in the Master's program, the student must submit a **Change of Degree** form to the Graduate School.
- If the form is not submitted, the student's status will automatically change to **Non-Degree** beginning the semester after the qualifying exam.

Exam Appeals

The outcome of the qualifying exam will be communicated promptly to the student, their adviser, and the committee. Appeals must be submitted within **48 hours** of this notification.

Appeal process

- Appeals should be submitted to the Director of Doctoral Programs, who will share them with the Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC).
- The GAC will appoint an **appeal committee** of two graduate faculty members who were not involved in the original exam. Appeals may concern any aspect of the exam outcome.
- The appeal committee will review all relevant documents and submit a recommendation to the GAC within **one week**.
- The GAC will make a final decision within **two weeks** of the original appeal. Any GAC member involved in the exam will be recused.
- If the GAC decision is contested, a final review will be conducted by the **Associate Dean for Graduate Studies**, with a decision issued within **three weeks** of the original appeal.

Next Steps After the Qualifying Exam

Students who pass the qualifying exam should begin planning to complete their coursework and prepare for the **Ph.D. dissertation proposal and Comprehensive Examination**. This next milestone typically occurs **12–18 months** after the qualifying exam, usually in the early part of the third year in the program.

Doctoral Committee Selection

Policy: [Fox Graduate School Policy GCAC-602](#)

Timeframe: No later than one year following successful completion of the Qualifying Exam

After passing the qualifying exam, each Ph.D. student must form a doctoral committee to guide their dissertation research. The committee plays a central role in advising the student and evaluating the dissertation proposal and final defense.

Committee Requirements

- The committee must include at least **four** members of the graduate faculty.
- At least **three** members must be from the College of IST (these can include chair and co-chair).
 - The committee chair must have full or partial budgetary appointments in IST. Typically, the **dissertation adviser** serves as the committee chair or co-chair.
 - The student may also have a dissertation co-chair (in or outside IST).
- At least **one** member must represent a field outside the student's primary area of research (often referred to as the "outside field" or "minor" member) who has no budgetary connection or conflict of interest with the IST program.

Appointment Process

- Students should consult with their adviser to identify appropriate committee members.
 - Once selected, committee members must be formally appointed through the Graduate School's online system.
 - The doctoral committee must be approved before the student schedules their comprehensive examination.
-

Committee Responsibilities:

Policy: [Fox Graduate School Policy GCAC-603](#)

- Provide guidance on scholarly development and execution of dissertation research.
- Design and evaluate the Comprehensive Exam.
- Intellectual development and research activities of the student during post-qualifying period.
- Assess the final dissertation and conduct the oral defense.

Students are encouraged to form their committee **at least one semester prior** to the comprehensive exam to ensure adequate time for proposal development and feedback.

To document the committee's formation, a **Graduate Student Committee Procedures and Doctoral Committee Appointment Signature Form** must be completed within **one calendar year** following successful completion of the qualifying exam. This form is available on the IST Graduate Programs website.

Comprehensive Examination

Policy: [GCAC-606 Comprehensive Examination - Research Doctorate](#)

Timeframe: Typically, 12-18 months of passing the qualifying exam

Once a Ph.D. candidate has completed all required coursework, they must take the Comprehensive Examination, typically within 12–18 months of passing the qualifying exam. This examination is designed to assess the candidate’s mastery of their major field, and, if applicable, their minor field of study.

Content and Format of the Comprehensive Examination

- **Eligibility Requirements**
 - International Ph.D. candidates must meet English competency and any foreign language or communication requirements before taking the Comprehensive Exam.
 - All candidates must have a **minimum GPA of 3.00** for coursework completed at the University and no deferred or missing grades.
 - Candidates must be registered as full-time or part-time during the semester in which the Comprehensive Exam is taken.
 - The College of IST does not issue letter grades for research courses; students will receive an “R” grade in IST 600, IST 601, IST 610, and IST 611.
 - If more than **six years** elapse between passing the Comprehensive Exam and completing the dissertation defense, the student must pass a second Comprehensive Exam before scheduling the final oral defense.

Comprehensive Exam Structure

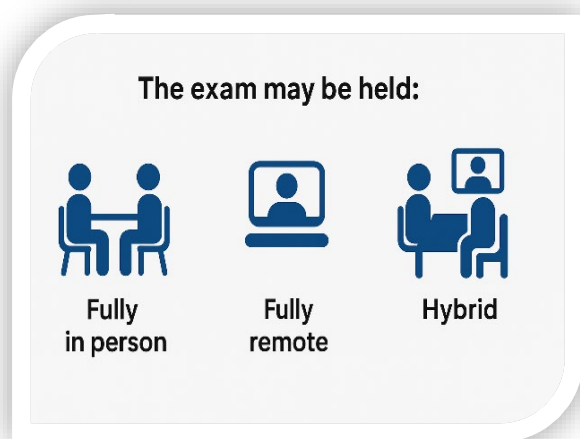
The Comprehensive Exam in the College of IST has both written and oral components. IST Graduate Faculty have combined the Comprehensive Exam and dissertation proposal defense into a **single session**.

- Students are assessed on their mastery of their major field (and minor or dual degree area, if applicable) through:
 - the literature review and methodology sections of their written proposal
 - oral questioning by committee members
 - Committee members will rate the candidate’s mastery as **Superior, Above Average, Average, Below Average, or Fail**.
 - A vote of at least **two-thirds** is required to pass.
 - A two-thirds vote of **Fail** results in termination from the Ph.D. program.
 - Exam results are reported by IST Graduate Programs to the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services.
-

Proposal Preparation and Scheduling

- Students must work with their adviser and committee to prepare a dissertation proposal (see the next section for more details).
- The proposal must be available for committee review **at least two weeks** before the scheduled exam date.
- The exam is scheduled by the IST Graduate Programs Office. Students must:
 - Submit the IST Exam Request Form through the IST Graduate Student website
 - Provide at least **one month's notice** to IST Graduate Programs (since the Graduate School requires two weeks to process exam paperwork)
 - Email a research abstract to istgradprograms@psu.edu at the time of scheduling the exam
 - Note that the IST Graduate Programs Office will announce the exam publicly **one week** before the scheduled date

Exam Format Options



Student preference for the mode of delivery should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree

If they cannot agree, the Director of Doctoral Programs will make the final decision.

Either the student or adviser may appeal that decision to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Graduate Affairs.

Post-Comprehensive Registration

- After passing the Comprehensive Exam, students must register **continuously** for each fall and spring semester until the dissertation defense by enrolling in IST 601.

Dissertation Research Proposal

Objective

The purpose of the dissertation research proposal is to evaluate the direction and appropriateness of the proposed research that will form the basis of the Ph.D. dissertation. As part of the Comprehensive Examination, the Ph.D. candidate must submit a written proposal to their doctoral committee and formally present and defend it at a committee meeting. This meeting is open to the university community. Scheduling requirements are outlined in the previous section.

Written Proposal Format

The written proposal must include the following components:

- A review of relevant literature
- A clear definition of research concepts and methods
- A proposed research schedule with key milestones

The candidate must provide the written proposal to their doctoral committee **at least two weeks** before the scheduled comprehensive examination and proposal defense meeting.

Sample Research Proposal Outline

I. Abstract

II. Introduction

- Problem definition and scope
- Motivation from the perspectives of information, technology, and people
- Research objective(s)
- Research question(s)

III. Review of Literature

IV. Proposed Research

- Research framework and approaches to be used
- Rationale for proposed approaches

V. Research Plan

- Key tasks and activities
- Schedule
- Expected contributions of the research

VI. Bibliography/References

Note: If human subjects will be involved, the student must complete the *Application for the Use of Human Participants* and submit it for approval to the [Office of Research Protections \(ORP\)](#) upon successful defense of the proposal.

Defense of Dissertation Research Proposal

The candidate is required to present and defend their dissertation research proposal during the Comprehensive Exam and proposal defense. Questions may be asked by any attendees, as directed by the doctoral committee chair.

At the conclusion of the presentation and initial question period, all attendees except the candidate and the doctoral committee may be asked to leave the meeting. The committee may then continue to ask any additional questions appropriate for only the candidate's participation. Afterward, the candidate will be asked to step out while the committee discusses and evaluates the proposal, the presentation, and the defense. The candidate will then be invited back to discuss the committee's evaluation.

The committee's assessment focuses on the candidate's readiness to conduct the proposed research, including both conceptual and methodological preparedness. Evaluation outcomes include:

- Acceptable to Proceed
- Needs Revision
- Needs a Complete Overhaul Before Proceeding

The committee may also require an additional review of revisions before approving the candidate to move on to the research phase.

Dissertation Defense (Final Oral Examination)

Policy: [GCAC-608 Final Oral Examination - Research Doctorate](#)

Objective

The objective of the dissertation defense, or final oral examination, is to evaluate the Ph.D. candidate's research accomplishments as demonstrated in the final draft of the dissertation. The candidate must submit the final draft to their doctoral committee and formally present and defend the dissertation at a meeting open to the university community. The final draft must conform to the editorial standards of the Fox Graduate School.

Fox Graduate School Guidelines

Any updates or changes to the official Fox Graduate School policies take precedence over the information presented here.

A doctoral candidate who has satisfied all other degree requirements will schedule for a final oral examination. At least two weeks' notice is required by the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services to schedule this examination. To meet this requirement, the student must submit the examination request through the IST Graduate Student website no later than one month prior to the intended exam date. If the request is not received at least two weeks in advance, it will not be processed, and a new examination date will need to be selected.

Normally, the final oral examination may not be scheduled until at least three months after the student has passed the dissertation proposal (oral comprehensive examination). In exceptional circumstances, the Director of Graduate Enrollment Services may grant a waiver. **The final oral examination must be held no later than ten weeks before commencement.**

It is the candidate's responsibility to provide a copy of the dissertation to each doctoral committee member **at least two weeks prior** to the scheduled examination date. Both the dissertation adviser and the candidate share responsibility for completing a final draft of the dissertation and consulting with committee members in advance of the defense. The draft should include appropriate notes, bibliography, tables, and other supporting materials.

The final oral examination is administered and evaluated by the full doctoral committee. It consists of an oral presentation of the dissertation by the candidate and a period of questions and discussion. While the primary focus of the examination is on the dissertation, committee members may also examine the candidate on the broader scope of their doctoral program to assess general scholarly attainment. The portion of the examination in which the dissertation is presented is open to the university community.

Exam Format Options

The final oral examination (dissertation defense) may be held in one of the following modes:



Student preference for the mode of delivery should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree

If they cannot agree, the Director of Doctoral Programs will make the final decision.

Either the student or adviser may appeal that decision to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Graduate Affairs.

At the time of the dissertation defense, the doctoral candidate must also meet the following requirements:

- Be registered as a full-time or part-time degree student for the semester in which the final oral examination occurs
- Have a minimum grade-point average of 3.00 for all work completed at the University, with no deferred or missing grades
- Have completed the residency requirement, defined as at least two semesters of full-time enrollment within a twelve-month period at the University Park campus (summer sessions excluded)
- Have at least a three-month interval between the comprehensive exam and the final oral examination
- Schedule the final oral examination within six years of passing the comprehensive examination

A favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the doctoral committee is required to pass the examination. The results must be reported by IST Graduate Programs to the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services within ten days of the examination.

Following the defense, the committee may require clarification or revision of sections of the dissertation. The committee will determine whether these revisions can be overseen by the adviser alone or if a full committee review is needed before final approval.

General Dissertation/Thesis Requirements

The Fox Graduate School, in collaboration with the University Libraries and the Penn State graduate faculty, has established format standards that all dissertations and theses must meet before final approval as a graduate degree requirement. The Thesis Office, part of the Fox Graduate School, is responsible for certifying that dissertations and theses comply with these format regulations.

Every dissertation or thesis must be reviewed and approved by the Thesis Office staff. The office reviews documents for formatting only and does not edit for spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Submissions to the Thesis Office must meet the formatting and deadline requirements described in the most current edition of the [*Thesis Guide*](#).

Penn State provides additional resources to support dissertation and thesis preparation:

- **PSTT (Penn State Thesis Template):** Provided by Information Technology Services, this package includes styles, macros, toolbars, menus, and layouts.
- **Statistical Consulting Center:** Offers assistance with thesis-related statistical questions.
- **Graduate Writing Center:** Located in 111-H Kern Graduate Building, provides writing consultation for graduate students across disciplines.

All doctoral dissertations must be submitted to the University in electronic format. For details on electronic theses and dissertations (eTDs), visit the eTD website. <https://gwc.psu.edu/>

In all cases, the dissertation or thesis author holds ultimate responsibility for meeting Fox Graduate School requirements. The student must pay applicable fees, activate their intent to graduate, meet submission and correction deadlines, and obtain required faculty approvals.

Below is a summary of the dissertation/thesis submission requirements:

- Become familiar with format requirements by carefully reading the *Thesis Guide* and review all Fox Graduate School and Thesis Office deadlines as listed on the Thesis, Dissertation, Performance, and Oral Presentation Calendar.
- Activate the intent to graduate in LionPATH during the semester you plan to graduate. Refer to the Thesis, Dissertation, Performance, and Oral Presentation Calendar for deadlines.
- Upload a draft of your thesis for format review (Word or PDF file) to the eTD website by the specified deadline. Corrections and instructions will be sent to you by email within three weeks.
- Defend the dissertation and make any changes required by the committee. This may occur before or after the format review, as long as all deadlines are met. Receive final approval from the committee through electronic signatures via the eTD system.
- Review the dissertation one final time to ensure no additional changes are needed. No further edits can be made after final approval by the Thesis Office. Convert the final document to a PDF for eTD submission. If you need help with conversion, contact the Thesis Office.

- Upload the final eTD to the eTD website, and submit the required supporting materials to the Thesis Office:
 - Signed Doctoral Signatory Page
 - ProQuest/UMI Agreement
 - Survey of Earned Doctorates
 - \$50 dissertation fee (payable through the Payment Portal)
 - *Note:* You may submit the dissertation and the supporting materials in any order.
 - Wait for email notification of thesis approval. If additional changes are needed, you will be notified. Your eTD will be available on the eTD website immediately after graduation unless you have restricted access (as noted on the Doctoral Signatory Page).
 - If you require bound copies, you may contact the Multimedia & Print Center on campus or any off-campus vendor. Providing bound copies is solely the student's responsibility; the Fox Graduate School does not supply them.
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College of IST Graduate Policies

Course Waiver Policy

Ph.D. students in the College of IST are required to complete a minimum of 18 credits (6 courses) to gain the research methodology and specialized skills necessary for dissertation research. Course selection should be made in consultation with the student's faculty adviser.

In some cases, up to nine credits of graduate-level coursework from other accredited institutions may be accepted toward the methodology and specialization requirements, subject to the following guidelines:

1. The course must be from an accredited institution.
2. The student must have earned a grade of "A" or "B."
3. The course may have been completed as part of a graduate degree program, but completion of the degree itself is not required.
4. The course must appear on an official graduate transcript.
5. The course must have been taken within five years prior to the student's registration in the IST graduate program.
6. To request a course waiver, the student must submit the following materials to the Graduate Programs Office:
 - a. A completed IST Graduate Course Waiver Form with the adviser's signature
 - b. An official transcript listing the course and grade, if not already on file
 - c. A syllabus for the course proposed for waiver
 - d. A written explanation of how the course supports the doctoral dissertation research

Independent Study Policy

The College of IST permits students to enroll in independent study courses with IST graduate faculty to explore topics not covered in regularly offered IST courses or graduate courses in other Penn State departments or programs. The following guidelines apply:

1. Students requesting an independent study course must submit a completed Independent Study Form to the Graduate Programs Office (available on the IST Graduate Student website).
<https://ist.psu.edu/current-students/graduate-students/course-and-thesis-scheduling>
2. A maximum of six independent study credits may be applied toward the degree program. Individual independent study courses may range from 1–3 credits, depending on the scope of the proposed work. These credits may count towards the specialization area requirements.

3. Independent study courses may not be used for Ph.D. dissertation research. They are intended for independent coursework on subjects not otherwise available through IST or Penn State graduate offerings.
 4. The student must meet with the independent study instructor for the contact hours corresponding to the number of requested credits. For example, a three-credit independent study requires three contact hours per week.
 5. The outcome of the independent study must be a deliverable agreed upon by both the student and the instructor that is relevant to the course topic.
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IST Graduate Student Termination Policy

(Approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee, February 2017)

The College of IST Graduate Student Termination Policy is derived from the Fox Graduate Education Policies and applies to all Ph.D., M.S., M.P.S., and I.U.G. students.

Students may be terminated from a graduate program in the College of IST for unsatisfactory scholarship. This includes, but is not limited to, failing to meet minimum academic standards (such as GPA or required course grades) and violating ethical, moral, or professional standards. Violations of these standards may result in academic sanctions, including suspension or dismissal by the student's graduate program, or by the Fox Graduate School, which may bar continued or future enrollment in any Penn State graduate program.

Examples of unsatisfactory scholarship include (but are not limited to):

- Behavior failing to meet acceptable ethical, moral, or professional standards
- Violations of the academic integrity policy or other university policies
- Inadequate grade-point average
- Failure to earn satisfactory grades in required courses
- Lack of satisfactory progress in research or other activities related to the culminating experience
- Failing the qualifying, comprehensive, or final oral examination (for doctoral students)

Behavior that violates the Student Code of Conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Once their review is complete, the graduate program will continue its review and determine any appropriate academic sanctions.

Termination Process

The termination process may be initiated by any of the following:

- The student's adviser
- The student's M.S. or Ph.D. thesis/dissertation committee
- The student's research or teaching supervisor
- The Director of Doctoral Programs
- The College's Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC)

If a recommendation for termination is made, a letter describing the rationale will be sent to the Director of Doctoral Programs. The Director will review the recommendation, and if they concur, will notify the student that the termination process has been initiated. The recommendation will then be reviewed by the Graduate Advisory Committee.

If approved by the GAC, the student will receive a letter from the Graduate Program Head indicating:

- The reason for termination
- The effective date of termination
- Any other relevant information regarding the student's status

Appeal Process

Upon receiving the notice of termination, the student has the right to request a review. To initiate a review, the student must submit a **written appeal to the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Affairs within ten days** of receiving the termination notice.

If the student believes they have experienced discrimination, they may file a complaint through the University's Office of Equal Opportunity and Access following the University's established discrimination complaint procedures.

The Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Affairs will then schedule a meeting within 30 days of receiving the student's appeal. The student will have the opportunity to meet with the faculty member(s) who made the termination recommendation, including members of the Graduate Advisory Committee.

Following this meeting, the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Affairs will notify the student in writing within **five days** whether the termination decision has been sustained or reversed. If sustained, the program head will provide:

- The reasons for termination
- The evidence supporting the decision
- Information on the right to appeal further to the Fox Graduate School

The program head will also notify the Fox Graduate School of the decision. Termination will normally be effective at the end of the semester in which the final decision is made, unless circumstances require immediate removal from the program.

If the termination is based on failure to uphold the highest ethical, moral, or professional standards, the Fox Graduate School may have a determination to dismiss the student from continued or future enrollment in any graduate program at Penn State.

IST Forms

Forms used by the Ph.D., M.S., and I.U.G. programs vary. For the most up-to-date versions, please visit the “Current Graduate Students” page located on the IST website at:

<https://ist.psu.edu/current-students/graduate-students/policies-forms-and-resources>

Forms located at this site include:

- Audit Check Sheet
- Adviser Agreement Form
- Adviser Change Form
- Independent Study Form
- Internship Leave Form
- Research Methods Course Substitution Form
- Specialization Course Waiver Form

and others.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Penn State is committed to providing access to students with disabilities to the university’s graduate programs. The Office for Student Disability Resources (SDR) offers support specifically tailored to the needs of graduate students. The office considers the need for accommodations in the following areas: 1) graduate assistantship accommodations; 2) coursework accommodations; 3) lab, fieldwork, and clinical work accommodations; 4) qualifying / comprehensive exams accommodations; 5) thesis / dissertation accommodations. An overview of disability resources specific to graduate students can be found here: <https://equity.psu.edu/offices/student-disability-resources/graduate-students-with-disabilities>

To be considered for reasonable accommodations, students **are required** to contact the SDR office, participate in an intake interview, provide documentation, and complete the registration process. Students should be aware that it may take time to go through the intake process, and that they may not know in advance whether accommodations will be needed either for their coursework or for their milestone exams. We thus recommend that students register with SDR for any eligible disabilities in advance, ensuring that all documentation is in place should accommodations be needed at any point during their graduate program. Students can register with SDR and choose not to request accommodations once registered.

Once registered, students can approach course instructors (for course accommodations) and/or the DGS or PIC (for accommodations to other program requirements, including benchmark examinations) to request accommodations. For milestone examinations, this process is **required**

for **each** milestone examination for which you request accommodations. Specific accommodations are determined through an interactive process and tailored to each student's needs with the goals of upholding rigor and disciplinary expectations in each of the distinct components of graduate education.

Students who would like accommodations for academic events (such as non-course-based department colloquia or seminars) that are not covered under the official SDR categories are encouraged to express these needs to the program leadership (e.g. DGS, PIC, or program head) and/or SDR.

Resources

Links to Fox Graduate School and University resources

a. General

- [Graduate student resource library](#)
- [University Libraries](#)
- [Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Fox Graduate School](#)

b. Academic Resources

- [Fox Graduate School Academic resources](#)
- [Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation Requirements](#)
- [Graduate Writing Center](#)
- [Fox Graduate School Ombudsperson Office](#)
- [Avenues for addressing graduate student concerns](#)

a. Career and Professional Development

- [Graduate Exhibition](#)
- [Three Minute Thesis](#)

b. Funding

- [Financial aid including Office of Student Aid](#)
- **Research and Conference Travel Funding Opportunities**
 - ♣ [International Travel Grants](#)

c. Health and Well-being

- [Health Insurance / SHIP](#)
- [Graduate Student Parental Leave](#)
- [Mental health support](#)
- [Child Care at Penn State](#)
- [Students in crisis](#)

d. Special Populations

- [Adult Learner Programs & Services](#)

- [Student Disability Services](#)
 - **International Students**
 - ♣ [Penn State Global ISSA](#)
 - ♣ [English for Professional Purposes Intercultural Center \(EPPIC\)](#) - *support for language skills*
 - [Military students](#)
 - e. **Clubs and Organizations**
 - [Graduate and Professional Student Association](#)
 - [Discover](#) – for finding graduate student organizations
-

Reporting and Assistance Resources

As we welcome new and returning students to campus, all members of the Penn State community are asked to be mindful of their individual responsibility to help keep the University a safe and ethical institution and an accountable steward of University funds whether generated from state, federal, student, or any other sources.

The University does not condone wrongful conduct by any member of the Penn State community no matter what position he or she may hold.

Thus, all members of the University community are urged to speak up if they see or suspect illegal, unethical, or unsafe conduct. If you do so, be assured that the University will protect you from retaliation. See AD67 or contact the Office of Ethics & Compliance for more information.

The following resources are available for faculty, staff, students, and others:

TO MAKE A REPORT

Crime or emergency

- Contact the campus police or security office
- In an emergency, dial 911

Child abuse, including child sexual abuse

- Contact the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Services “ChildLine” at 800-932-0313
- If the child is in immediate danger, dial 911 first
- Penn State Authorized Adults (per AD72) are also to email AD72@psu.edu communication that a report has been made. More information on AD72

Behavioral threat

- Contact the Behavioral Threat Management Team at 855-863-BTMT (2868), 814- 863-BTMT (2868), reportBTMT@psu.edu

Bias or discrimination

- Contact the Affirmative Action Office at 814-863-0471
- Visit the Report Bias website
- Students at University Park should call the Lion Support Help Line at 814-863-2020 to report acts of intolerance
- Students at other campuses may contact their campus Student Affairs office to report acts of intolerance

Sexual Harassment and other forms of sexual misconduct

- Contact the Affirmative Action Office at 814-863-0471 or another appropriate office listed
- To file a complaint outside of the University contact:
- The Office for Civil Rights (Philadelphia Office) at (215) 656-8541 or email OCR.Philadelphia@ed.gov
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Philadelphia District Office) at 800- 669-4000
- The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (Harrisburg Regional Office) at 714-787-9780

Research-related

- Contact the Office for Research Protections at 814-865-1775 or ORProtections@psu.edu

Suspected ethical or policy violations

(Including fraud, theft, conflict of interest, retaliation, athletics compliance)

- Use Penn State Ethics and Compliance Hotline at 800-560-1637 or <https://psuethicsandcompliance.tnwreports.com> (Both are anonymous and available 24/7)

TO ASSIST VICTIMS**Sexual violence, sexual abuse or sexual harassment**

- The Penn State Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Hotline is available 24/7 at 800-550-7575 (TTY 866-714-7177)
- The University's Sexual Harassment and Assault Reporting Website
- The University-wide designated sexual harassment resource person for students, regardless of sex or gender, is the Director of the Center for Women Students at 814-863-2027
- The University-wide designated sexual harassment and sexual misconduct resource person for employees is the Vice Provost for Affirmative Action at 814-864-0471
- For University Park, the Centre County Women's Resource Center Hotline is available 24/7 at 814-234-5050 or 877-234-5050

All others

- Contact the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 814-863- 0395
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 866-799-2728

RESOURCES

All employees should be aware of Penn State’s Conflict of Interest policy. Please see the following for more information:

- Policy [HR91](#) – Conflict of Interest
- Policy [RP06](#) – Disclosure and Management of Significant Financial Interests
- Policy [AD86](#) – Acceptance of Gifts and Entertainment

If it is not clear where to turn for assistance, any of these offices will guide the individual to someone who can help:

- [Office of Human Resources Employee Relations Division](#) at 814-865-1412
- [Office of University Ethics and Compliance](#) at 814-867-5088
- [Office of Affirmative Action and Title IX Coordinator](#) at 814-863-0471
- [Office of Student Conduct](#) at 814-863-0342
- [Office of Internal Audit](#) at 814-865-9596
- [Cleary Act](#) Compliance Manager at 814-863-1273
- Your campus, college, or unit’s Human Resources representative. Contact information is available at <https://hr.psu.edu/content/hr-strategic-partner-and-consultant-directory>
- [Office of Disability](#) at 814-863-1807

TRAINING

Training is available on many of the above topics. Contact the [Office of Human Resources Center for Workplace Learning and Performance](#) at 814-865-1473