



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

# Graduate Program Guide

## Technology & Social Behavior (TSB) joint PhD Program Northwestern University

A handbook for students and advisors

This handbook is a general guide intended to help graduate students and their advisors navigate through the program. It is not a legal document. For graduate school rules and related documents, students should see The Graduate School (TGS) website: <https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/>

\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, please review the latest COVID-19 news and updates at this dedicated website: <https://www.northwestern.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-updates>

## **Contact Information**

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### **TSB Listservs**

Mailing list for TSB PhD students. Only list members and owners can post and receive.  
[tsb-students@listserv.it.northwestern.edu](mailto:tsb-students@listserv.it.northwestern.edu)

Mailing list for TSB-affiliated faculty. Only List members and owners can post and receive.  
[tsb-faculty@listserv.it.northwestern.edu](mailto:tsb-faculty@listserv.it.northwestern.edu)

Current list owners: [nad@northwestern.edu](mailto:nad@northwestern.edu), [m-agaton@northwestern.edu](mailto:m-agaton@northwestern.edu)

### **Websites**

TSB PhD Program website  
<http://tsb.northwestern.edu>

# Students and Faculty

## Current TSB Students

- Mowafak Allaham, MowafakAllaham2021@u.northwestern.edu
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- Yixue Wang, YixueWang2022@u.northwestern.edu
- Dongping Zhang, DongpingZhang2023@u.northwestern.edu
- Richard Zhang, RichardZhang2025@u.northwestern.edu

## TSB-Affiliated Faculty

- Nabil Alshurafa, Preventative Medicine
- Larry Birnbaum, Computer Science
- Jeremy Birnholtz, Communication Studies
- Pablo Boczkowski, Communication Studies
- Fabián Bustamante, Computer Science)
- Noshir Contractor, IEMS / Communication Studies / Kellogg
- Leslie DeChurch, Communication Studies
- Nicholas Diakopoulos, Communication Studies
- Doug Downey, Computer Science

- Matthew Easterday, SESP
- Ken Forbus, Computer Science
- Steven Franconeri, Psychology
- Elizabeth Gerber, Mechanical Engineering / Communication Studies
- Darren Gergle, Communication Studies
- Kris Hammond, Computer Science
- Jason Hartline, Computer Science
- Brent Hecht, Communication Studies
- Michael Horn, Computer Science / SESP,
- Ian Horswill, Computer Science
- Sid Horton, Psychology
- Ágnes Horvát, Communication Studies
- Jessica Hullman, Computer Science / Journalism
- Maia Jacobs, Computer Science
- Matthew Kay, Communication Studies / Computer Science
- Barbara O’Keefe, Communication Studies
- Eleanor O’Rourke, Computer Science / Learning Sciences
- Bryan Pardo, Computer Science
- Chris Riesbeck, Computer Science
- Michael Roloff, Communication Studies
- James Schwoch, Communication Studies
- Aaron Shaw, Communication Studies
- Jack Tumblin, Computer Science
- Ellen Wartella, Communication Studies
- Uri Wilensky, Computer Science / SESP
- Marcelo Worsley, Learning Sciences / Computer Science
- Haoqi Zhang, Computer Science

**TSB Executive Committee**

- Noshir Contractor
- Nicholas Diakopoulos
- Darren Gergle
- Elizabeth Gerber
- Ian Horswill
- Bryan Pardo
- Chris Riesbeck

## **Degree Requirements**

The TSB doctoral program admits students from a variety of backgrounds and gives them rigorous training in social science, humanities, and engineering methodologies, allowing them to understand technological developments in their broadest possible contexts. The implementation and production of media, information and communication technology—as well as the study of their contexts of use—is an expected part of the program of study. Accordingly, students should either have a technological background already, or be prepared to acquire the relevant skills early in their graduate program.

To complete the Ph.D. in Technology and Social Behavior, students must complete coursework, pass qualifying examinations and prospectus, and complete a thesis as detailed below:

### **Course Requirements**

Critical evaluation of disciplinary perspectives, as well as integration of disciplinary methodologies, is a key goal of the TSB doctoral program. The required courses therefore provide theoretical, historical, psychological, and sociological perspectives on technology, along with classes in research methods. For the remaining courses, each student must work with an advisor to create a course of study that approaches a single theme within technology and social behavior from multiple disciplines.

Because Ph.D. students are encouraged to create a course sequence that best supports their research, dissertation, and teaching plans, each student will be assigned to a first-year advisor upon arrival, who will help design a research plan. Students need not, however, feel obliged to choose this person as a thesis advisor. The research plan will incorporate course requirements from both the School of Engineering programs and School of Communication, however since these degree requirements are quite flexible, students can expect to engage in hands-on research starting in their first year.

Computer Science and MTS both have flexible course requirements, demonstrating both departments' support of independent programs. In the TSB combined degree program, 2 additional units are added to the overall Ph.D. requirements: students must take qualifying examinations in both departments, and students must submit their Ph.D. theses to a committee composed of faculty from both departments.

### **First Year Rotations**

In the first year, students participate in 2 two-quarter lab rotations. One of these will be with your first-year advisor and should be considered your home laboratory. The second will be with a research mentor with whom you would like to work closely with on a research project. The lab rotations give you exposure to different styles of research and different topics, while getting you involved in research activities from the moment you arrive. Each lab rotation should result in a paper (hopefully to be submitted to a conference or journal). By the time you begin the quarter you should have worked with the DGS to identify a primary advisor and, to the extent possible, identify one or two potential professors with whom you could perform a lab rotation. **Please submit the details of each of your rotations using [this form](#) early in the Fall and Spring quarters.**

The TSB program combines the requirements of the Communication Studies and Computer Science departments in a 20-unit curriculum that includes the following:

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Course Tracking (report course number, professor, title, and quarter of completion)</b>
The MTS 501 course: “First Year Research Practicum”	1.
Two MTS graded courses taught by two different faculty members	2. 3.
The MTS 503 course: “The Practice of Scholarship”	4.
The MTS 519 course: “Responsible conduct of Research”	5.
Two units of COMM_ST 499 (rotation)	6. 7.
Two units of COMP SCI 499 (rotation)	8. 9.
<p>A concentration in either the Artificial Intelligence or Interfaces track as defined by the Computer Science Department. This concentration will be composed of 4 courses taken from one of those concentrations, and will define which qualifying exams the student takes in CS. Check with the DGS or relevant Computer Science program for course details.</p> <p><i>(Examples of acceptable courses for the Interfaces track are Design of Interactive Learning Environments, Computer Graphics, Computer Game Design, Machine Learning, etc.)</i></p>	10. 11. 12. 13.
<p>The remaining units can be taken in Computer Science, MTS or departments across the University (Learning Science, Engineering, Art &amp; Technology, etc), including graded Independent Studies (e.g. 499, but not 590 since it’s pass/fall) in Computer Science or MTS.</p> <p>Note: 6 units must be 400 or 500 level.</p>	14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21.

The Graduate School of Northwestern University (TGS) has university-wide policies and registration requirements that must be followed in addition to the TSB program requirements. Students should follow these policies as they are required in order to remain active in the program and to graduate. They are as follows:

- [PhD Coursework and Registration Requirements](#)
- [PhD Timeline](#)
- [Full-Time Study Requirement and Authorized Courses](#)
- [Change of Registration Policy](#)
- [Continuous Registration Policy](#)
- [Language Courses During the Academic Year Policy](#)
- [Grades and Grade Requirements](#)

### **Summer Registration**

[Summer registration](#) is required for doctoral students receiving funding in the summer quarter from the University.

Summer enrollment may also be required as a result of visa or loan status. Students should review the details of their visa or loan to determine if summer registration is required. For detailed information regarding such policies, students are responsible for contacting the International Student and Scholar Services or their loan company directly. For students doing a summer internship please contact Bruce Lindvall about the [Crown Family Internship](#), which facilitates registration at NU and continuity of benefits if needed.

Unfunded students are not typically required to register during the summer, unless in the situations specified above. Please review the [full-time study](#) and [registration](#) requirements.

Summer enrollment for funded students is usually accomplished by registering full time for 3-4 units. For example:

- 1st year students on a lab rotation would typically register for a 499 for 1 unit with their rotation advisor, and then also for 2 units of [MTS 590](#) with their rotation (or first-year) advisor, for a total of 3 units of registration;
- 2nd year students would register for 3 units of 590 with their current advisor;
- 3rd year and above students would register for [TGS 500](#).

MTS 590 is graded on a P/N/K basis (pass, no grade, in progress). Students should register in a section with their current advisor. Students must notify their advisor that they have enrolled. At the end of summer quarter, students must again contact their advisor and request submission of a Pass or No Pass grade. The advisor will submit a grade dependent on the student's progress.

Please review the [full-time study](#) and [registration](#) requirements.

### **Additional Programming**

TSB students are expected to participate regularly in academic activities provided by the

program, allied departments, and University centers. Generally, such activities include:

- Conferences organized by program faculty or students
- TSB Colloquium Series co-organized by faculty and students (and strongly encouraged to attend Computer Science and MTS seminar series as well as related seminars hosted by the Segal Design Institute, Center for Human-Computer Interaction + Design, and AI @ NU initiative)
- Professionalization workshops organized by students and conducted by faculty, senior students, or others
- Lectures, workshops, conferences, and other scholarly activities offered by other programs as pertinent to the student's intellectual development

### **Advising**

The program director helps to assign a first-year advisor to each incoming graduate student. The goal is to make the best pairing with a first-year advisor possible, with the intention that this could become a long-term advising relationship. The first-year advisor typically directs the first laboratory rotation and serves as the home laboratory affiliation for the first year. The first-year advisor also helps orient the student on coursework, research, and other relevant aspects of graduate education. Please enter your first-year advisor information in the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)). Also review the [Guidance for Positive Graduate Student and Faculty Adviser Relationships](#) and the [Graduate Educations Expectations](#).

A student can change advisors at any time during the course of graduate studies. However, this must be a mutual decision between the student and new advisor. It may also require the new advisor to make funding support commitments if the student does not have an external fellowship or outside source of funding. Any member of the TSB faculty who is tenured or tenure-track may serve as an advisor.

In a student-initiated change of advisors, the student is responsible for both securing the acceptance of the new advisor and communicating the change to the former advisor. Because no student is permitted to pursue graduate studies without guidance from an advisor, the student may not terminate an advising relationship until a new one is in place. Please update advisor information in the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)).

An advisor can also decline to continue in the role at any time during the course of the student's graduate studies. If the advisor wishes to no longer serve in that role, the advisor must officially notify the student and Director of Graduate Studies in writing. Once official notice has taken place, the student has one quarter to secure a new advisor. During the transition, the current advisor will continue to serve.

A student without an active advisor is not considered in good standing and is at risk of exclusion from the program.

### **Qualifying Exams**

Students in the TSB combined degree program will complete two qualifying exams, one related



to each of the constituent programs of CS and MTS.

Students take the CS qualifying exam in either the *Interfaces* or *Artificial Intelligence* track. See the CS PhD Graduate Manual for details on the qualifying exam for each track:

<https://phd.cs.northwestern.edu/>

Students take the MTS exam in two parts, by completing one major field exam and one minor field exam. See additional details on the qualifying exams structure in MTS:

<https://mts.northwestern.edu/resources/>

The Examination Chair (most often your advisor) will help establish the details of the exams.

### *Scheduling of the Qualifying Exams*

The Graduate School (TGS) requires that qualifying exams must be completed **no later than the end of the student's 3rd year in the program**. However, the TSB requirements are more stringent and require that the Computer Science qualifier be completed **no later than the end of the student's 2nd year in the program**, and the MTS qualifying exams be completed **no later than the end of the student's third year in the program**.

The procedures for the Computer Science qualifying exam depend on the track chosen, and students should work with their advisor to determine the track best suited for their research and career goals. For the Artificial Intelligence track, the students need to inform the director of the Artificial Intelligence division in advance that they will be sitting for the exam. This typically takes place near the end of Spring quarter in the second year. For the Interfaces qualifying exam, the students need to work with their advisor to form a committee of three to review a research paper and presentation led by the student. The committee needs to consist of at least two members of the Computer Science faculty and can include one member that does not have a Computer Science affiliation.

The MTS qualifying exam requires two written components (one major field and one minor field) supervised by two different members of the student's MTS committee. The major field component assesses whether the student is capable of doing high-quality independent research within the student's major field (i.e. the student's core research interest). This will typically take the form of a research paper of publishable quality. The minor field component assesses the student's grasp of material in the student's minor field (that is, an area adjacent to the student's core research interests). This exam is meant to be smaller in scale and scope than the major field exam (e.g. less work, shorter papers) and can take a variety of forms including a written paper, data analysis, development of a course syllabus with readings, a grant proposal, a portfolio of engaged scholarship, and so on. The topic must be approved in advance and in consultation with the student's advisor.

Timely completion of qualifying exams is ultimately the responsibility of the student. If not completed on time, the student is not considered in good standing and is at risk of exclusion from the program.

### *Procedures for Revising or Retaking the Qualifying Exam*

The exact procedures for retaking a qualifying exam depend on the form of the exam chosen. For details of the Computer Science exams please see the Computer Science [Graduate Manual](#). Written components of the MTS portions of the exam are typically reported as “Pass,” “Revise,” or “Fail.” A student who receives a request for revisions has no more than six weeks from receipt of the grade to submit the revision.

If the student receives a “Fail,” they are permitted to retake the exam once. No part of the exam may be revised or retaken more than once.

### *Approval process*

When exams have been successfully completed, the student is responsible for 1) uploading the examiners’ approvals (confirmation email from each examiner to the student verifying passed exams) into the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)) —>Documents—>Upload Documents—> General and title the File “Qualifying exam approval- [Computer Science qual] or [MTS Major qual] or [MTS Minor qual]” with name (Last name, First name) and when all exams have been completed and uploaded then 2) submitting the “PhD Qualifying Exam” form available in the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)) —>TGS Forms. The department will receive an automated message with instructions to approve the student should be admitted to candidacy. The program assistant will validate passage of the exams by reviewing the examiners’ confirmations already uploaded by the student in GSTS.

### **Prospectus Defense**

TSB students must complete their dissertation prospectus, revise, and have it approved by the dissertation committee members, by no later than the end of their fourth year in the program.

The prospectus is a written document that is read and reviewed by the student’s dissertation committee. The details of how the examination are conducted are ultimately determined by the dissertation chair (usually the student’s advisor) but require review of the document and typically involve a short presentation followed by detailed questions and examination of the prospectus by the committee. This review may result in additional changes to the prospectus document. Once a satisfactory prospectus document is achieved, the committee members signal their approval with a vote.

Once a satisfactory final prospectus is approved by the committee, the student is responsible for 1) uploading the committee approvals (confirmation email from each committee member to student verifying passed prospectus) into the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)) —> Documents—> Upload Documents—> General and title the File “Prospectus approvals” with name (Last name, First name) and then 2) submitting the prospectus form available in the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#))—> TGS Forms. The department will receive an automated message with instructions to approve the student’s prospectus form. The program assistant will validate passage of the written exams by reviewing the committee members’ confirmations already uploaded by the student in GSTS.

### **Thesis**

Theses in Computer Science are mostly composed of an implemented system, while theses in Communication require empirical research that adduces evidence for a hypothesis. Ph.D. theses in TSB, the combined Ph.D. in Computer Science and Communication, will comprise two parts

that are not often found together – an implementation, and a hypothesis about how the implemented system affects social behavior, with an empirical evaluation of that hypothesis.

In order to ensure that the Ph.D. thesis represents dual competence in Computer Science and Communication, thesis committees are composed of four faculty members, of whom two are in Social Science fields and two are in Computer Science. A minimum of three of the committee members, including the chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. The thesis must be judged during the thesis defense to be acceptable by all four of these committee members.

### **Thesis Defense**

The Application for Degree form in [GSTS](#) must be submitted for the quarter in which you intend to complete the PhD degree and by the TGS deadlines.

Once the written thesis is completed, a final examination takes place in the form of a thesis defense, which includes your thesis committee and is also open to the public. You should work with your advisor and thesis committee to schedule your defense. Once scheduled, you should contact the TSB Program Administrator with the title, abstract, and scheduling details of your defense so that it can be publicly announced. The examining committee, however, has the discretion and will typically exclude the public during part of the examination for additional questioning of the candidate, and will additionally confer in private in deciding the outcome of the defense.

Please review the [PhD Degree Completion Checklist](#) for the complete requirements, approval processing, and steps to receive the degree.

Be aware that TGS has specific requirements and deadlines governing thesis submission and graduation. All [TGS requirements](#) must be satisfied before the Ph.D. is conferred.

### *Thesis Defense Outcomes*

The private thesis defense can result in a “Pass,” “Revise,” or “Fail.” A pass may still require some small changes that need to be made to the final document before submission to TGS.

Revise status will require the student to revise some or the entire document, and it requires additional review by the committee before being judged to be of passing quality. In the case of a “fail,” the student has one more opportunity to retake the exam at a future date.

### **Thesis Submission**

Once the committee has approved your final dissertation, you will work with TGS to format and submit the final document.

After successful submission of your dissertation to TGS, you’ll submit your PhD Final Exam form in [GSTS](#) and the [PhD Degree Completion Checklist](#) to the program.

This process requires substantial attention and planning as the TGS deadlines for submission of your dissertation to TGS and PhD Final Exam form to the department are early and required in order to attend graduation events. Please see the TGS guidelines for [dissertation submission](#) for further details on this procedure.

## **Teaching Experience**

Students are expected to develop some experience as teachers during their PhD program, as per [the requirements](#) set forth by The Graduate School. For the TSB program this teaching experience can take many forms including serving as a Teaching Assistant for an undergraduate or professional degree course, as an instructor of record, or by developing several courses to teach in the [Computing Everywhere](#) program. Please feel free to communicate your interests and goals for developing teaching experience with the DGS.

Students are required in the first year to attend at least two [seminars / workshops](#) that are offered through the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence.

Students are required to complete the [Northwestern Graduate Student Teaching Conference](#) and School of Communication Graduate Student Teaching Session before serving as a TA or GA (usually in your second year). The workshop and session takes place in September before the year in which the student plans to teach.

## **TSB Annual Evaluation**

Once a year the TSB DGS performs a review of each TSB student, in consultation with their advisor, to determine progress toward the degree. Prior to this evaluation, all students are required to submit a report about their activities during the year into the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)). Students are required to keep their profile updated quarterly. Please follow the prompts and complete/answer all sections accurately. Missing information will be considered as incomplete and may be noted when evaluating progress.

This report should list all courses taken or taught; professional activities, including conference presentations and attendance; publication submissions, noting their status; grants applied for; and any additionally relevant material. It should also provide official status on all major degree milestones (course completion, Computer Science qualifier, MTS qualifiers, prospectus defense, thesis defense). The faculty will review this report, discuss the student's progress at the meeting, and determine whether students are making satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. and to give an official determination of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" progress. The program director then writes a letter in consultation with the student's advisor, and this is sent to the student and included in their academic file.

### *Satisfactory Academic Progress*

A student is considered to be making [satisfactory academic progress](#) if they meet the grades and cumulative GPA requirements, have completed their major milestones on time, have an active advisor, and are judged by the faculty at annual reviews to be making adequate research progress. If satisfactory progress is not being made, the student will be informed verbally and in writing.

### *Probation*

If a student's progress is judged to be "unsatisfactory," they will be informed that they are placed on [probation](#) and will be provided in writing the details of what needs to occur and a timeline for completion in order for them to re-establish "satisfactory" progress. If the student does not

complete the requirements, they will be at risk of exclusion from the program.

### *Exclusion and Appeal*

Students on probation are given two quarters to remedy whatever outstanding issues exist (e.g., delayed progress on major program milestones). If they do not meet the requirements over the probationary period they can be excluded from the program and TGS.

Further details on [exclusion and appeals procedures](#) are available on The Graduate School website.

### **Conflict Resolution**

On rare occasions, a student may have a conflict with his/her advisor or committee members. When such a conflict occurs, the student is encouraged to wait 48 hours and then express his/her concerns directly to the other party in the conflict. If the nature of the conflict is such that the student does not feel as if he/she can communicate directly with the other party (e.g., sexual harassment, abusive language), the student is invited to communicate his/her concerns with the Director of Graduate Studies or the Office of Student Affairs in The Graduate School. A dispute resolution plan will be developed and/or appropriate action taken to remedy the situation in consultation with the Office of the Ombudsperson.

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Northwestern University does not discriminate or permit discrimination by any member of its community against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, reproductive health decision making, or any other classification protected by law in matters of admissions, employment, housing, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates. Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on any of these characteristics is a form of discrimination. Further prohibited by law is discrimination against any employee and/or job applicant who chooses to inquire about, discuss, or disclose their own compensation or the compensation of another employee or applicant.

Northwestern University complies with federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination based on the protected categories listed above, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX requires educational institutions, such as Northwestern, to prohibit discrimination based on sex (including sexual harassment) in the University's educational programs and activities, including in matters of employment and admissions. In addition, Northwestern provides reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants, students, and employees with disabilities and to individuals who are pregnant.

Any alleged violations of this policy or questions with respect to nondiscrimination or reasonable accommodations should be directed to Northwestern's Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, [equity@northwestern.edu](mailto:equity@northwestern.edu).

Questions specific to sex discrimination (including sexual misconduct and sexual harassment) should be directed to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman

Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165,  
[TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu](mailto:TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu).

A person may also file a complaint with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights regarding an alleged violation of Title IX by visiting [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html) or calling 800-421-3481. Inquiries about the application of Title IX to Northwestern may be referred to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator, the United States Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or both.

## **Work Obligations**

Financial support from the University includes the obligation to provide teaching, teaching assistance, or research assistance as specified by the department. The expected commitment is a maximum of 15-20 hours a week. Teaching involves having responsibility for all aspects of a course; teaching assistance involves providing specified support for faculty instruction for a specific course, including activities such as copying, grading, and leading discussion sections; research assistance involves supporting faculty scholarship, including activities such as design and development of studies, programming work, literature reviews, writing and proofreading, and providing logistical support for scholarly events. Teaching and teaching assistance should conform to the highest professional standards to provide an excellent experience for undergraduate students. Research assistance should conform to the highest professional standards to provide timely and rigorous support for scholarly activities. In departmental nomenclature, both teaching and teaching assistance are referred to as TA or GA assignments, and research support is referred to as an RA assignment. TA/GAs are required to be in residence at Northwestern during their assistantships.

Students are given TA and RA assignments during the fall, winter, and spring quarters, except during their first year of study and their fellowship year. The fellowship year typically is taken in the fourth year.

Specific assignments are made by the Department Chair in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Students may submit requests for specific assignments to these individuals.

Students should notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair in advance and at least one month before the start of the quarter of any changes in enrollment, so a replacement can be arranged for the GA or RA assignment and graduate student funding can be adjusted.

Assignments are subject to change by the Department Chair as teaching and research needs of the department shift over the course of the year. If a student's assignment needs to be changed to better meet department needs, the student will receive an additional notification before the start of the quarter.

Satisfactory performance of TA and RA responsibilities is part of a student's annual review. Consistently poor performance of either teaching or research responsibilities can lead to

probation, loss of funding, and dismissal/exclusion from the program.

It is the program's expectation that students will fulfill these RA and GA assignments. If there are extenuating or unanticipated circumstances that could prevent students from fulfilling these assignments, students should notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair in advance and no later than one month before the start of the quarter of changes in enrollment. At that point, the situation will be discussed and a resolution will be attempted, but students should be aware that notification of a possible conflict does not on its own negate the assignment.

Assignments are subject to change by the Department Chair's discretion in the event of unforeseen circumstances and as teaching and research needs of the department shift over the course of the year. If a student's assignment needs to be changed to better meet department needs, the student will receive an additional notification before the start of the quarter.

Detailed assistantship information including best practices are outlined on the TGS [website](#).

#### *Permission to Work*

Graduate students are expected to be full-time students conducting their studies and research and fulfilling program obligations. On occasion another funding opportunity may arise. When that situation occurs, the request for permission to have additional in addition to GA/TA, RA or Fellowship obligations is required. Please complete the ["Graduate Student Permission to Work Request Form"](#). This form must be completed and approved prior to the student beginning the work. The Graduate School may not be able to approve permission to work requests submitted after the work begins. Students will not be approved for additional work that is more than 15-20 hours per week. The request should provide the nature of the work, the number of hours, the amount of compensation and duration of the proposed work. The form will be reviewed by the student's director of graduate studies and department chair to ensure that the additional work will not interfere with the student's progress towards degree or interfere with any assigned duties. With their support, they will endorse the request electronically and will be forwarded to the Graduate School Student Funding office. The department and student will be notified via email if and when approved.

#### *Funding Schedule*

Students are funded according to the terms of their letter of admission.

#### *Changes in Funding or Receipt of Awards*

Students should notify the department program assistant in advance and at least one month before of any changes to their funding or receipt of any external awards. Students should provide confirmation from the Director of Graduate Studies of funding changes or of the detailed award letter. Failure to notify the department can result in not receiving the funds, being paid from an incorrect funding source or having to return the funds.

TSB students often take on industrial research internships and should inform the department program assistant as soon as an internship position is secured. Students do not receive departmental or school funding while they are on internship.

### *Financial Aid Policies*

Financial aid policies including Regulations Governing Recipients of University Assistance are provided at the following link: <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html>.

## **Travel Policy**

\* Please review the latest COVID-19 travel restrictions and requirements at the general [website](#) and the COVID-19 specific [website](#).

Conference travel support is available from up to three resources: (1) The Graduate School, (2) the Department of your primary advisor, and (3) the Technology and Social Behavior program. In order to receive funding, you must be in good standing (i.e., “satisfactory” standing according to your annual review and TGS) as well as meet any additional requirements of the particular programs.

Travel arrangements for conferences can be completed through [Egencia](#), the university preferred travel system. Otherwise, travel arrangements can be made independently and after the travel period, students may submit expenses for reimbursement.

Graduate students traveling internationally under university-sponsorship or support must abide by the health and safety requirements outlined by the university’s [Office of Global Safety and Security \(OGSS\)](#) and review [COVID-19 travel restrictions and requirements](#).

### *The Graduate School- Conference Travel Grant*

Information about The Graduate School’s Conference Travel Grant is available on their [website](#).

## **Awards and Support**

The below awards are offered to eligible TSB students for conference travel, statistical training, annual membership fee (ACM), and Dissertation Research support. Students receive support for conferences where they are presenting a paper or on a panel. Please refer to the [Graduate Student Travel & Dissertation Support Outline](#) and the [Financial Support FAQ](#) documents for instructions on applying and payment procedures. For requirements and details on how to apply for the one-time Statistical Training Award, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies for the Technology and Social Behavior Program.

- Departmental Conference Travel Support:
  - Students are eligible for up to \$1,000 towards conference travel from the Department of Communication Studies.
  - [Department Conference Travel](#)
  
- TSB Conference Travel Support:
  - TSB students are eligible for up to \$500 towards conference travel from the TSB Program.



- [TSB Conference Travel](#)
- Annual Membership Fee Support:
  - The Department of Communication Studies will reimburse or pay the cost of one student membership per year to ACM, AAAI, NCA, or ICA professional organizations. A combination of any organizations up to an aggregate total of \$100 can be covered for the academic year. Please contact the Accounting Specialist so that funds are dispersed appropriately to cover the fee.
  - [Association Membership](#)
- Dissertation Research Support:
  - Graduate students who have passed their Ph.D. Qualifying exams may be eligible for a one-time award up to \$1,500 towards dissertation research expenses.
  - [Dissertation Funding](#)

#### *Additional Awards*

Students also may be selected by the faculty for the following awards:

#### Award Name: Graduate Dissertation Award

Type: Cash

Award Amount: \$400 per award Multiple Recipients: Yes

Terms of Award: Given for dissertations of exceptional quality in three areas: rhetoric, mass communication, and interpersonal communication. This award goes to two students who have completed their dissertation each year, across Rhetoric and Public Culture, Technology Society and Behavior, and Media, Technology, and Society programs.

#### Award Name: Donald H. and Carolyn E. Ecroyd Fellowship

Type: Scholarship

Award Amount: Financial Aid determines

Terms of Award: Established in 1993, this scholarship honors the late Caroline D. Ecroyd, an alumna of the School of Communication. Dr. and Mrs. Ecroyd both spent many years as university faculty members in the speech field. Mrs. Ecroyd was unable to complete her Ph.D. in communication at Northwestern because of lack of funds. She created this award to assist graduate students for whom the funds would make possible the completion of their doctoral dissertation. Students are eligible for this award during the last year of their doctoral program.

#### Award Name: Irving J. and Laura Lee Fellowship Type: Scholarship

Award Amount: Financial Aid determines

Terms of Award: For an outstanding graduate student. Established in 1987 by David Lee to honor and perpetuate the memory of his parents, who met at Northwestern as students and both became School of Communication faculty members, Irving specializing in public speaking and semantics, Laura in children's language development and disorders.

Students are also invited and encouraged to apply for [external funding](#) as well as [internal university funding](#). The Graduate School is an excellent resource for locating these opportunities,

as is the [Office of Fellowships](#).

## Masters Degree in TSB

Students pursuing the PhD in TSB are eligible to also pursue a Masters of Science (MS) degree in TSB that is awarded “on the way” to the PhD. This is a non-admitting degree that is available only to students in the TSB PhD Program.

The MS in TSB is optional, but if a student decides to pursue it, the requirements already align with those of the PhD program. Students may request receiving the new non-admitting MS degree upon completion of the course requirements and approval of the CS and MTS qualifying exams. The coursework requirements are exactly those of the PhD degree as outlined previously in the handbook.

To receive the MS degree students must demonstrate a “culminating experience”. The academic paper that is produced as part of either of the CS or MTS qualifying exams may serve as evidence of this culminating experience. The student and advisor will consult together to choose the appropriate exam paper, and it will then need to be reviewed and approved by three TSB faculty. If the CS qualifying paper is selected this will have already been reviewed by three TSB faculty as part of the qualifying exams milestone, and these approvals can likewise be used as approvals for the MS culminating experience. Should you choose a paper associated with an MTS exam, or another paper entirely, you will need to have three TSB faculty review the paper and send their approvals for the use of the paper as demonstration of the culminating experience.

See TGS’ full set of requirements and timeline for application here:

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/masters-degree-requirements.html>.

When MS degree requirements are complete, the student is responsible for 1) submitting the “Masters in Primary PhD” form in ([GSTS](#))--> TGS Forms, 2) uploading the committee approvals (confirmation email from each committee member to student verifying passed exams) into [GSTS](#)—> Documents—> Upload Documents—>General and title the File “MS approvals” with name (Last name, First name), 3) submitting the “Application for Degree” form available in ([GSTS](#))—> TGS Forms and then 4) submitting the “Masters Degree Completion” form available in ([GSTS](#))—> TGS Forms The department will receive an automated message with instructions to approve the student’s MS degree form. The program assistant will validate passage of the exams by reviewing the committee members’ confirmations already uploaded by the student in GSTS.

## Academic Timeline

*Important caveat: This timeline is provided only for guidance. It won't fit everybody exactly, because this isn't a one-size-fits-all doctoral program, but we provide it to you to give you a sense of what you should be thinking about as you proceed through the program.*

### Before your 1st Year

- The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will help you become acquainted with degree requirements and potential courses to take. They will also work with you to identify a primary advisor and one or two potential professors with whom you could perform a lab rotation.

### 1st Year

- Meet with the DGS and your advisor during the Fall registration period to put together a class schedule for your first 3 quarters. This may change, but should serve as an initial road map.
- All graduate students at NU must apply for graduate funding at some point. In your first year you should apply for graduate funding opportunities such as the NSF GRFP, NDSEG and other relevant fellowship and scholarship programs.
- You are required in the first year to complete MTS 519 for behavioral scientists through TSB (alternatives are also available via Computer Science and SESP – please speak with DGS if you require these options). You will enroll in MTS 519 for the face-to-face RCR training program, typically offered in the Spring quarter.
- You are required in the first year to attend at least two [seminars / workshops](#) that are offered through the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence.
- 
- Work with your lab rotation advisor to develop a goal sheet for your lab rotation (you will do this at the beginning of both lab assignments, and these sheets will serve as a guide for your end of year progress report). Goals should include course goals, research goals and publication goals. For your first lab rotation assignment, you must submit information in the [TSB Lab Rotation Form](#) by the last day of October. For your second rotation, submission is required by the last day of April.
- Sign up for a 499 class each quarter with your current lab rotation advisor. These 499 independent-study units will constitute your lab rotation credits.
- Before the end of exam week of Winter quarter, submit a paper to your first lab rotation advisor and the DGS. The length and format of this paper should be decided on at the beginning of the lab rotation. If you do not submit a research paper by this date, you will receive an incomplete on your 499 class for the quarter. The rotation advisor will communicate his/her assessment of the report to the DGS as part of his/her evaluation of the rotation student.
- Take MTS 501.
- You are required to attend all sessions of the TSB Colloquium Series (and strongly encouraged to attend Computer Science and MTS seminar series as well).
- Begin to fulfill MTS course requirements (2 MTS courses, taught by 2 different faculty members, 2 MTS 590s).

- Begin to fulfill Computer Science requirements (a concentration in either Artificial Intelligence or Interfaces, composed of four courses in one of those areas).
- Fill in any gaps in your undergraduate education (for example: introductory Computer Science classes, statistics, or experimental design).
- At the end of Spring quarter (before the end of exam week) turn in your “TSB Annual Progress Report”.

## 1st Summer

- This is your opportunity to get some serious research accomplished in view of submitting publications during your second year. Continue to work with your second lab rotation advisor to plan research that can be conducted over the summer. You are not obliged to work more on your lab rotation during the summer than during the school year. However it’s a good opportunity to get a lot more research done.
- At the end of exam week in Summer, turn in your second lab rotation paper to your rotation advisor and the DGS. If you do not submit your lab rotation paper by this date, you will receive an incomplete on your 499 course for this quarter. The rotation advisor will communicate his/her assessment of the report to the DGS as part of his/her evaluation of the rotation student, and this will factor into year-end evaluation.
- You are required to complete the [Northwestern Graduate Student Teaching Conference](#) and School of Communication Graduate Student Teaching Session before serving as a TA or GA (usually in your second year). The workshop and session takes place in September before the quarter starts.

## 2nd Year

- By the last day of October in your second year, you must declare your doctoral advisor and the lab you will join by filing the “Thesis Advisor Agreement”, signed by you and your new advisor.
- Take MTS 503 (Practice of Scholarship).
- Take more Computer Science courses to prepare for the Computer Science quals.
- Take more MTS courses to prepare for the MTS quals.
- Begin to scout out 2 social science faculty for the two components of your MTS qual.
- If you were not successful during your first year at obtaining graduate funding, use one of your lab rotation papers as the basis for a graduate fellowship application, such as an NSF GRFP, Ford, Spencer, etc.
- If you plan to carry out an internship in an academic, industry or government research lab during your second summer you should begin to seek out these opportunities early in the Fall quarter (note: most internships are secured by the beginning of the winter quarter). Internships require the consent of your advisor and you should discuss and plan together the appropriateness and timing of such an activity. Your advisor may also have contacts in research labs that are often key to successful placement.
- TSB students specializing in Artificial Intelligence must successfully complete the Artificial Intelligence qualifying exam in the spring quarter.

- At the end of Spring quarter (before the end of exam week) turn in your “TSB Annual Progress Report”.

## **2nd Summer**

- If you stay on campus, the second summer should be a productive research summer working with your advisor. You should work with your advisor to establish a research plan for the summer and you are expected to be actively engaged in research during this time.
- Alternatively, if you have secured a summer internship then you should be generating publishable research in this environment.
- TSB students specializing in Interfaces must complete their CS qualifying exam (paper plus presentation) by the end of the summer quarter of their second year.

## **3rd Year**

- TSB students specializing in Interfaces must complete their breadth requirement (courses) by the end of the spring quarter of the third year.
- Take your major MTS-style qual (this is usually administered by your advisor, but doesn't need to be) and your minor MTS-style qual.
- TSB students must be admitted to candidacy by the end of summer quarter of the third year. This means passing qualifying exams in both MTS and Computer Science and completing all course requirements.
- When you have completed all exams, please have your advisor contact the department program assistant to confirm you have passed and should be admitted to candidacy. The department will submit their approval to TGS. Students are then notified via email by TGS of their admission to candidacy, further requirements for the completion of their program, and their degree deadline.
- At the end of Spring quarter (before the end of exam week) turn in your “TSB Annual Progress Report”.

## **4th Year**

- Put together a dissertation committee composed of 4 faculty members (see degree requirements for specifications).
- TSB students must complete their dissertation prospectus, revise, and have it approved by the dissertation committee members, by the end of the fourth year. Once your prospectus is approved, you need to complete the online “PhD Prospectus Form” in GSTS and upload your committee members’ approvals (i.e. email(s) stating you passed) in the “Documents” section in GSTS. The department assistant will review the approvals and submit approval for the milestone to TGS. Students are then notified via email by TGS of the approval of the prospectus.
- At the end of Spring quarter (before the end of exam week) turn in your “TSB Annual Progress Report”.

## 5th Year

- Finally! Settle down and write a doctoral dissertation.
- Make sure to keep your advisor up-to-date. Make a timeline with him/her about when you will be turning in chapters, and when you would like to defend. An advisor taken by surprise by a dissertation or defense date is not a happy advisor, and we don't want that to translate into grumpy behavior in the defense!
- Please review the [PhD Degree Completion Checklist](#) for the complete requirements, approval processing, and steps to receive the degree.
- Work with your thesis committee to schedule your thesis defense. Once scheduled, communicate with the Program Administrator so it can be announced publicly.
- Before your thesis defense, you must complete both the "Application for Degree Form" and "Ph.D. Final Exam Form" available in [GSTS](#). After the defense, your committee members will receive an email to confirm the thesis defense and dissertation was successfully completed and approve/not approve passage.
- Online submission of your "Ph.D. Final Exam Form" serves as notice to TGS of your status, and initiates some processes on their end. Be aware that TGS has specific [requirements](#) governing thesis submission and graduation. All TGS requirements must be satisfied before the Ph.D. is conferred.
- Have a party, and then prepare for greatness!

## **Additional Policies and Resources**

How to Register

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/registration-and-courses.html>

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty Procedures

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/academic-integrity.html>

TGS Calendar with Deadlines

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/news-events/calendar.html#resp-tabs3>

Taking Courses at Other Universities

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>

Language Acquisition

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>

Teaching Requirement

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/assistantships/graduate-and-teaching.html>

Leave of Absence Process

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/leaves-of-absence.html>

Parental Accommodation

<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/parental-accommodation/>

Readmission

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/readmission.html>

Withdrawal Procedure

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/withdrawal.html>

Petitioning for Extension

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress.html>

Remunerative Work

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html>

TGS External Award Policy

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html>

Grading systems

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>



Hooping and Commencement Ceremonies

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/graduation/index.html>

Graduation and Diploma Mailing

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/graduation/index.html>

Best Practice Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Assistants

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/assistantships/graduate-and-teaching/best-practices.html>

Guidelines for Research Assistants

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/assistantships/research/index.html>

Key requests or issues

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Building maintenance requests or issues

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Copier access request or issues

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Room reservation instructions

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Telephone conferencing at Frances Searle or Annie May Swift

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Update student profile on program website

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

## **Important Campus Offices**

Health Insurance

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/graduate-life/health-services/health-plan/index.html>

U-Pass

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/graduate-life/u-pass/index.html>

WildCARD

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/community-campus-life/the-wildcard.html>

University Shuttles

<http://www.northwestern.edu/userservices/transportation/shuttles/index.html>

Parking and Safety

<http://www.northwestern.edu/up/parking/>

AccessibleNU

<http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/>

The Women's Center

<http://www.northwestern.edu/womencenter/>

Gender & Sexuality Resource Center

<http://www.northwestern.edu/norris/services/lgbt/>

Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion

<https://www.northwestern.edu/diversity/index.html>

International Student and Scholar Services

<http://www.northwestern.edu/international/>

Legal Services

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/legal-services/>

Center for Civic Engagement

<http://www.engage.northwestern.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services

<http://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>

Fitness and Recreation

<http://www.fitrec.northwestern.edu/>

Libraries

<https://www.library.northwestern.edu/>

Off-Campus Life

<http://www.northwestern.edu/offcampus/resources/how-tos/index.html>

Office of Fellowships

<http://www.northwestern.edu/fellowships/>

Office of Human Resources, Parent and Family Resources

<http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/childcare/solutions/index.html>

Office of the Registrar

<http://www.registrar.northwestern.edu/>

Searle Center for Teaching Excellence

<http://www.northwestern.edu/searle/>

Northwestern Career Advancement (NCA)

<http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/>

Student Affairs

<http://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/>

Volunteerism and Community Outreach

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/community-campus-life/volunteerism-community-outreach.html>

Graduate Student Associations and Graduate Leadership Council

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/community-campus-life/tgs-affiliated-organizations/student-associations.html>

Professional Development Programming for Graduate Students

<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/professional-development/>