

2025-2026

Human Development and Family Sciences Graduate Program Handbook

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Welcome!

Welcome to the Graduate School of the University of Connecticut, and to the Graduate Program in Human Development and Family Sciences (HDFS). This Handbook is designed to provide you with basic information concerning what we have to offer, what you should expect of us, and what we expect of you. *It is in your interest to read it carefully and to consult with your Major Advisor or the Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies about any unclear points.* We encourage you to ask questions as they arise, so that you can avoid unnecessary complications.

All University of Connecticut (UConn) graduate students are held to the basic requirements and regulations of the Graduate School as designated in the catalog. All UConn graduate programs can adopt further requirements in addition to those set by the Graduate School; this Handbook includes those we have added in HDFS.

In entering this program, you are joining a creative and innovative field. The career you make for yourself at UConn and beyond will depend largely upon your own resourcefulness and initiative as you choose from the range of available options. Required courses in our program are oriented toward presenting you with a content overview, basic research skills, and a range of alternative academic and professional directions from which you can choose. After that, the range of options to practice and hone your skills will depend largely on your choice of directions. Our graduate program is small enough to be tailored to your personal needs and goals, yet large enough to provide considerable diversity and exposure to a variety of perspectives.

We look forward with excitement to our mutual association and hope that both you and we may find it a challenging and rewarding experience.

Sincerely yours,

Eva Lefkowitz, Ph.D., Department Head, HDFS

Beth Russell, Ph.D., Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies, HDFS

Important Resources & Dates

Graduate School Catalog

The [2024-2025 Graduate Catalog](#) articulates University-level policy. Throughout this handbook, reference to the Graduate School and its policies are common and the particulars for each policy are found in the Catalog, thus it is an essential resource. It contains the description and requirements of the [HDFS graduate degree programs](#) and a [list of brief descriptions of HDFS graduate-level courses](#).

The Graduate Catalog is the binding document for each UConn graduate program. HDFS is accountable to what is written in the Graduate Catalog, so please read it carefully as it is the most authoritative, final word on program requirements for degree completion. While advisors have authority to grant exceptions to many things, students need to be aware of the processes for requesting them and the needed documentation. Please plan accordingly.

Graduate School Forms

All forms required by the Graduate School are provided [here](#), including plans of study, defense approval, general exam completion, and final thesis/dissertation approval paperwork.

Helpful steps to graduation are articulated by the Graduate School for both [M.A.](#) and [Ph.D.](#) students that organize the key processes governed at higher levels of the University.

HDFS resources

Program-specific timelines, advising checklists, and other advising FAQ resources can be found on the department [SharePoint site for matriculated HDFS graduate students](#).

Department Dates

Please be aware that the department follows the Graduate School and university calendars. For example, Assistantship contracts are effective university-wide on August 23rd each academic year; this is also the date the supplemental description of duties forms are due to the HDFS department. When the department requires review or submission steps in concert with university timelines, timelines are described under the relevant sections of this handbook. For example, details for *all* student defenses must be provided to the HDFS department with 3 weeks' notice to allow department staff adequate time to comply with the 2-week Graduate School timeline.

Academic Calendar

UConn's [Academic Calendar](#) is posted on the Registrar's website.

The HDFS Graduate Program

Admission to the Graduate Program

Students are admitted into the HDFS graduate program based on evidence of scholarly potential. There are three possible routes for admission:

1. The applicant has completed a master's degree with a research thesis within HDFS or a related field of study.
2. The applicant has completed a master's program in HDFS or a related field without having conducted a thesis. This applicant must be able to present evidence of their scholarly potential in the form of work that the HDFS Admissions Committee considers the equivalent to a research thesis (e.g., authorship of a published article with letters from mentors attesting to the quality of the applicant's contribution to the work).
3. The applicant has no post-baccalaureate training (i.e., directly from a bachelor's degree). This applicant must show substantial scholarly potential through work that the HDFS Admissions Committee considers the equivalent of a research thesis (e.g., evidence of high-level research-focused courses, letters from faculty with whom the student did undergraduate research, an undergraduate Honors thesis that was research-based, employment as a research assistant involved in multiple aspects of significant research investigations that resulted in (co-) authorship of a published article with letters from mentors attesting to the quality of the applicant's contribution to the work). Students admitted directly from a bachelor's degree will complete the M.A. degree "on the way" to the Ph.D. (see M.A. requirements below).

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is an optional part of the application process.

Focus and Areas of Specialization

The key word for the graduate program in Human Development and Family Sciences (HDFS) is **context**. All of the HDFS programs are concerned with human behavior and family patterns and processes as these are influenced by physical, social, cultural and historical factors. This appreciation of real world contexts leads many HDFS professionals to view human development and family life through action- and change-oriented lenses. Our graduate program is designed to encourage and support students' personal and professional growth and development, predicated on the belief that intellectual curiosity is an intrinsic part of being a successful professional and that students must feel free to pursue their interests.

Graduate students in the HDFS department study the diverse ways in which individuals develop within their social and familial contexts across the lifespan. They examine theory, develop and evaluate intervention/prevention programs, and engage in research to advance the field and, above all, to benefit the lives of individuals and families globally. Our areas of specialization include:

Child and Adolescent Development

Development during infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, and the transition to adulthood in the context of a range of social settings, including families, peers, schools, and culture.

Adulthood, Aging, and Gerontology

The health and wellbeing of adults, older adults, families, caregivers, and communities.

Diversity and Culture

The quality of life for individuals of diverse social, cultural, and racial/ethnic backgrounds within and outside of the United States; gender and sexual identities; and disabilities/abilities.

Couples, Parents, and Families

Relationships across the lifespan, including dating, marriage, and families of heterosexual and LGBTQ couples, in many social contexts including culture, socioeconomic status, and family structure.

Health, Wellbeing, and Prevention

The processes that promote health and wellbeing, and how to prevent negative outcomes at the individual, familial, community, and societal levels to develop prevention and intervention policies and practices.

Through discussions with their Major Advisor upon admission and later with their selected advisory committee, students will complete a course of study that includes experiences in and outside the classroom, crafted to meet their individual goals and interests while reflecting and building on the faculty's goals and areas of expertise. In addition to the required course of study outlined below, students and their advisors have considerable flexibility in defining an area of specialization that reflects each student's future expertise. Most students are likely to elect one area of specialization, however, some students may prefer to breadth in their program, as their studies and interests may span several of these areas. Unique configurations may be developed and pursued as long as the student ensures there are sufficient faculty and resources available. Students are required to complete minimum credits in their chosen specialization area which may include relevant courses available across the university, as the committee's discretion.

Faculty Advisory Committee

(See also

Advising and Review Process)

A faculty advisory committee should be formed as early as reasonable according to the student's plans and goals, generally at the end of the student's first year of study once 12-18 credits are complete for students completing their M.A., and at the end of the second year for those completing the Ph.D. program. **Forming a M.A. or Ph.D. committee will require students to articulate their specific topic of study, outline a draft of the courses they will take, and identify the corresponding faculty expertise that will help to complete that work; it is also helpful to have a timeline for progress and degree completion in mind for discussion when inviting faculty to join the committee. Students form the committee around the intended thesis or dissertation idea, then soon after review/discuss the courses listed on the Plan of Study (POS) to build the needed experience base for the project.** According to the policies established by the Graduate School, this committee must consist of *at least* three members: a major advisor and two or more associate advisors. The Major Advisor is automatically the chair of this committee and must hold a graduate

faculty appointment in HDFS. At least one of the required Associate Advisors must also be on the HDFS faculty and hold a graduate faculty appointment (which includes most but not all members of the HDFS faculty). A final associate committee member may be a UConn faculty member with an appointment outside HDFS without additional approvals. If deemed appropriate by a graduate student's major advisor, a suitably qualified external associate advisor from outside the university can be approved by the Graduate School and the student's advisory committee. This request must come from the Major Advisor and should be accompanied by the external individual's curriculum vitae. Ordinarily, *not more than one external associate advisor* is appointed to any master's or doctoral student's advisory committee.

Degree Conferral

UConn stipulates that graduate degree conferral requires students have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 for all courses listed on the final Plan of Study (POS) and that all requirements for the degree have been completed satisfactorily by the deadline specified in the [Academic Calendar](#). Degrees are conferred three times each year in August, December, and May. However, the only graduate Commencement ceremony is held annually in May. Students who qualify for degree conferral receive their diplomas by mail, normally within three months following conferral. If all required paperwork and steps needed for conferral are not received by the Office of the Registrar **at least two weeks prior** to the intended conferral date, conferral is delayed to the next conferral period.

Master of Arts Program Requirements

Please note: Admission to the very limited number of slots in our HDFS M.A. program is typically considered only for students clearly intending to proceed to a Ph.D. either at UConn or elsewhere, and as such, the M.A. is a research-focused program.

Plan of Study

Students design their Plan of Study (POS) in consultation with the student's Major Advisor and advisory committee. The Graduate School sets a **minimum of 30 credits** to complete a master's program. The typical number of credits in the M.A. program in HDFS is 30-45 course credits which includes nine thesis preparation credits. Please note that courses listed on the M.A. POS may not appear on the student's Ph.D. POS., so best practice for students completing both degrees is to list only those courses needed to meet the M.A. program requirements on the first POS, leaving the maximum number available as options for the later, doctoral POS. Once completed, changes require the submission of a revised Plan of Study that must be approved again by the student's advisory committee; this is a *very common step* to update the form prior to graduation.

The following [required courses](#) comprise the M.A. curriculum:

- HDFS 5001 Proseminar in Human Development and Family Sciences
- HDFS 5003 Research Methods in Human Development and Family Sciences I
- HDFS 5005 Qualitative Methods
- HDFS 5008 Quantitative Analysis for HDFS
- HDFS 5215 Models and Concepts of Lifespan Human Development,

- Either HDFS 5310 Patterns and Dynamics of Family Interaction OR
HDFS 5311 Theories of Family Development
- One human development course (HDFS 5101, 5102, 5103, 5240, 5242, or 5248)
- additional HDFS courses in their area(s) of specialization and any additional course requirements of the master's degree Portfolio deemed essential by their advisory committee (e.g., research practicum, fieldwork, independent study)

In addition, all M.A. students are required to write a thesis, or thesis equivalent (see descriptions below), register for the corresponding **nine credits of GRAD 5950: Master's Thesis Preparation**, and pass an oral examination – or defense – of their thesis.

A master's degree must be completed within six years according to Graduate School policy, however, the typical completion range spans from 1½ to 3 years. For full-time students (those taking a minimum of 6 credits per term), this is likely to include two years of full-time graduate study and may also include contiguous summers. A one-time, two (2) year extension of the student's terminal date is considered when the student has made consistent progress to complete the degree requirements. A recommendation to extend the terminal date must be signed by the major advisor and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

MA Portfolio

A terminal master's degree portfolio includes seven benchmarks that should be completed before graduation. Students are asked to submit a current version of this portfolio every year as part of the annual review process the department employs to track student progress and offer support when needed.

	Benchmark	Evaluation Criteria
1	Curriculum Vitae	
2	Approved/signed M.A. POS in one or more areas of specialization	Approved by Advisory Committee; submitted to HDFS Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies and the Graduate School
3	Core courses. Courses should incorporate readings essential to the student's program of study.	Unofficial Transcript; Instructor grade
4	Completion of Professional Proseminar and Professional Development Modules on research ethics, standards, and procedures (CITI)	Grade in Proseminar (HDFS 5001); evidence of completion of required training
5	Thesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Book chapter, journal manuscript, technical report - A program evaluation or portion of an evaluation 	Approval by committee and oral defense to department; Signed paperwork (Report on the Final Examination for the Master's Degree) submitted to HDFS Associate Department

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature review - Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed Methods study - Policy Analysis - Case study – based on practicum experience – includes evaluative elements 	Head for Graduate Studies and the Graduate School.
6	<p>Leadership and/or Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a professional society beginning the first year in the program <p>And at least one of the following (or other activities as designated by the committee):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conference attendance - Membership on professional or service organization boards - Reviewing proposals for presentations or publications - Service on departmental, university, outreach, or professional organizations committees - Volunteer work at local, state, or national conferences - Appointment or election for committee involvement in local, state or national organization - Attendance in Department colloquia 	Evidence of membership in national organization(s) and participation in activities at departmental, local, state, regional, and national levels.
7	One presentation/poster at state, regional, national, or international conferences, as primary presenter or as part of a research team. Posters or presentations scheduled to be presented during the student’s UConn graduate career are acceptable.	Power Points slides/posters, papers, or other formats of presentation. If student is 3 rd + author, then she/he should complete and include an Authorship Responsibility Checklist explaining role(s).

Master’s Thesis

UConn’s Graduate School articulates dual pathways to M.A. completion, a thesis option and a non-thesis option, called Plan A and Plan B, respectively. The HDFS graduate program is a research focused degree and requires all students complete a thesis, or thesis equivalent, thus all students completing a Master’s are Plan A students. There are several types of appropriate theses or thesis equivalents which include:

1. Original Research Project

Students design a study in which they collect data and write a thesis entirely on their own data. This should be done in close collaboration with one's advisor, to avoid overwhelming the student. A wide range of topics and approaches are satisfactory to the Department, dependent on agreement by one's advisory committee (e.g., quantitative and qualitative studies or policy analysis, etc.).

2. Replication

A thesis can also take the form of a replication of a previously conducted study. Re-doing a study with additional controls or a younger or older age sample are examples of how a replication can serve as an M.A. thesis.

3. Secondary Data Analysis

Today, there are more national data sets than ever available that can be used for research purposes. There are faculty in the department who can help students access and use these archived data bases. Students can use these resources for their M.A. theses involving topics such as poverty and child development, women's employment and parenting roles, parent-child relations, and physical/mental health issues among cancer survivors and minority families. Several faculty members have interviews and other data sets available that have not yet been analyzed. The use of these materials is an appropriate route for an M.A. thesis and benefits all concerned.

4. Ongoing Research

Another route used for completing the thesis requirement is through involvement with faculty or doctoral research that is being planned or is underway. Master's students might collaborate on or extend these ongoing projects in ways that are mutually beneficial to all involved. The M.A. thesis reports on such efforts.

5. Jointly Conducted Investigation Across Graduate Students

In the past, graduate students have jointly conceived and conducted a research project that served as a basis for their respective M.A. theses. The students might share in the design and execution of the study but focus on different research questions or aspects of the study for their respective theses. A joint project can benefit students when there is mutual help and productive sharing of data. The separate M.A. theses report the common elements but analyze and interpret different aspects of the study.

6. Completion of the Dept. of Educational Psychology Certificate in Program Evaluation

The required project for the [Certificate in Program Evaluation through the Department of Educational Psychology](#) may satisfy the M.A. thesis requirement in HDFS contingent on the approval of the advisory committee. The thesis must conform to the guidelines for preparing the thesis, scheduling the defense, and necessary steps for submitting posted by the Graduate School. (Note: There is also a separate [online certificate program](#).)

The Registrar's website provides [guidelines for the preparation of the thesis](#), scheduling the defense, and [necessary steps for submitting the thesis](#).

Oral Examination

The required oral examination, or defense, is seen as providing closure on the M.A. program experience. It is an educational experience that consists of a presentation of the completed thesis and provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their competence in their area of specialization within a professional setting. The student's advisory committee will determine the scheduling, format, and focus of the oral exam. In addition, students must complete and submit this [HDFS defense form](#) at least 3 weeks prior to their thesis defense to allow sufficient processing time to meet the Graduate School timeline.

Doctor of Philosophy Program Requirements

The Graduate Faculty of HDFS approved the following curriculum for all Ph.D. students matriculating in Fall of 2024 and thereafter. The HDFS Ph.D. program is designed to support a cohort model, where each incoming class of students will take some of the same classes in the same order in the first two years. **A student may request a waiver of required core courses if she/he has completed similar course work. However, the waiver must be discussed with and approved by the student's Major Advisor and the Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies (ADHGS).** In some cases, the student will be asked to discuss his or her background and qualifications with the instructor of a specific course to allow that faculty person to have input into the decision as to whether to waive the relevant course requirement.

Plan of Study

Through discussions with their Major Advisor and advisory committee, a student will develop a doctoral [Plan of Study \(POS\)](#). Although certain minimum requirements are set by The Graduate School (30 for the M.A. and 80 for the Ph.D., with 50 credits post-M.A.), it is important for students to realize that **work toward this degree is not merely a matter of accumulating course credits** or of satisfying requirements. The degree will be conferred **only after the advisory committee are convinced that the student has developed independence of judgment and mature scholarship in their chosen field.** After accounting for the 15 required doctoral dissertation preparation credits (GRAD 6950), our required curriculum, below, permits ample opportunities for students to pursue additional coursework to support research training in their area of specialization.

The following [required courses](#) comprise the Ph.D. curriculum.

- HDFS 5001 Orientation to Human Development and Family Sciences (1-credit)
- HDFS 5003 Research Methods in Human Development and Family Sciences I
- HDFS 5004 Mixed methods in social and behavioral research
- HDFS 5005 Qualitative Research Methods in HDFS
- HDFS 5006 Professional Development in Human Development and Family Sciences
- HDFS 5008 Quantitative Analysis for HDFS
- HDFS 5215 Models and Concepts of Lifespan Human Development
- **Either** HDFS 5310 Patterns and Dynamics of Family Interaction **or** HDFS 5311 Theories of Family Development
- HDFS 5312 Diverse Families: Adaptations Across the Lifespan

- HDFS 5340 Prevention, Intervention, and Policy Approaches
- Two additional courses in qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed methods, as approved by the student's advisory committee (e.g., beginning with EPSY 5610).
- One human development course (HDFS 5101, 5102, 5103, 5240, 5242, or 5248).
- Three additional HDFS courses (at a minimum) in their area(s) of specialization and any additional course requirements of the Doctoral Degree Portfolio deemed essential by their advisory committee (e.g., research or teaching practicum, fieldwork, independent study).

In addition, all Ph.D. students are required to write a dissertation, approved by the committee, and register for **fifteen credits of GRAD 6950: Doctoral Dissertation Preparation**. Finally, all students must pass an oral examination – or defense - of their dissertation.

According to the Graduate School policy, all doctoral work must be completed within a period of eight (8) years of the beginning of the student's matriculation in the Ph.D. program. Failure to complete the work within the periods specified or failure to maintain [Continuous Registration](#) will require reevaluation of the student's entire program and may result in a notice of termination.

Guidelines for Independent Teaching by a Graduate Student

Opportunities may be available at the Storrs and regional campuses for Doctoral students to teach undergraduate HDFS courses independently as an instructor of record. Eligibility requirements include:

- Completion of GRAD 6001 (Introduction to College Instruction).
- Completion of HDFS 5010 (Practicum in University Teaching in HDFS).
 - Teaching practica are 3-credit individualized learning experiences that students arrange with a relevant graduate faculty member (true of most but not all HDFS faculty). The student and faculty collaborate on the specific activities to be completed over the course of the semester to best prepare for the solo instructor role, often using an apprenticeship model. Importantly, practica students are not TAs and should have more advanced opportunities that extend or build on previous responsibilities they had as TAs (either as graders or discussion section leaders).
 - When possible, the preference is for the practicum to be in the same course that the graduate student plans to teach, so selecting a faculty member scheduled to teach courses of interest is a good place to start!

Each November (approximately), students are surveyed for their interests and readiness for a range of assistantship roles for the following year. Students can indicate their interest and preparation for solo instructor of record roles at that time and should be prepared to detail the following:

- A. The semester when GRAD 6001 and HDFS 5010 were taken.
- B. The semester(s) during which the student is willing to teach.
- C. The course(s) the student is interested in teaching.
- D. Description of other related research or work experience (including all TA roles).

PhD Portfolio

Doctoral students maintain a Portfolio that includes eleven benchmarks completed before graduation. Students are required to submit a current version of this portfolio every year as part of

the annual review process the department employs to track student progress and offer support when needed. The benchmarks are listed in the table below. Note that these are minimal requirements, and students are encouraged to present and publish their research throughout their time in graduate school well beyond the minimums captured here. When there are different requirements for students who matriculate with a bachelor's versus master's degree, these are noted.

#	Benchmark	Evaluation Criteria
1	Performance in required and area of specialization courses.	Instructor grades as listed on student transcript.
2	Approved and completed M.A. Plan of Study for students who enter Ph.D. program from a bachelor's degree (NA for those entering from a prior MA degree).	Approved by Advisory Committee; submitted to HDFS Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies and the Graduate School.
3	Completion of HDFS 5001, including required completion of research ethics (e.g., CITI) training.	Grade in HDFS 5001 and evidence of completion of required training.
4	MA thesis for students who enter Ph.D. program from a bachelor's degree (and do not have a completed prior MA thesis; NA for those entering from a prior MA degree).	Approval by committee and oral defense to department. Paperwork submitted to HDFS Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies and the Graduate School.
5	Student membership in appropriate professional and research organization(s) required. Participation in departmental, state, regional, national, or international organizational activities strongly encouraged throughout graduate career.	Evidence of membership in national organization(s) and participation in activities at state, regional, national, and international levels.
6	Three presentations or posters at state, regional, national, or international conferences, as primary presenter or as part of a research team. Can include one presentation/poster presented prior to entering the program but at least two must be submitted while at UConn and presented (or scheduled to be presented) during the student's UConn graduate career. Those can occur at any point throughout graduate career. One of the presentations may be completed after completion of the General Exam.	Copies of the presentations. If student is 3rd+ author, then they should complete and include an Authorship Responsibility Checklist explaining role(s).
7	Authorship of two manuscripts published, in press, or submitted to peer-reviewed journals or as chapters for edited volumes. Can include one article submitted prior to matriculation. At least one manuscript must	Manuscripts and editorial reviews, if available, of article submitted to a peer-reviewed journal or book editor. If student is 3rd+ author, then they should

	be completed and submitted at any point throughout the student's graduate career in the HDFFS Ph.D. program. One of the manuscripts may be completed after completion of the General Exam.	complete an Authorship Responsibility Checklist explaining role(s).
8	Approved Ph.D. Plan of Study .	Approved by Advisory Committee. Submitted to HDFFS Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies and the Graduate School.
9	General Exam: a comprehensive, critical review of the literature in a substantive area of the student's scholarly area of interest. Topic of the exam to be determined by the student's advisory committee but must demonstrate the student's command of the literature and the ability to synthesize and explain the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical knowledge on the chosen topic. This exam is to be completed independently by the student.	Report on the General Exam form , approved by the Advisory Committee plus two additional department faculty designated for this purpose by the HDFFS Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies.

Remaining Benchmarks are completed after passing the General Exam which results in notification by the graduate school of Ph.D. candidacy

10	Dissertation Proposal.	<p>Proposal approved by Advisory Committee and reviewed/evaluated by at least two members of the faculty in addition to Advisory Committee.</p> <p>Following a review of the written dissertation proposal by the student's advisory committee, the dissertation proposal will be presented orally in a defense to department faculty (minimum of two additional faculty, beyond the advisory committee) and then revised in accordance with discussion at defense and discretion of the Advisory Committee. Dissertation proposal with signed approval page by Advisory Committee, noting additional faculty who participated in the oral defense, submitted to HDFFS Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies and transmission to the Graduate School</p>
11	Dissertation.	Approval by student's Advisory Committee; oral presentation or defense to audience, including at least five faculty members (advisory committee plus 2) as required by the Graduate School. Completion form initiated by the student and approved by the Advisory Committee and Degree Audit.

General Exam

According to the Graduate School, students usually complete the General Examination after the student has completed at least 75% of coursework. In HDFS, this means after the completion of all required courses and 75% of area of specialization courses. The General Exam approved by the Graduate Faculty consists of a comprehensive, critical review of the literature in a substantive area of the student's scholarly area of interest. The topic of the exam is to be determined by the student's advisory committee. The exam must demonstrate student's knowledge of the literature and the ability to synthesize and explain the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical knowledge on the chosen topic. This paper is to be completed independently by the student. Any accommodations for allowable resources (e.g., speech to text software or other supports through the Center for Students with Disabilities, librarian support on search terms, etc.) must be discussed and approved by the committee to be articulated as part of the development of the exam question.

Developing and Administering the Exam Question

The advising committee develops a question(s) based on the students' research interest. Questions and the timeline for their completion are often – but not always – developed in collaboration with the student, at the committee's discretion. The intent of the question is to provide the student with a substantive task that will prepare them for their expressed doctoral work, thus students and Major Advisors should have previously deliberated about what the dissertation project will be (though there is variability in how specific or concrete ideas need to be to satisfy a committee that a student is ready). The General Exam is not intended to be verbatim a portion of the dissertation, though it should heavily prepare students for that future work. Often the exam questions result in papers that, with sometimes *significant refinement*, can be considered for inclusion, but that is not the explicit intent. The committee presents the formal question(s) and instructions to the student, including the length of the exam and time to completion, via email. The Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies (ADHGS) should be included in the email. Length of exams generally varies from 25-40 pages and time to completion varies from 30-90 days, depending on the committee. Students should be directed to submit a masked copy of their completed exam to the ADHGS via email. It is also advisable to send students the [Comprehensive Exam Review Guidance form](#) used to evaluate exams.

Exam Evaluation

Completed exams are submitted as a masked PDF and include a copy of the exam questions/instructions to the ADHGS. The ADHGS asks two non-committee HDFS faculty to review the exam within 4-6 weeks; their identities remain confidential. Exams are evaluated according to criteria in the Comprehensive Exam Review Guidance form- which includes details for the pass/revise & resubmit/fail decision.

The General Exam will be evaluated by the Advisory Committee plus at least two additional faculty designated for this purpose and masked from the student by the ADHGS. Reviewers are directed to complete the criteria form and return it to the ADHGS. The reviewers independently rate the Exam as Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail.

- If all reviews rate the exam as a “Pass,” the exam is complete.
- If one or more reviewers rate the exam as a “Revise and Resubmit,” the student may be asked to make revisions and resubmit the exam to the reviewers who requested revisions,

at the discretion of the Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies. The timeline for such revisions is typically 30-60 days.

- If one or more reviewers rate the exam as a “Fail,” then detailed assessments of the paper by all reviewers are submitted to the ADHGS, who has the discretion to ask the student to revise the exam.

If the revised paper is not rated as “Pass” by all advising committee members and at least one of the additional reviewers, the ADHGS will call a meeting of the advising committee and the two additional reviewers to confer and seek consensus about a decision. The ADHGS then notifies both the student and the advising committee of the final decision, including the set of 5 Comprehensive Exam Review Guidance forms (the copies from the masked reviewers remain masked, keeping their identities confidential).

Upon approval, the student will complete and circulate for committee member signatures the [Report on the General Exam](#). Upon completion, they will submit the form to the ADHGS who will add in the names of the masked reviewers and submit the final form to the Graduate School.

Dissertation

Planning Process

The dissertation should address an appropriate topic in HDFS and upon its completion should make a significant contribution to the field. From initial conceptualization to finish, the completion of the dissertation will take a significant portion of the student’s time and effort in the Ph.D. program. In the process of designing, conducting, and writing the dissertation, the student will become one of the world’s experts on their topic. The student will need to develop a deep understanding of the relevant literature, demonstrate the ability to use appropriate methods, and communicate their results. Students will develop, refine, and revise these conceptual and methodological skills over the entire course of doctoral study through courses, program benchmarks, and other related experiences. Frequent conversations with the Major Advisor and consultation with the advisory committee members, about the evolution of students’ interests are in everyone’s best interests.

Dissertation Proposal

After completing the General Exam, doctoral students must submit a Dissertation Proposal for approval by their advisory committee. Each student’s advisory committee oversees the construction of dissertation proposal. The proposal is to be typed and double spaced, and it should be prepared with care and attention to style required for scholarly writing and publication. It should specify Background, Purpose for the Research, Research Question, Methods and Procedures, Analytic Procedures, and Discussion (including Significance and Limitations). It should be approximately 20 double-spaced pages in length of text, with a maximum of 25 pages. Please be concise. For example, the literature review should not contain the kind of detail expected in the dissertation but, instead, should provide essential information to enable reviewers to understand the goals and procedures of the proposed research. [In the instance of a multi-paper (e.g., 3-article) dissertation, the student’s committee can provide guidance as to the appropriate length and format of the proposal, though overarching introduction and discussion sections are common in these instances and overall page length tends to be longer to accommodate a set of methods and products rather than those for a single paper.]

Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal

Following preliminary approval of the written proposal by the Advisory Committee, the student will present an announced oral defense to the Department faculty. A minimum of two faculty outside of the Advisory Committee must attend. The student's advisory committee will determine the scheduling, format, and focus of the oral exam. The Graduate School website provides guidelines for the preparation and scheduling defenses. In addition, students must complete and submit this [HDFS defense info form](#) at least 3 weeks prior to their thesis defense to allow sufficient processing time to meet the Graduate School timeline.

Revisions may be suggested during the Oral Defense and the student will complete these as required by the Advisory Committee. Successful completion of the dissertation proposal will be acknowledged by the Advisory Committee by signing the [Dissertation Proposal for the Doctoral Degree form](#), which is then signed by the ADHGS and submitted to Degree Audit (a unit within the Registrar). Upon submission to Degree Audit, a *pro forma* consideration and approval process will be conducted by the Executive Committee of that group, at which point the student will be allowed to submit the dissertation upon its completion. **Please note that the dissertation proposal final approval should be at least six months before the date of degree completion.**

Dissertation Research

Subsequently, the student and their advisory committee are responsible for completion of the dissertation in the form and manner proposed. Of course, relatively minor changes to the project may be made as the study or studies proceed. However, if the dissertation is altered dramatically from the proposal, the student *must* resubmit the new dissertation version to the Graduate Faculty of the HDFS and the Graduate Faculty Council of the Graduate School for reconsideration.

Students must take at least 15 credits of dissertation preparation (GRAD 6950) while completing their doctoral study(ies). The Graduate School maintains that there is a cap of 9 credits of GRAD 6950 per semester. The timing of these credits will be discussed and decided with the Major Advisor and the Advisory Committee. Typically, the time necessary to complete the dissertation will be *at least one year* of full-time commitment.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

The final stage of the dissertation process requires doctoral candidates to present their dissertation in a publicly announced oral defense to the department. The defense occurs after the advisory committee has approved the dissertation as complete enough to be defended. The Graduate School/Degree Audit provides [guidelines for the preparation of the dissertation](#) and [scheduling the defense](#). In addition, students must complete and submit the [HDFS defense info form](#) at least 3 weeks prior to their anticipated defense date to allow sufficient processing time to meet the Graduate School requirements.

Following a successful defense, the student should review the [information about submitting the necessary paperwork](#) and initiate the [Dissertation Approval form](#), which will route to members of the Advisory Committee and the ADHGS for approval before ending up with Degree Audit for their review.

Advising and Review Process

(See also [Rights, Responsibilities, and Expectations](#))

Advising

A critical element influencing progress and satisfaction with the graduate program is advising. When a student is admitted to the graduate program, they are assigned a Major Advisor. The Graduate Admissions Committee (GAC), working with appropriate members of the faculty, assigns a Major Advisor based on the best combination of student and faculty interests and faculty advising loads. This preliminary Major Advisor provides consultation for initial course choices. However, as soon as possible in a Ph.D. student's career—and not later than completing a year of full-time course work or its equivalent in part-time work—the student should select a permanent Major Advisor and form an advisory committee. This selection may be an affirmation of the assigned Major Advisor, *or* it may be a different faculty member who is a better fit for the completion of the student's graduate career in HDFFS. Any change for this role must be completed through the [Change of Major Advisor form](#) found on the Registrar's site. The Major Advisor serves many important roles:

1. Advises on class selection, initially solely and later in conjunction with the student's advisory committee;
2. Recommends appropriate members for the advisory committee;
3. Chairs the thesis or dissertation committee;
4. Provides the student with opportunity for professional exposure and advancement (informing about appropriate organizations, workshops, providing opportunities for co-presentations, etc.);
5. Works with the student to insure appropriate progress and satisfactory completion of all requirements;
6. Reports to the ADHGS and the entire Graduate Faculty about the student's progress; and
7. Fulfills the goal of providing each student with a high-quality education that is the foundation for professional advancement and satisfaction.

A successful relationship with a Major Advisor requires that a student must have reasonable expectations for what can and cannot be done by the advisor. Information about resolving potential conflicts in this relationship is provided under "Advising and Conflicts" in Section II.

After selecting a Major Advisor, the Advisory Committee must be completed with at least two other associate members of the Graduate Faculty. At least one of the required associate advisors must also be on the HDFFS faculty and hold a graduate faculty appointment (which includes most but not all members of the HDFFS faculty). A final associate committee member may be a UConn faculty member with an appointment outside HDFFS without additional approvals. If deemed appropriate by a graduate student's major advisor, a suitably qualified external associate advisor from outside the university can be approved by the Graduate School and the student's advisory committee. This request must come from the Major Advisor and should be accompanied by the external individual's curriculum vitae. Ordinarily, *not more than one external associate advisor* is appointed to any master's or doctoral student's advisory committee. The exact composition of this critical committee

depends on the individual student's interests and needs. The advisory committee will be responsible for:

1. Reviewing and approving the POS, which is a list of all course work applied to the Ph.D.;
2. Participating in the development and subsequent evaluation of the General Exam;
3. Working with the student in all stages of the dissertation project from preparation of the proposal, to writing the dissertation, to presentation of the oral defense;
4. Working in close collaboration with the student on Institutional Review Board (IRB) matters;
5. Evaluating and approving the thesis and/or dissertation, and
6. Completing all required paperwork and meeting appropriate deadlines.

Annual Review of Doctoral Students

Each Spring, typically in March, students are required to report on their progress towards degree completion. The department will contact students with the directions for completion but uses the above portfolio format to articulate and assess benchmark progress. These annual reviews preserve the academic integrity of the program, provide constructive guidance to students in the progression of their program, and aid the department in monitoring where investing resources will support student achievement in our field.

Typical Progress Timeline

Each year, the annual review should address all program benchmarks. The review must be prepared in conjunction with and approved by the Major Advisor before it is submitted to the ADHGS. Some *general guidance* can be offered by expected progress as follows, allowing for the discretion of each advising committee and with some latitude granted for specific circumstances.

1. Students completing their first year of study should expect to report on:
 - Progress on required courses.
 - Student membership in at least one appropriate national organization.
 - Submission of presentation/poster to a state, regional, national, or international conference.
 - Advising committee formed and a Plan of Study roughly drafted; some students may be ready to seek signatures for required submission paperwork.
2. In the student's second year, reporting typically includes:
 - Progress on required courses and areas of specialization courses.
 - Second presentation/poster submitted to state, regional, national, or international conference.
 - Presentation of a paper/poster at a state, regional, national, or international conference, at least as part of a team, potentially in a lead, first-author role.
 - Advising Committee formed and a Plan of Study submitted.
 - M.A. thesis progress, for those entering the program with a bachelor's degree. Some students may be prepared to complete and defend a thesis this year.
3. In the student's third year, reporting typically includes:
 - Successful completion of all core courses and significant progress toward completing area of specialization courses. Students who have consistently taken more than the minimum

credits required for full time status (6 per semester) may be nearing the end of their coursework.

- Submission of article with student as co-author to a peer reviewed journal or a chapter for an edited volume.
- Completion of M.A. thesis, including oral defense (if student enters with a bachelor's degree).
- Ph.D. Plan of Study approved and submitted (if student enters with a master's degree).
- General exam planning underway, some students may be ready to complete the exam this year (if student enters with a master's. degree).

4. In the fourth year:

- General exam completion
- Course requirements are generally complete, though often students elect to take additional offerings above the minimum
- Written dissertation proposal submitted and reviewed by the advising committee; oral defense of proposal (may only be submitted *after* approval of completion of Comprehensive/General Exam).

5. Before degree conferral, the following is expected:

- Second article or chapter submitted; preferred as first author.
- Third presentation/poster at state, regional, national, or international conference.
- Teaching and/or applied experience completed, if relevant for student's goals.
- Final portfolio submitted for evaluation.
- Dissertation research completed, written, approved, and defended.

It is important to recognize that it is the student's responsibility to make satisfactory progress. In most cases, our students exceed the suggested minimum achievements detailed above. All students *must* continue to register under appropriate catalog numbers every semester or the Graduate School will terminate the student's candidacy even if the student and student's Major Advisor and advisory committee feel satisfactory progress *is* being made. However, simply continuing to pay continuous registration without progress on one's course work, thesis, general examination, or dissertation is *not* considered satisfactory progress. The Major Advisor is empowered to instruct the Graduate School to terminate a student's candidacy for lack of progress.

Articulation Policy

Admission from M.A. to Ph.D. within Human Development and Family Sciences

It is possible for students who were admitted initially to the M.A. program to apply for continuing study in the doctoral program. Typically, this occurs when the students are near completing the M.A. program. Successful applicants will have demonstrated an outstanding record of academic achievement and significant involvement in scholarly research including conference presentation and publication (co-)authorship. Current MA students interested in pursuing a Ph.D. should talk to their Major Advisor, other faculty, and the ADHGS as early as possible to discuss their doctoral interests. Successful completion of the MA in HDFS is *not* sufficient for admission into the Ph.D.

program. Students applying from within the HDFS program to the doctoral program are required to follow all application procedures:

- They can ask to have certain elements of their M.A. application included in their Ph.D. application (that is, they may ask that GRE scores or transcripts need not be resubmitted).
- They must provide new letters of recommendation (at least some of which may be from faculty with whom they have worked in their M.A. program here) and a new personal statement.
- Each applicant must provide evidence of his or her scholarly work or potential, in the form of a thesis, publications in referred journals to which they made significant contributions, or other scholarly products.

Rights, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Climate Statement for the Graduate Program in Human Development and Family Sciences

The faculty, administrators, and graduate students in HDFS are committed to creating a social, intellectual, and interpersonal climate that enhances the experiences of graduate students and faculty. Graduate students and faculty occupy reciprocal and interdependent positions within the University. Any effort to enhance the climate must address both student and faculty contributions to the climate.

In order to create an optimal climate, we believe that it is important to make the responsibilities and rights of both graduate students and faculty explicit. Both are to act in professional and considerate ways. The Graduate Faculty within HDFS is committed to providing the best educational opportunities that they can for graduate students. Members of the Graduate Faculty will be responsive to student needs and will work to create an atmosphere that promotes academic rigor while respecting the rights, dignity, and privacy of HDFS graduate students. At the same time, graduate students are expected to participate actively in activities both inside and outside the classroom that are important to their educational experience and contribute to the broader academic community. Active participation in the academic life in the department entails graduate students taking responsibility for their own education and taking advantage of the unique learning opportunities available in our program.

What follows represents our effort to make explicit what graduate students can expect of faculty members as instructors, advisors, and supervisors. These expectations constitute what we agree are the rights of graduate students in HDFS. This document also makes explicit what the graduate faculty believe they should be able to expect of graduate students, and these expectations constitute what we think of as the rights of faculty. In developing this statement, we have addressed rights and responsibilities pertaining to graduate instruction, advising, assistantships, and overall participation in the University community.

Mutual Rights and Obligations:

- Faculty and graduate students will communicate with respect and dignity.

- Faculty and graduate students will discuss in advance how a graduate student's involvement in a faculty member's research will be recognized.
- Faculty and graduate students are expected to follow ethical standards for professional conduct.
- Faculty and graduate students will be knowledgeable about and abide by HDFS and University grievance procedures.
- Faculty and graduate students are expected to respond to contacts and requests for information in a timely fashion.
- Faculty and graduate students are expected to take responsibility for the overall climate of the department by working to resolve problems that arise in constructive ways.

Student Rights/Faculty Obligations:

- Faculty will be knowledgeable of and abide by the University's policies regarding sexual harassment, confidentiality, and non-discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability.
- Faculty will respond to communications from students in a timely fashion (see the Practices and Policy Statement for HDFS).
- Faculty will provide students with timely feedback concerning course work, theses, proposals, comprehensive examinations, and dissertations (see the Practices and Policy Statement for the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences below).
- Faculty will respect and protect student's right to express differing opinions.
- Faculty, as professional role models, will act in accordance with the ethical standards for professional conduct of their respective professional organization (APA, NCFR, etc.).
- Faculty will provide a clear, complete syllabus that includes a listing of all course requirements, with due dates, distributed at the first seminar meeting.
- Faculty will start and end class on time.
- Faculty will provide concrete feedback to graduate students and suggestions for improving the quality of their work (papers and exams should be returned to students with comments and feedback).

Student Rights/Major Advisor Obligations:

- Graduate students have the right to change advisors without recrimination.
7. Major Advisors will provide accurate information about requirements for successful completion of degree requirements.
 - Major Advisors will meet with their graduate advisees at least twice a year to discuss courses, graduation requirements, and advisee's concerns.
 8. Major Advisors will complete all academic and administrative paperwork required for advisees' progress in the program.
 9. Major Advisors will assist students in setting educational-career goals (when asked by the student).
 10. Major Advisors should provide concrete feedback and suggestions for improving the quality of the student's scholarly work.

Student Rights/Faculty Supervisor Obligations:

- Faculty supervisors will provide assigned graduate assistants with clear expectations regarding requirements and constructive feedback so each student is aware of the supervisor's evaluation of his or her performance.
- Faculty supervisor's demands on graduate assistants should conform to the job description relative to the funding source.
- Faculty supervisors will provide adequate notice to graduate assistants when they request that a student work during hours outside of the student's normal work schedule.
- Faculty will not expect a graduate assistant to work beyond the contracted period.

Graduate Student Obligations/Faculty Rights:

- Graduate students will attend class and keep up with assigned readings and assignments.
- Graduate students will arrive for class on time and not leave until the end of class.
- Graduate students will actively participate in their classes, while not engaging in text messaging or other activities that are distracting to themselves and others.
- Graduate students will be involved in their own professional development to enhance their knowledge, professional skills and competencies by participation in educational activities such as colloquia, brown bag presentations, informal research discussion groups, etc.
- Graduate students will keep their Major Advisor informed about their progress and possible impediments to their progress.
- Graduate students will address any problems with faculty in a constructive manner. Graduate students will deal directly with a faculty member in addressing an issue or problem or will follow the appropriate grievance procedure.
- Graduate students will respect the multiple demands on faculty members' time.
- Graduate students will understand that faculty members' contracts are nine months (that is, from the first week of the Fall semester until graduation in May). Consequently, any work with a faculty member during the summer months will be based on individual negotiations.

Graduate Student Obligations/Supervisor Rights:

- Graduate students employed as graduate assistants for the academic year will work from the beginning of fall semester to the end of the spring semester, including semester break and exam periods (e.g., 8/23 – 5/22). Students and supervisors will work out arrangements for distributing hours and tasks during the year so that they may be able to take advantage of periods of time away from the University and still fulfill their obligations.
- Students employed as graduate assistants will be responsible for assisting with departmental functions, such as proctoring undergraduate exams.
- Graduate students employed as graduate assistants, work-study, student labor, and in any other capacity will keep track of their hours worked and advise their supervisor if work demands exceed or fail to meet the contracted number of hours.

Practices and Policy Statement

As a rule, the following time periods should guide the review and return of student work in a timely manner. Please note that these rules apply during the academic year and **not** during the summer months.

11. *For a student paper in a class*, if the paper is turned in on time then a grade should be provided in a timely fashion and entered at the latest by the end of the semester. If a student receives an incomplete grade, she/he should turn in the work within the allotted time according to University policy. The faculty member has three months to submit a grade from the time they receive the materials to complete the course work.
12. *For thesis/dissertation proposal*, advisors should make their comments and return to the student within a period of approximately four to six weeks from receiving the proposal during the academic year.
13. *For the dissertation*, advisors should make their comments and return to students within a period of six to eight weeks (depending on the number of pages to be read). If this is not possible, students should be provided with a reasonable date when they would get their dissertation draft back not exceeding three months from the time that it was received by the advisor.
14. *Response to student communication* via e-mail or telephone messages regarding assignments for class or advising should be within three to four days unless the faculty member is attending an activity at which he or she cannot access and respond to such messages. Even then, responses should not take more than a week.

Grievance Procedure for Addressing Problems

In atypical occasions, it may happen that a graduate student in HDFS feels aggrieved or uncertain about whether they have been treated fairly by a member of the faculty or staff. In such situations, there are several routes that can be taken to seek resolution or redress. Many difficulties can result from misunderstandings, and so clear communication and informal mediation are usually the most effective and least anxiety-provoking ways of addressing grievances.

- The first approach in most cases is for the student to request a meeting with the faculty or staff member, to state the problem politely, and to attempt a direct solution.
 - If that proves unsatisfactory or should such a meeting seem undesirable given the circumstance, there are several choices.
 - Sometimes appropriate mediation can be provided by other faculty or staff in the Department or at other campus units such as the Women's Center or one of the cultural centers or religious institutions.
 - Alternatively, the student may consult with the ADHGS and the Department Head. It is the responsibility of the ADHGS, then, to gather the facts in the case and seek a mutually acceptable resolution. All faculty and staff in the Department report ultimately to the Department Head and formal action can be taken at that level, if appropriate.

If the initial collection of facts suggests a violation of law or of explicit University [policy concerning prejudice or harassment](#), the administrator will immediately consult with appropriate staff in Human Resources, the Graduate School, or the Provost's Office regarding appropriate action.

Challenges to a Grade

[Grading policies](#) are described in the [Graduate Catalog](#). The Graduate School adheres to the [grade appeal process established by the University Senate and described in their Bylaws](#).

Conflicts Concerning Major Advisors

Although most relationships between graduate students and major advisors are characterized by trust and professionalism on both sides, on occasion conflicts may arise. If, due to personality conflicts or changes in either the student's or advisor's focus of research, one or both determine that the match is not satisfactory, then they should discuss the situation with the ADHGS. The ADHGS may be able to mediate the differences or facilitate finding another faculty member who would better serve the Major Advisor role for that student.

The ADHGS will do everything possible to ensure that the student can continue to have high-quality advising. Ultimately, however, it is the responsibility of the student to find another Major Advisor; indeed, in the case of the Ph.D. program, the Graduate School requires that if another Major Advisor cannot be located within six weeks of notification by the faculty member that they are unable to continue to serve as Major Advisor, the student's candidacy for their degree program will be terminated.

The bottom line is that it is essential to a high-quality graduate experience to have a positive working relationship with one's Major Advisor. Thus, if at any point that is not the case, students are free, and encouraged to find a more suitable match. The administration of both the Department and the Graduate School are prepared to assist in any way with that endeavor. However, it is important to note that a change of advisor may mean it will take longer to complete all requirements (for example, if a change occurs in the middle of the General Exam or at the dissertation stage, necessitating review by a new Major Advisor or committee member and, perhaps, a change in the content of the dissertation).

Departmental and University Centers and Opportunities of Special Interest

Departmental Research and Service Centers

There are multiple direct service, research, and advanced training facilities included within the department of Human Development and Family Sciences, each offering a unique opportunity to students and to a larger academic or public audience:

The [Center for Applied Research in Human Development](#) specializes in meeting the needs of community, state, and federal agencies for high quality training, program evaluation, and consultative services. These resources are increasingly in demand as human service programs are required to document the need for the services they offer and to evaluate their impact on the individuals and families being served.

The [Child Development Laboratories \(CDL\)](#) is licensed by the state of Connecticut and accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. The Laboratory serves the university, the HDFS department, the Storrs community, and the New England region as a research facility for the study of child development, providing state-of-the-art training for students whose goal is a career in direct service to young children, as well as serving local children and their parents as a model childcare and education center. The CDL is a member of the Council of Child Development Laboratory Administrators.

The [Center for the Study of Culture, Health, and Human Development](#) is a University-wide resource for faculty from various disciplines focusing on the scientific understanding and active promotion of healthy human development in its cultural context, including HDFS, Anthropology, Nursing, Nutritional Sciences, Pediatrics, and Education. The Center also manages the University-wide Graduate Certificate in Culture, Health, and Human Development.

The (Ronald and Nancy Rohner) [Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection](#) is an internationally-recognized center devoted to understanding healthy parental-child relations and the pathologies of child maltreatment. Faculty at the Center coordinate several national and international research projects, host visiting scholars from around the world, and consult with state and national agencies on the assessment and promotion of sound parent-child relations.

Colloquia and Informal Research and Policy Discussions

Graduate students are expected to participate in formal and informal extracurricular activities in the department and University-wide. Full participation in the intellectual life of the community involves active involvement in seminars, lectures, colloquia, brown bag presentations, student presentations, and informal research discussions. The brown bag series of presentations are informal lectures and discussions given by members of the HDFS faculty and students, faculty from related fields, and professionals from outside the University. Several program areas and centers provide regular brown bag series. Schedules and announcements are posted as much in advance as possible so these activities can be planned for in students' calendars and time budgets.

The HDFS department arranges special colloquia and seminars throughout the year. Other relevant departments and centers on campus, such as CETL, IBACS, InCHIP, Psychological Sciences, Sociology, and the Women's Center, offer relevant colloquia and seminars to which HDFS students are invited.

Graduate Laboratory

The Grad Lab (FSB 205) is available to all graduate students in HDFS. Individual workstations are available upon request. Formal requests for space will be distributed to all graduate students, all applications reviewed by the ADHGS, and workstations assigned at the beginning of each academic year. Criteria for allocating individual workstations include ongoing work on dissertation, thesis or other research project, no other allocated space, and other extenuating circumstances underlying the request.

Students assigned to individual workstations as well as those who use the Grad Lab on a regular basis are expected to share responsibility for overseeing the use of space. To ensure the upkeep of the space, students who use the Grad Lab on a regular basis will be scheduled on a rotating basis to

oversee proper upkeep of the space. In addition to assigned workstations, a common area, kitchen, and computers are available for graduate students to share.

The UConn Council on Family Relations

The UConn Council on Family Relations (UCCFR) is a professional organization for graduate and undergraduate students who are preparing for academic careers in human development, family policy, and other related areas. We are located within the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, at the University of Connecticut. UCCFR is a student affiliate of the [National Council on Family Relations](#), an organization committed to the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family development and relationships. Some of our activities include:

- Discussing topics related to families, family development, and relationships
- Learning and practicing research presentation skills
- Attending and presenting at regional and national conferences
- Exploring careers in human development and family sciences
- Sharing experiences about graduate school with interested undergraduates

Academic and Personal Counseling Resources

Throughout the course of one's academic career, many questions may arise regarding one's career goals, personal relationships, etc. The most frequently asked question in those cases is "Who do I turn to?" Your Major Advisor or the ADHGS can often be of help and should be turned to first. They know the various resources available and can make referrals if necessary.

The University's [Center for Career Development](#) has expanded the list of programs offered to graduate students (scroll down to "Additional Resources for Grad Students"). Lunch & Learn Seminars, Resume & CV Assistance, Mock Interviews, and On-Campus Recruiting are just some of the offerings.

Funding for Graduate Education: Graduate Assistantships, Financial Aid, & Fellowships

The goal in HDFFS is to provide at least three-quarter -time (15 hours per week) to full-time (20 hours per week) assistantship support for Ph.D. students who request it, who are making timely progress, and when finances and "fit" allow it. We make every effort to maintain funding for graduate students throughout the degree program for which they were accepted. At the same time, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences limits use of its funds for doctoral students within their first 5 years and continually seeks cost-efficiency that limit rather than expand available funds. We encourage students to be enterprising and creative in developing their own funding and employment opportunities, as illustrated in several of the categories below.

There are essentially five sources of funds for graduate students in the HDFFS Program (beyond the students themselves):

- HDFS funds: The largest portion of funds provided by the higher administration for basic functioning at the University. Smaller more variable portions are generated by faculty research accounts (e.g., start-up), and Foundation accounts.
 - Assistantships are allocated by the Department Head, and both Associate Heads (for Graduate and Undergraduate Studies), for several kinds of purposes: primarily assisting in teaching undergraduate courses, independent teaching of an undergraduate course, assisting in the Student Services Center, and supporting essential departmental functions.
 - These assistantships (10 hours per week or more) come with a complete waiver of tuition (that is, additional support from the Graduate School), and access to University-subsidized health insurance.
- Research grants: Funds from research grants are the second largest source in HDFS, and these also come with tuition payment and health benefits. These are funds provided by the federal government (National Institute of Health, National Science Foundation, etc.), state government, or private foundations or organizations to members of the faculty to hire assistants in carrying out a specific research project.
 - Sometimes these assistantships require special skills – interviewing, data analysis, foreign language – and the selection of assistants is the prerogative of the faculty researcher (the “Principal Investigator” for the grant).
 - Research grants usually last between one and five years.
 - Generally, faculty with research grants for assistantships work with the Department Head and ADHGS to identify appropriate students and to manage their support. Students desirous of such assistantships should make their wishes known to faculty who have or may be in the process of obtaining research funding.
- Graduate School funds: A very small number of entrance fellowships are available from the Graduate School at the time of graduate admission.
 - These include Graduate Scholarship awards, for those with outstanding academic records, and multicultural scholar awards, for students from under-represented groups.
- External fellowships: On occasion, students obtain their own grants, usually for research, from the National Institute of Health or from foundations that have doctoral support programs, such as the Spencer Foundations.
 - The application process usually involves a faculty sponsor, and it requires a high degree of academic maturity and motivation, but the process itself is educational and, when won, these fellowships mark an excellent beginning to an academic vita
- Other: Some HDFS students obtain assistantships from other departments at UConn for assisting in teaching, research, or student counseling. Some students also seek employment outside the University.

Graduate Assistantship Appointments

Degree-seeking graduate students who meet the criteria listed below are eligible for graduate assistantships. Appointments ordinarily are made for the nine-month period, late August through mid-May, but may be of shorter duration for a variety of reasons. Recipients usually serve the

University as teaching assistants, readers, or laboratory and research assistants. They may take fewer than the usual number of courses per year because of this added workload.

To be appointed, to retain an appointment, or to be reappointed, a student must have been accorded

- Regular (not Provisional) status,
15. Must maintain a cumulative average of at least B (3.00) in course work
 16. Must be eligible to register (i.e., must not have more than three viable grades of Incomplete on his or her academic record)
 - Must be enrolled in a graduate degree program scheduled to extend through the entire period of the appointment or reappointment
 - Must be a full-time student, counting course work and/or its equivalent together with assistantship duties throughout the period.

The holder of a full assistantship devotes one-half of available time to studies and one-half (approximately 20 hours per week) to assistantship duties, while the holder of a half assistantship ordinarily devotes three-quarters of available time to studies and one-quarter (approximately 10 hours per week) to assistantship duties.

Ordinarily, a graduate student is not permitted to earn more in a given academic year than the applicable maximum stipend rate. With the written approval of the student's Major Advisor and the consent of the Dean of the Graduate School, however, approval may be granted for a student's earnings from University sources to exceed the maximum stipend rate by a limited and specified amount. Approvals for overages take some time, so please plan accordingly. Such overages are not permitted for students studying under F1 visas.

Stipend rates for graduate assistants are calibrated in terms of progress toward the advanced degree and experience (beginning at Level 1 for those with a baccalaureate, Level 2 or M for those with at least the master's degree or thirty graduate level credits beyond the baccalaureate degree, and Level 3 for students who have passed the doctoral general examination). Ordinarily, a graduate assistant may not exclude any part of the stipend from U.S. taxable federal gross income. The [stipend rates](#) for a full-time (20 hours for two semesters) and half-time (10 hours for two semesters) for the current academic year vary based on level and percentage employed.

Tuition is waived for Graduate Assistants (10 or more hours per week) but not the General University Fee, the Graduate Matriculation Fee, or other fees. If an assistantship begins or terminates during the course of a semester, tuition will be prorated on a weekly schedule – charged for that portion of the semester when the assistantship is not in force, waived when it is in force. This often results in an adjustment of the tuition charges, including partial assessment (if the student is registered throughout the semester for course work for which tuition is charged) or a partial refund (if tuition has been paid). Graduate assistants who complete the proper forms with the Division of Human Resources are eligible for subsidized health insurance.

When students become eligible for the Level 2 or Level 3 stipend rate, including the submission of all required paperwork to Degree Audit, the department will submit a payroll change effective the first day of the next academic term. A student who anticipates a payroll level change may contact the Program Assistant to be sure all is in place for that increase.

Graduate Assistants at UConn are members of the [GEU-UAW](#) bargaining unit and covered by their collective bargaining agreement. One requirement of the collective bargaining agreement involves Supplemental Description of Duties forms required to be completed by faculty, research assistants and teaching assistants before or at the beginning of the start of their contract date. The form assures that both faculty and students are aware of expectations and requirements needed to fulfill the assistantship. Completed forms are filed with HDFS and retained on behalf of Human Resources, though we recommend that faculty and student keep copies.

Other Potential Sources for Graduate Assistantships

Graduate students may seek graduate assistantships outside HDFS. Graduate assistantships outside of HDFS may include responsibilities for programming and services, research, administrative and technical support. Most recently, graduate assistantship and hourly employment opportunities have been available from various campus centers and programs. These include Career Services, the Individualized Major program, Graduate Student Senate, Resident Honors House Supervisor, UConn Writing Center, Neag School of Education University Program for College Students with Learning Disabilities, Student Health Services, Global Studies, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington.

Other Types of Financial Aid

Opportunities to seek external funding can be found through the [Office of National Scholarships and Fellowships](#) and the [Graduate School](#). Although not exhaustive, the Graduate School also lists internal funding opportunities in their listserv emails. maintains a list of internal funding opportunities. The Graduate Student Senate (GSS) provides [short term loans](#) up to \$2000, funded by graduate student activities fees, to assist graduate students in dealing with financial emergencies. Veterans may qualify for a tuition waiver under the State of Connecticut tuition waiver program. Veterans must provide a form DD214 (separation of service) and must be recognized as a resident of Connecticut at the time of admission or readmission to the University. Veterans seeking tuition waiver applications or assistance should contact the [Office of Student Financial Aid Services](#). Additional information regarding need-based financial aid for Graduate students is available from the [Office of Student Financial Aid Services](#). International applicants are not eligible for need based financial aid. Grants providing tuition and the general University fee are available to a small number of international students who are sponsored by certain organizations (e.g., ATLAS and LASPAU) recognized by the Graduate School.

Graduate School, CLAS, and HDFS Fellowships

Travel Funds for Graduate Students

The Graduate School provides a one-time \$750 fellowship to support doctoral student conference participation ([Conference Participation Award](#)). Additionally, pending funding availability, the HDFS department provides limited funds to support professional development activities, including travel to conferences. Apply for the [HDFS Grad Student Conference Travel Support](#) on QualiBuild.

Pre-doctoral Fellowships

Funded through the Graduate School or the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, these pre-doctoral summer fellowships are awarded to doctoral students on the recommendation of the graduate

faculty in their program. Predoctoral fellowships carry no service (teaching or research) commitment. To be eligible, a candidate must be a Regular (not Provisional) full-time doctoral student in HDFs. Award amounts vary but normally range from \$500 to \$2,000. The ADHGS calls for applications for pre-doctoral fellowships in the Spring semester of each year.

Summer Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships

Pending budgetary approval, The Graduate School awards a limited number of Summer Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships (DDF) for advanced doctoral students. Most recently, these have been in the amount of \$2,000. The DDF enables students to place a higher priority on writing their doctoral dissertation expeditiously, but there are particular timing constraints described here: [Summer Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship](#).