

## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. IN COMMUNICATION

(Students Entering in Fall 2017)

A Ph.D. degree requires successful completion in three general areas: Coursework, Comprehensive Examination, and Dissertation.

- I. Coursework: The Ph.D. plan of study is an agreement between a student and the student's Advisory Committee concerning what coursework the student will undertake to meet degree requirements. The plan is designed with reference to the student's major area, dissertation area, and general method. Approval or revision of the plan requires unanimous approval by members of the student's Advisory Committee.
  - A. Pre-Dissertation Coursework
    1. Plan of Study Requirements for Student Entering Ph.D. program with BA/BS in Communication. (A Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution is required for admission into the doctoral program.) Minimum pre-dissertation coursework totals 48 credits.
      - a. COMM 700 Introduction to Graduate Study in Communication (3 credits) (Required in first semester).
      - b. Theory Requirement. 3 credits. Students must complete one of the following (a second theory course is strongly recommended):
        - 1) COMM 602 Communication Theory
        - 2) COMM 630 Seminar in Public Relations Management
        - 3) COMM 652 Contemporary Rhetorical Theory
      - c. Methods and Foundations Requirement. 12 credits.
        - 1) *Quantitative*: COMM 701, plus nine additional credits in quantitative methods and statistics.
        - 2) *Historical/Critical*: COMM 711 and COMM 712, plus six additional credits in methods and foundations.
        - 3) *Qualitative*: COMM 714 and COMM 715, plus six additional credits in methods and foundations.
      - d. Cognate Area Outside Department. 6 credits. Contributes to later dissertation research. Typically drawn from single academic discipline. May be drawn from coherent combination of disciplines with Advisory Committee approval.
      - e. Area of Specialization. 15 credits.
      - f. Optional courses. 9 credits.
      - g. At least 24 credits should be taken from the Department of Communication and 24 credits should be numbered 600 or higher.

Students must maintain a B or better (including B-) for courses that are required.

2. Plan of Study Requirements for Student Entering Ph.D. program with M.A. in Communication. (A Master's degree from an accredited institution is required for admission into the doctoral program.) Minimum pre-dissertation coursework totals 27 credits.\*
  - a. Methods and Foundations Requirement. 12 credits. Students must complete 6 credits through one of the following sequences:
    - 1) *Quantitative*: COMM 702 and COMM 703. (Prerequisites to COMM 702 such as COMM 600 cannot be used to satisfy the 12-hour requirement. Additional coursework may be required depending upon preparation in statistics.)
    - 2) *Historical/Critical*: COMM 711 and COMM 712.
    - 3) *Qualitative*: COMM 714 and COMM 715.
    - 4) 6 additional credits in methods/foundations credits within or outside department.
  - b. Cognate Area Outside Department. 6 credits. Contributes to later dissertation research. Typically drawn from single academic discipline. May be drawn from coherent combination of disciplines with Advisory Committee approval.
  - c. Area of Specialization. 9 credits.\*
  - d. Students must maintain a B or better (including B-) for courses that are required.

\*Minimum coursework specification assumes that a student with an M.A. in Communication has successfully undertaken courses that are functionally equivalent to the following: (a) an introduction to graduate study, (b) a theory course in communication, (c) two courses related to the student's general area of research interest.

#### B. Dissertation Credits

1. COMM899 Doctoral Dissertation Research. Minimum 12 credits. After advancement to candidacy, students must enroll in COMM 899 each fall and spring semester until completion of degree even if 12-credit requirement is satisfied.
2. COMM898 Pre-Candidacy Research. Minimum 1 credit each fall and spring semester between completion of Plan of Study and Advancement to Candidacy, if applicable. (Eligibility for Candidacy requires passing Comprehensive Examination).

#### C. General Coursework Guidelines:

1. Completion of COMM 602, COMM 630, or COMM 652 (or their equivalent), and 700 (or its equivalent); and of 701, or 711 and 712, or 714 and 715 with grade of B or better (including B-) prior to matriculation satisfies specific course(s) requirement.
  2. Continuous enrollment during spring and fall semesters required until the Ph.D. degree is completed.
  3. Advisory Committee may require additional preparatory courses.
  4. Students must maintain Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress.
- D. Research Assurances [Human Subject Research]. Any research involving human subjects requires prior approval by Communication Human Subjects Review Board and/or the University's Institutional Research Board (IRB).
- E. Course Registration
1. Full-time students typically enroll in 10 credits per regular (fall and spring) term.
  2. First-semester students on teaching assistantship enroll in COMM 686 Teaching Communication (1 credit).
  3. COMM 798 Independent Study, contracted with faculty member, requires accessing specific faculty section numbers at and lifting of "Permission Only" block by the Graduate Coordinator.
  4. Matriculating funded students register no earlier than August to avoid registration cancellation due to unprocessed tuition remission.
  5. Registration on Testudo (on-line system) or MARS (telephone system 301-403-0500) requires Student ID and PIN. Initial PIN is birthday (e.g., 042285 for April 22, 1985). From menu, choose Records and Registration, then Registration, and then Drop/Add. Enter course and section numbers, grading method, and credits for each class.
- F. Coursework Plan of Study
1. Advisor & Advisory Committee
    - a. The Advisory Committee requires at least four members, including the Advisor who must be a Regular Graduate Faculty in Communication.
    - b. At least three members must be Regular Graduate Faculty, and the majority must be Communication faculty.
    - c. Students must complete and submit the "Appointment of Program Advisor/Advisory Committee" form to their Advisor for approval. Once approved, the student submits form to the Graduate Director.
    - d. The Cognate Area Examination option requires a faculty member from Cognate Area on Examining Committee for Cognate Examination.

- e. Changes in the Advisory Committee require new approval.
- 2. Plan of Study Approval
  - a. The Plan of Study requires unanimous approval by the Advisory Committee.
  - b. The Plan of Study meeting prior to approval is required if requested by student, advisor, or any other Committee member and shall occur on Fridays of 7th, 8th, and 9th weeks of fall and spring semester reserved for M.A. and Ph.D. Committee meetings.
  - c. The final Plan of Study must be approved by the Advisory Committee by the last day of classes the semester preceding the exams (by the end of spring for fall exams, and by the end of fall for spring exams). Except in extraordinary circumstances, any changes in exam plans after that date will result in delaying the exams by one semester.
- 3. Successful Completion of the Plan of Study
  - a. Must complete with a grade of B or better (including B-) all courses listed on the Plan of Study.
  - b. May replace/exclude from the Plan of Study courses with a grade lower than B if not explicitly required with approval by the Advisory Committee.
  - c. Failure to retake courses with a grade lower than B may jeopardize GPA and Good Standing.
  - d. Changes in an approved Plan of Study require unanimous approval of Advisory Committee and Graduate Director via Request for Change in Plan of Study Form.
  - e. Minor changes (e.g., semester course can/will be taken) require no new approval.

## II. Comprehensive Examination

- A. Mission: The Ph.D. comprehensive examinations are designed for the graduate student to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of literature related to the student's approved research program, specifically in terms of the major area, method,

subject area, and oral examinations. In addition to demonstrating a depth of knowledge in a program of study, the examination process should prepare the student to write a dissertation, to secure an academic or professional position, and to fulfill an academic or professional career with distinction.

1. The advisor and the graduate student should meet early in the student's program to discuss the comprehensive examination process and should meet to discuss the procedures for the comprehensive exams the semester before the student completes the exams.
  2. The comprehensive examinations will cover readings from graduate coursework, independent studies, and the student's dissertation area. Additional readings may be recommended by members of the advisory committee. The graduate student's advisory committee may require the graduate student to prepare a reading list and circulate that list for approval with the advisory committee once the examination plan is approved.
  3. Graduate students may approach members of the advisory committee for feedback on the written exams prior to the oral examination. Graduate students should use the period between the written and oral examinations to continue their review of the examination materials.
- B. Comprehensive Examination shall be conducted according to the Plan for Comprehensive Examination approved by the Advisory Committee. That plan must be finalized by the last day of classes the semester preceding the exams (by the end of spring for fall exams, and by the end of fall for spring exams). Except in extraordinary circumstances, any changes in exam plans after that date will result in delaying the exams by one semester.
- C. Comprehensive Examination Components
1. Written component of at least twelve hours.
  2. Subsequent oral component of two hours.
- D. Plan for Comprehensive Examination
1. Comprehensive Examination Plan requires the majority approval of the Advisory Committee no later than the final semester of coursework required in the Plan of Study.
  2. Plan must specify:
    - a. The semester the examination will be taken.
    - b. The subject matters of various written components of the examination.
    - c. The hours allocated to each portion of the written examination (Minimum 12 total).
    - d. The Advisory Committee member(s) delegated by the Committee to prepare each subject examination.
    - e. The form and format of questions. Any variations from supervised "closed book" examination and/or special conditions (e.g., method for distributing examination, time allowed for completion, allowances and/or

restrictions on materials, word or page limit, etc.). The examination will be “closed book,” supervised, and taken on campus unless the Plan specifies otherwise.

E. Comprehensive Exam Schedule and Deadlines

1. The Advisor must forward questions and a list of which exams are *in camera* and which are take-home via email to the Graduate Director or designated exam proctor by the first week of the semester the examination will be taken.
2. Must complete the Comprehensive Examination by the second semester following completion of coursework in the Plan of Study to maintain Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress.
3. The written portions of the comprehensive examination occur during 2nd through 4th weeks of the fall semester at times specified by the Graduate Director. In the spring, the written exams occur during the three weeks immediately preceding spring break (typically the 5th, 6th, 7th weeks of the semester). Examinations other than “closed book” are due at the same time.
4. The Graduate Director may order the subject examinations to maintain integrity if multiple students answer the same questions in given semester.
5. The oral portion of the examination occurs Fridays of the 7th, 8th, and 9th weeks of the fall semester reserved for Ph.D. committee meetings. In the spring, the oral portion of the examination occurs on the Fridays of the 9th, 10th, and 11th weeks of the semester.
6. The scheduling of oral examinations requires that the student and the advisor propose three 2-hour time slots to the Committee via e-mail to request availability (cc: Graduate Coordinator). The Graduate Coordinator coordinates and schedules times/ locations of oral examinations if multiple examinations occur on one day.
7. Students must attempt all three written examinations and the oral examination in the same semester. No more than two of a student’s three written examinations may be given in a take-home format.

F. Subject Matter of Written Examination

1. Consists of at least three parts, all subject to Advisory Committee approval:
  - a. Major Area Examination: Tests knowledge of the student’s disciplinary interest area selected by the student and the Advisor from a list approved by the Graduate Committee.
  - b. Methods Examination: Tests knowledge of general methods from which the specific dissertation method will be drawn.
  - c. Subject Area Examination, selected from among the following options:
    - 1) Dissertation Research Literature Examination: Tests knowledge of theory and literature informing the dissertation. May include material from Cognate Area.

- 2) Second Content Area Examination: Tests knowledge of second area selected by the student and the Advisor from a list approved by the Graduate Committee.
- 3) Second Method Examination: Tests knowledge of a second general research method.
- 4) Cognate Examination: Tests knowledge of Cognate Area. An outside faculty member from the Cognate Area strongly recommended.

G. Written Examination

1. Unrefined answers for written examinations require immediate submission via hard copy, e-mail, or disk to the Advisor and the Graduate Director or a designated examination proctor who shall confirm receipt.
2. Optional refined answers—typed and corrected for grammar and spelling only—must reach the Advisory Committee within three days.
3. Refinements must be indicated with strikeouts for deletions and brackets [e.g., added word] for additions (or use Word Track Changes).

H. Comprehensive Examination Assessment

1. Following the oral component of the examination, the Committee issues one of following judgments: pass with distinction; pass; conditional pass; or failure of one or all subject areas.
2. Pass with distinction or pass requires a majority vote of the Advisory Committee.
3. Conditional pass or failure requires that the Committee inform the student and the Graduate Director in writing of deficiencies in the examination and include requirements for the student to pass/retake the examination (e.g., additional coursework, rewriting portion of exam).
4. Students failing any portion of the examination may retake that portion one time during same or subsequent semester with the Graduate Director's approval. Second failure constitutes termination from the program.
5. The Advisory Committee reports determination to the Graduate Director via the Report of Advisory Committee on Comprehensive Exam.

I. Advancement to Candidacy

1. Passing the comprehensive examination confers eligibility for application for Candidacy. The Application for Admission to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy requires approval by the Advisor, the Graduate Director, and the Graduate Dean and depends upon the following completed materials in graduate file (see departmental forms):
  - a. Approved Request for Appointment of Program Advisor and Advisory Committee.
  - b. Approval of Plan of Study Form.
  - c. Approval of Comprehensive Examination Plan Form.

- d. Report of Advisory Committee on Comprehensive Examination indicating student passed Comprehensive Examination and copies of answers to written portion of examination.
2. Admission to Candidacy must occur within five years after matriculation and at least six months before the degree is awarded.
3. Teaching and research assistants advance to a new pay classification upon advancement to candidacy. Paperwork must reach the Graduate School prior to 25th of month to become effective first day of following month.

### III. Dissertation, Dissertation Prospectus, & Examination

- A. Dissertation and Oral Examination/Defense. A dissertation and an oral defense of the dissertation are required for the doctoral degree.
- B. Research Assurances (Human Subject Research). Dissertation research involving human subjects requires prior approval by the Communication Human Subjects Review Board and/or the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and approvals must accompany the Nomination for Dissertation Examining Committee.
- C. Dissertation Examining Committee Membership
  1. Minimum of five members who are members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least three members who must be Regular Graduate Faculty members, including the Chair and the Dean's Representative of the Graduate School.
  2. The Dean's Representative must be a tenured Graduate Faculty member from outside the Department of Communication. A background/interest in the dissertation research is strongly recommended.
  3. The Chair must be the Dissertation Advisor.
  4. A majority of the Committee must be Department of Communication faculty.
  5. Consult Graduate Catalogue for stipulations concerning Co-chairs, Special Members, Emeriti faculty, or former University of Maryland faculty.
- D. Dissertation Examining Committee Nomination & Approval
  1. Committee Membership requires nomination by the Advisor and the Graduate Director and approval by the Graduate Dean.
  2. Requests for Appointment of Dissertation Advisor and Nomination of Thesis/Dissertation Examining Committee requires approval by the Graduate Dean no later than six weeks before the defense. Dissertation defenses cannot be held until the Committee composition is approved by the Graduate Dean.
  3. Changes in the Committee membership require new approval.
  4. For Emergency Substitutions, see Graduate Catalogue.
- E. Dissertation Prospectus Committee: The Dissertation Prospectus Committee typically mirrors composition of and becomes the Dissertation Examining Committee.
- F. Dissertation Prospectus General Features

1. Identifies a disciplinary problem/question addressed in the dissertation.
  2. Reviews previous pertinent research.
  3. Specifies procedure for addressing research question/problem.
  4. Provides a précis of probable dissertation chapters.
  5. Furnishes a bibliography of germane materials.
- G. Dissertation Prospectus Meeting, Schedule, & Approval
1. The Dissertation Prospectus Committee must receive the prospectus approved by the Advisor at least two weeks before the prospectus meeting.
  2. The Prospectus meeting, which is two hours, may be scheduled at discretion of the student, the advisor, and the Committee but must be confined to fall and spring semesters.
  3. Approval of the prospectus requires a unanimous Committee vote. The Committee must communicate its determination to the Graduate Director (copy to the student) via the Report of Dissertation Prospectus Committee on Dissertation Prospectus Meeting and specify in writing any conditions for prospectus approval or rationale for rejecting the prospectus.
- H. Dissertation Format
1. The dissertation must conform to format in the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Manual.
  2. Formatters not settled in the Manual, the Advisor may require one of several standard manuals of style.
- I. Dissertation Examining Committee Approval for Examination: The Dissertation Examining Committee must receive the dissertation approved by the Advisor at least two weeks before the scheduled defense.
- J. Dissertation Examination Scheduling and Announcement
1. The Dissertation Examination, which is two hours, may be scheduled at discretion of the student, the advisor, and the Dissertation Examining Committee but must be confined to the fall and spring semesters.
  2. The announcement of date, time, location of examination, the candidate's name, the dissertation advisor, and the dissertation title must be publicized to all members of the University Graduate Faculty and Department of Communication graduate students via e-mail, newsletters, or individual announcements at least five working days prior to examination. Omission of proper notice of examination may nullify the defense.
- K. Dissertation Examination Attendance
1. Oral defenses must be attended by all members of the Dissertation Examining Committee. Consult Graduate School Catalogue for procedures regarding Emergency Substitutions and Remote Participation.

2. Oral defenses must be open to all University Graduate Faculty. Oral defenses may be open to others with permission of the advisor.

L. Dissertation Examination

1. Part 1—Student Participation
  - a. The Dean's Representative must be identified at beginning of examination.
  - b. The Candidate presents a brief public presentation/summary of dissertation research.
  - c. Questions from the audience are permitted at the discretion of the advisor.
  - d. The Dissertation Examining Committee Chair may allot time for answers or rule on relevance of questions from audience members.
2. Part 2—Questioning by Dissertation Examining Committee
  - a. The Dissertation Examining Committee formally examines the Candidate.
  - b. Open only to the Committee, other Graduate Faculty, and Department of Communication graduate students.
  - c. Only the Committee members may ask questions.
3. Conclusion of Examination
  - a. Open only to the Dissertation Examining Committee.
  - b. The Committee deliberates and issues one of the following judgments:
    - 1) Accept the dissertation without revision and sign the Report of Examining Committee.
    - 2) Accept the dissertation contingent upon recommended revisions and—excepting the committee Chair—sign the Report of Examining Committee. The Committee empowers the Chair to evaluate the dissertation for recommended changes and, upon the Chair's approval, sign the Report.
    - 3) Recommend revisions but not sign the Report of Examining Committee until revisions have been reviewed and approved by the Committee.
    - 4) Recommend revisions and require a second meeting of the Committee to review alterations prior to approval and signing of the Report.
    - 5) Rule the dissertation and the defense a failure.
  - c. Chair must inform the candidate of the Committee's decision in the presence of the Dean's Representative, and both the Chair and the Dean's Representative must sign the Report of Dissertation Examining Committee and forward it to Graduate Director with copies to the student and the graduate file.

M. Pass/Failure

1. The Candidate passes if only one member of the Dissertation Examining Committee refuses to sign the Report of Dissertation Examining Committee, but

- other Committee members sign, before or after approval of recommended changes.
2. Two or more negative Committee votes constitute failure. In cases of failure, the Committee must detail deficiencies in the dissertation and/or oral performance on Report.
  3. A second examination requires approval of the Graduate Director and the Graduate Dean and may be permitted if the candidate is in Good Standing at time of the proposed second examination. Failure of the second examination, or if the second examination is denied, results in termination from the program.

#### N. After Dissertation Examination

1. The Advisor must file the Report of Examining Committee with the Graduate Director.
2. The Student must prepare at least two "hard-bound" copies of the final approved version of the dissertation on acid-free paper for the following: the Dissertation Advisor, the Department of Communication. Members of the Examining Committee may also request copies.
3. The Student must submit a final version of the dissertation electronically. Consult Graduate School Catalogue for directions and stipulations regarding University rights and student copyrights.

### IV. General Guidelines

#### A. Time Limits

1. Must complete regular coursework in the Plan of Study, pass a Comprehensive Examination, and Advance to Candidacy within five years of matriculation.
2. A minimum of six months and no more than four years may elapse between admission to candidacy and the dissertation examination.
3. No more than nine years may elapse between matriculation and the dissertation examination.
4. Extensions require approval of the Advisor, the Graduate Director, and the Graduate Dean.
5. Consult the Graduate School Catalogue for further information regarding extensions, termination, and readmission.

#### B. Graduate Director Approval and Form Processing. All required Departmental Forms and Graduate School Forms require final approval by Graduate Director. After the signature of the Graduate Director is obtained, all forms must/will be given to Graduate Coordinator for processing:

1. The Graduate Coordinator makes one copy of all forms for the Advisor.
2. The original of Department form is placed in student file.
3. The original of the Graduate School form is sent to the Graduate School by the Graduate Coordinator and a copy is placed in the student's file.

## V. Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress Toward Degree

### A. Benchmarks for Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress

1. For students who enter the Ph.D. program with B.A./B.S. degree, five consecutive years of funding is guaranteed for those who remain in good standing academically, make satisfactory progress toward their degree, perform satisfactorily their assigned responsibilities as part of assistantship duties, and upon the availability of university funds. To remain in good standing and make satisfactory progress towards their degree, students who enter the Ph.D. program with a B.A./B.S. degree must meet the following benchmarks:
  - a. Maintaining minimum of 3.0 GPA and B or better (including B-) for courses that are required.
  - b. Filing approved Appointment of Program Advisor/Advisory Committee and Plan of Study forms by semester of the 12th credit (second semester for fulltime students).
  - c. Submitting all work specified within an incomplete contract by end of the semester following the awarded incomplete unless otherwise specified in the incomplete contract.
  - d. Finalizing course work by the end of the 5th semester is encouraged; finalizing course work by the end of the 6th semester is required.
  - e. Taking the Comprehensive Examination by the semester following completion of course work in approved Plan of Study; Passing Comprehensive Examination by second semester following completion of coursework in approved Plan of Study.

- g. Defending a dissertation prospectus by the second semester following completion of the Comprehensive Examination.
  - h. Passing the Dissertation Examination within four years following Advancing to Candidacy and nine years following matriculation.
  - i. No judgment of breaching ethical principles of scholarship (e.g., violations of academic integrity and/or intellectual property rights or non-compliance of protocols for protection of human subjects).
  - j. See *section below* for “Procedures for Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress Review.”
4. For students who enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. degree, four consecutive years of funding is guaranteed for those who are in good standing academically, making satisfactory progress toward degree, performing satisfactorily assigned responsibilities as part of their assistantship duties, and upon the availability of university funds. To remain in good standing and make satisfactory progress towards their degree, students who enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. degree must meet the following benchmarks:
- a. Maintaining minimum of 3.0 GPA and B or better (including B-) for courses that are required.
  - b. Filing approved Appointment of Program Advisor/Advisory Committee and Plan of Study forms by semester of 6th credit (first semester for full-time students).
  - c. Submitting all work specified within an incomplete contract by end of the semester following the awarded incomplete unless otherwise specified in the incomplete contract.
  - d. Taking the Comprehensive Examination by the semester following completion of course work in approved Plan of Study; Passing the Comprehensive Examination by second semester following completion of coursework in approved Plan of Study.
  - e. Finalizing course work by the end of the 3rd semester is encouraged; finalizing course work by the end of the 5th semester is required.
  - f. Defending prospectus by the second semester following completion of the Comprehensive Examination.
  - g. Passing the Dissertation Examination within four years following Advancing to Candidacy and nine years following matriculation.
  - h. No judgment of breaching ethical principles of scholarship (e.g., violations of academic integrity and/or intellectual property rights or non-compliance of protocols for protection of human subjects.)
  - i. See *Ph.D. Handbook* for Procedures for Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress Review.

O. Procedures for Good Standing/Satisfactory Progress Review

- 1. Failure to meet any benchmark requires that the Graduate Director notify the student, the Advisor, and the Department Chair of deficiency. Except in cases involving breach of ethical principles of scholarship, the student shall be placed on one semester of academic probation. The Advisor and the student are

required to develop a written plan that identifies the steps that will be taken to ensure that the benchmark(s) is achieved within one semester. The student's Advisory or Dissertation Committee and the Graduate Director need to approve the plan.

2. Immediately in cases involving breach of ethical principles of scholarship, or after one semester where a student on probation has still not met a benchmark, the Graduate Director and the Graduate Studies Committee meet with the student and his or her Advisory or Dissertation Committee to discuss the lack of benchmark compliance. Upon the completion of that meeting, the Graduate Studies Committee provides a ruling on the lack of compliance. The student can remain on academic probation and be required to take additional and expedited steps to achieve the benchmark. The student also can be suspended from the program, lose departmental funding, and in extreme cases, can be recommended for dismissal from the program.
3. The student can appeal the Graduate Studies Committee's decision within 15 days of the ruling. The student needs to provide a written statement of appeal. The Advisor needs to supply a written statement that responds to the student's letter of appeal based on consultation with the Plan of Study or Dissertation Committee. The Graduate Faculty reviews the appeal materials and renders a final decision.
4. Recommendation for dismissal from the program by the Graduate Studies Committee requires a meeting of Department of Communication Graduate Faculty. Within such a meeting, dismissal from the program must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of members present and voting.