

## University at Buffalo Information Science Graduate Student Association

### UB Information Science PhD Info Session (With Dr. Dan Albertson) Q&A Sheet

For clarification about anything in this document, please reach out to either of the contacts mentioned at the end of this document.

## Overview

The Information Science PhD program is only about 3-4 years old, is at an R1 AAU institution (prestigious research university), and is currently the only program in the country to allow students to complete the degree from a distance (there is no residency requirement). It's a fairly selective program with one out of every three applicants being accepted into the program. It's important for students to note that before applying, they should look at the current faculty's research interests to ensure there is a potential advisor for them, as some students have been turned away because their area of interest wasn't supported by the faculty, not because they weren't a good candidate for the program. You can find the department faculty list here to see if someone matches your area of research interest for your dissertation: <https://ed.buffalo.edu/information/directory/faculty.html>

For students interested in entering the program in the fall of 2024 there will be funded graduate assistantship opportunities available. Note: *Only in-person (on campus) full-time status students will be eligible for these graduate assistantship opportunities.* Graduate assistantships start at a base stipend of \$25,000 per year plus all tuition and fees, guaranteed for 5 years. The work obligation for graduate assistants is 20 hours a week. When completing that 20hr/wk you will be working to help the department while also working towards the completion of your dissertation.

There are four big milestones to the PhD program. First is the coursework, a total of 72 credit hours, up to 36 of which can be transferred in from the MS program. There are 5 required core courses and 9 credits worth of electives that can be completed. It's important to note that you will have to take courses on both qualitative and quantitative research methods, even if you only plan to use one in your dissertation. Second is the qualifying process, sometimes referred to as an examination. It's more of a deliverable paper comprised of a synthesis of literature relevant to your dissertation. In addition to the paper, you'll be asked a variety of questions by the committee to prove that you're confident in the work you've produced thus far. Third is the dissertation proposal, showing the data you'll collect, the variables, how you'll collect it, findings, implications etc. Then you will present this secondary stage of research to the committee, and if you pass that, you'll be able to conduct your research and write your dissertation. The Fourth and final milestone is completing and successfully defending your dissertation.

When pursuing a PhD, it's important to keep in mind that it's a research degree and nothing more. A PhD is not intended to help you get a promotion or to get a director position. While the credential may look good on your resume, it's not the intended purpose of the degree. The degree does not teach you management, it proves that you are capable of conducting robust independent research.

**If you're considering applying to the PhD program for the Fall 2024 semester, please reach out to Dr. Dan Albertson (information at end of document).**

## Questions

**Q: For those who complete the degree part-time, how much will that cost?**

A: Tuition rates vary by semester, but you can visit the UB website to find more information about the pay. Your semesterly payment will depend on how many credit hours you take.

<https://www.buffalo.edu/studentaccounts/tuition-and-fees.html> Through this link, you can filter by semester (it will change on a yearly basis) then after you've selected the semester you can view the "per credit rates" (probably look at "resident graduate" for the best estimate), and then it's a chart by credit hour estimates.

**Q: Are there a lot of students per cohort?**

A: The program is kind of reaching saturation at this point, but the goal is to bring in a cohort of 3-5 students for the fall of 2024. The goal of having a small cohort on campus is to provide funding for students to complete their degree and offer mentoring opportunities to strengthen their learning experience in the program.

**Q: Will students be allowed to take methods courses outside of the department?**

A: Yes! The department acknowledges that there are some limitations to what they can offer, so students are encouraged to take courses outside of the department for the elective courses. For those online there will be limited options, but for those who decide to complete the degree in-person, they will have the full range of UB's grad course offerings available.

**Q: Are you required to complete the MS before you can apply to the PhD?**

A: This is under the assumption that you're going right from this MS program to the PhD, in which case, yes. If you're wondering about going from the MS program to a PhD with a graduate assistantship, you would have to make sure you're going to be going full-time status as a student for the PhD program if you're not currently a full-time student. You cannot be a part-time PhD student and have a graduate assistantship, and it is expected that you will not have any external work outside the university either while being a graduate assistant.

**Q: For the 20hr of work you need to do for the graduate assistantship, is that work you're completing for professors, or work towards your dissertation?**

A: The 20hr/wk is going to be a combination of those two things. Think of it this way, for the 20 hours of time you'll be working on professors' research projects with them and aiming to be second and third author on their research papers, but each faculty advisor will be slightly different. The goal is to pair you with a faculty advisor whose research is somewhat similar in nature to the research you want to do for your own dissertation, though it's not guaranteed.

**Q: If I wanted to take one course per semester for the PhD, how long would it take?**

A: You can't really time out how long the PhD will take, as it mostly depends on how quickly you'll be able to complete your dissertation. Some people go into the program knowing it will take them a while, and some people try to complete it as quickly as possible.

## Contact Information

If you have any follow up questions, please contact either Ayiana Crabtree or Dan Albertson.

**Ayiana Crabtree**

IS-GSA President

[ayianacr@buffalo.edu](mailto:ayianacr@buffalo.edu)

**Dan Albertson**

IS Department Chair

[dalbert@buffalo.edu](mailto:dalbert@buffalo.edu)