

# Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements

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To earn the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree, a candidate must demonstrate mastery of a particular field of knowledge, of the techniques of research, and of the correlation of his/her specialty with the larger areas of knowledge, especially those directly related to his/her own field of interest.

## Ph.D. Graduate Committee

### Committee Composition

- The student's graduate program is directed by a committee composed of the major professor who is chair of the committee. The chair must hold Level 1 Graduate Faculty status and must be from the student's major department/program. A Level 2 Graduate Faculty member may serve as co-chair.
- A student without a minor must have a committee composed of the chair and at least three members.
- If the student has a minor, the committee must be composed of at least five members: the chair, at least three members from the major field, and one minor member.
- Each committee member must hold a Level 1, Level 2, Associate, or Committee Participant appointment. At least one-half of all committee members must be from the student's major/disciplinary field. No more than two Committee Participant appointees can serve on a dissertation or doctoral committee. The major professor is generally the dissertation director, but any member of the committee can serve as the dissertation director.
- The Committee Request ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/graduate\\_program\\_of\\_study.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/graduate_program_of_study.pdf)) form is submitted to the Office of the Graduate School with the program of study when the preliminary/comprehensive examination is scheduled.

### Committee Changes

When the composition of a student's graduate committee changes, the student submits the change(s) on the Request for Change of Committee form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/request\\_for\\_change\\_of\\_committee\\_members.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/request_for_change_of_committee_members.pdf)). The form should be signed by the new and departing committee members and the student. If, subsequent to the administration of the final or oral/written comprehensive examination, a student's request to remove a committee member does not meet with the approval (signature) of that member, then the student must submit to the dean of the Graduate School a written request for removal of the committee member. This request must contain suitable justification for such action. The dean will then decide if removal is necessary and accordingly inform the student, the committee member, the major professor, and the graduate coordinator.

## Ph.D. Program of Study

### Course Requirements

- Meeting all the course requirements (non-research) for a Ph.D. generally requires three academic years beyond the bachelor's degree as a full-time student. The total number of course credit hours will vary, based on the specific doctoral program, the student's needs, and the student's academic history. Program of study courses must be approved by the student's committee. A student may be required to take an ESL, LSK, or undergraduate course, but these courses or audited courses cannot be included on a program.
- Courses taken in previous graduate work that fulfill current degree requirements are not part of the program and must be listed on the attachment sheet ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/grad\\_prog\\_of\\_study\\_attach\\_doc.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/grad_prog_of_study_attach_doc.pdf)) to record the student's fulfillment of those requirements.
- The program of study form must be submitted to the OGS with the declaration of examination form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/comprehensive\\_exam\\_announcement.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/comprehensive_exam_announcement.pdf)) when the preliminary/comprehensive exam is scheduled.

### Program of Study Changes

If a program of study submitted to the Graduate School subsequently changes, the student submits a change of program form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/change\\_to\\_graduate\\_program\\_of\\_study.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/change_to_graduate_program_of_study.pdf)) to effect additions and deletions.

### Minor

In establishing the candidate's program of study in his/her major, the student may choose a minor area of study. A minor is a current block of approved coursework derived from a master's or doctoral degree program or concentration other than the major department program and must be approved by the student's committee. A GPA of 3.00 on the minor coursework is required. A minor in a doctoral program requires

- at least 12 hours of current graduate coursework in the approved area;
- approval of the student's major professor;
- approval of the graduate coordinator from the minor area;
- a member from the minor area on the student's graduate committee;
- completion of any additional requirements as specified by committee members from the major and minor areas (per Graduate Council, March 2005).

Up to one-third of the 12 required hours for a doctoral minor may be transferred to MSU. The hours must be academically relevant at the time the degree is awarded and fall within the time-limit requirements for coursework (per Graduate Council, September 2005 and March 2010). See Transfer Credit below.

## Transfer and Sharing of Credit Hours

A total of 9 credit hours can be **shared** between two MSU degrees in which a student is enrolled concurrently (see Dual Degrees in this publication). For those cases other than dual degrees, a total of 9 credit hours can be **shared** or **transferred** to a student's program of study. The three potential sources of credit hours are one or a combination of the following: those earned as a student in a graduate program at another university, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree (**transferred**); those earned in another graduate program at MSU, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree (**shared**); and those earned as an unclassified student at MSU (**transferred** to a degree program). Credit hours can be shared between or transferred to degrees of the same or different level (Graduate Council, November 2011). See Transfer Credit below for more information on the Transfer policy.

## Transfer Credit

Transfer credit hours from other domestic universities, international universities, or military educational programs may be used to fulfill requirements for the doctor of philosophy degree at MSU provided they meet the criteria established by the Graduate School, meet program requirements, and are academically relevant to the current program at the completion of the degree. At the doctoral level, transfer credit cannot exceed one-half of the coursework requirement. All dissertation credit hours must be taken at MSU. Up to one-third of the required 12 hours for a doctoral minor may be transferred to MSU. Only courses in which grades of B or higher were earned may be accepted for transfer. No credits can be transferred after successful completion of the Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination (per Graduate Council, September 2005 and March 2010).

## Ph.D. Examinations

### Qualifying Examination

Some departments require doctoral students to take a qualifying examination. A student must be enrolled at MSU during the semester the exam is administered. A student taking the examination during the summer semester can be enrolled in any summer term to fulfill this policy. The student must have a 3.00 GPA after admission to the degree program (i.e., program and non-program courses).

Doctoral students in the College of Education are required to successfully demonstrate competency in the application of research and statistical techniques and must refer to the *College of Education Doctoral Student Handbook*.

### Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination

- A Ph.D. student takes the preliminary/comprehensive examination in the terminal semester of coursework or when within 6 hours of coursework completion excluding any internship/practica courses (per Graduate Council, May 2006).
- The student must have a minimum 3.00 GPA on all courses attempted for graduate credit after admission to the degree program (i.e., program and non-program courses) (per Graduate Council, September 2004).
- When the examination is scheduled, the student's program of study and committee request form are submitted to the Graduate School with the Declaration of Examination/Defense ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/comprehensive\\_exam\\_announcement.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/comprehensive_exam_announcement.pdf)) form at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of examination.
- The doctoral student must take the preliminary/comprehensive examination by the appropriate deadline.

**June 1 for December graduation**

**November 1 for May graduation**

**February 1 for August graduation**

- The student must be enrolled at MSU when taking the preliminary/comprehensive examination(s). A student taking the examination during the summer semester can be enrolled in any summer term to fulfill this policy.
- The student's graduate committee serves as the examining committee. The student or a committee member may request that the Graduate School appoint an outside observer to attend the comprehensive/ preliminary examination.
- One negative vote **will not** constitute failure for a student on a preliminary/comprehensive examination. Two negative votes **will** constitute failure for a student on a preliminary/comprehensive examination (per Graduate Council, October 2005).
- Following the examination, the student's committee must promptly complete the examination results report form, whether pass or fail, and submit the original and a copy to the OGS by the deadline. **Submission of the report by the student is prohibited.**
- A student who fails this examination can apply to schedule a date for another examination after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original examination. Two failures on this examination will result in the student being dropped from further consideration as a doctoral candidate.

## Ph.D. Admission to Candidacy

A doctoral student is admitted to candidacy when she/he has

1. satisfactorily completed all required coursework, and the final program of study is approved;
2. completed required research skills or other requirement(s) prior to taking the preliminary/comprehensive examination;

3. passed the preliminary/comprehensive examination; and
4. received formal approval of a dissertation topic by the graduate committee.

When the student has met these requirements, the committee must submit the original examination results report and one copy with the admission to candidacy form to the Graduate School. **Submission of the examination report by the student is prohibited.**

## Ph.D. Dissertations

### Dissertation Preparation

All candidates for the Ph.D. must submit a dissertation. The student's graduate committee must approve the dissertation topic, the outline, and the final submission. Dissertation research is subject to review and approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The student must be enrolled at MSU during the semester of the dissertation defense. A student defending during the summer semester can enroll in any summer term to fulfill this policy.

The student must register for at least the minimum number of required dissertation/research hours. The University requirement is 20 credit hours although some programs have been approved to require more. These hours may optionally, at the discretion of the student's doctoral committee, be divided between XXX 9000 (Dissertation/Research) hours and XXX 9913 Dissertation Seminar, a course designed to assist students in starting and/or completing their dissertation (per Graduate Council, March 2014; effective Fall 2014). Students can take this course only if their department/program offers the Dissertation Seminar. Credit for the required number of hours of dissertation/research is awarded the student upon the successful submission of the final dissertation, regardless of the actual number of hours successfully completed.

The dissertation must show

1. mastery of the techniques of research and
2. a distinct contribution to the field under investigation and study.

The manual entitled *Standards for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2012) describes the regulations governing dissertation preparation and must be followed. The student should access the *Standards* and review Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review information at <http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/index.asp>.

### Dissertation Defense

A public presentation of the dissertation research and defense before the student's graduate committee is required. The defense is open to any member of the Graduate Faculty and the dean and associate dean of the Graduate School. The following requirements must be met.

- The defense must occur by the deadline posted on the Graduate Academic Calendar.
- To allow time for careful and thoughtful evaluation and discussion, the examination for the oral dissertation defense should be scheduled no sooner than seven days after the final manuscript has been distributed to all committee members.
- The Declaration of Examination/Defense form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/comprehensive\\_exam\\_announcement.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/comprehensive_exam_announcement.pdf)) must be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of examination.
- The student or committee may request that the OGS appoint an outside observer to attend the dissertation defense.
- The student's graduate committee will evaluate content and style of the completed dissertation. One negative vote **will not** constitute failure for a student on a dissertation defense. Two negative votes **will** constitute failure for a student on a dissertation defense (per Graduate Council, October 2005).
- A grade of S for satisfactory or U for unsatisfactory is given for dissertation credit. A student cannot graduate with a U grade in the final semester.
- A student who fails to defend his/her dissertation successfully can apply to schedule another defense after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original. Two failures to defend the dissertation will result in the student's removal from candidacy.
- Following the defense, the student's committee must complete the examination results report and submit both the original and a copy to the OGS by the deadline. **Submission of the report by the student is prohibited.**

### Dissertation Submission

Following the successful defense, the student electronically submits the dissertation to the Library and must meet the initial and final submission deadlines. The student must be enrolled at MSU in the semester(s) when both the initial and the final submissions occur.

Dissertation submission must be in Portable Document Format (PDF) and uploaded to the Library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) database.

The committee signature page, complete with required signatures, must be submitted in print to the Library before the dissertation will be reviewed. For security reasons, signatures should not be scanned for the PDF document; this page will remain absent of signatures for the electronic version. The Library will retain a copy of the signature page with the original signatures for archival purposes.

## **Dissertation Publishing**

The University has an agreement with ProQuest Information and Learning Company (ProQuest) for the microfilming of all dissertations. Under this agreement, two microfilm copies of the complete dissertation will be made and, if desired, the dissertation will be copyrighted with the copyright in the name of the author. The microfilm will be made available for purchase through ProQuest. The citation and abstract will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT) electronic database and the full document made available to subscribing institutions. There is no longer a fee for publishing dissertations. The fee for copyrighting is \$55.00; one may also ask ProQuest to publish the document with open access for \$95.00. As an alternative to copyrighting through ProQuest, copyright can be obtained by submitting to <http://www.copyright.gov> for a \$35 fee.

## **Ph.D. Time Limit**

A Ph.D. student must complete the degree program within five years after passing the preliminary/comprehensive examination (per Graduate Council, March 2010). A student may submit a request for a one-year extension of time, using the Request for an Extension of Time form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/request\\_for\\_extension\\_of\\_time.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/request_for_extension_of_time.pdf)) if needed under well-justified, extenuating circumstances. The request must be signed by the major professor and the dean of the college and submitted to the Office of the Graduate School (per Graduate Council, May 2005). A second request must also be approved by the dean of the Graduate School and the Office of the Provost.

## **Ph.D. Additional Requirements**

### **Language and Research Skills**

Any foreign language or research skill requirements for the Ph.D. degree are determined by the major department or program. If a program requires a language, a student whose first language is not English may elect to use English for the language requirement. The student may fulfill the requirement by scoring in the 85th percentile (scaled score = 575 or higher) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language.

### **Residency Requirement**

There is no specific on-campus residency requirement. However, Ph.D. students will be required to complete one-half of all required coursework and all dissertation credits from Mississippi State University. Departments, schools, and colleges can set degree-specific residency requirements (per Graduate Council, October 2005).