

# 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

### Program Requirements

Completion of a Ph.D. requires substantial academic work in the field or program of interest beyond the bachelor's level and includes both formal coursework and research (dissertation credit hours). Mississippi State University requires that doctoral students earn at least 54 hours of graduate credit beyond the bachelor's level, which includes a required 20 hours of dissertation credits. Of the 54 hours, at least 24 must be from GPA-graded graduate coursework with a minimum of 12 credit hours at the 8000 level or higher (excluding dissertation research credit), and at least 20 must be dissertation research credits. The remaining 10 hours can be earned with coursework credits, dissertation/research credits, or a combination of both. Individual programs may require additional hours, including dissertation credit hours, as well as permit previous graduate degree coursework in the field to contribute to that total. 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.

A student who has taken a course at the 4000 level is not allowed to enroll in the same course for credit at the 6000 level without explicit permission of the instructor and graduate coordinator of the department offering the course, and the dean of the Graduate School.

Courses taken in previous graduate work that fulfill current degree requirements but are not part of the program 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. All courses listed on the program of study must appear on the student's Mississippi State University transcript.

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

A minor is a current block of approved coursework derived from a current MSU degree program or concentration other than the major program. The option of a minor is at the discretion of the major area in which the program is offered and must be approved by the student's major professor and/or graduate committee. The minor coursework is designated on the student's program of study.

Up to one-third of the required hours for a minor may be transferred to MSU. Hours transferred toward fulfillment of a minor must be relevant in content to the graduate program when the degree is awarded and must fit within the time-limit requirements for the specific degree.

A minor in a doctoral program must meet the following requirements.

- At least 12 hours of graduate coursework in the minor field of study
- Approval of the student's major professor and graduate committee
- Approval of the graduate coordinator from the minor field of study
- An MSU Graduate Faculty member from the minor area who serves as minor professor on the student's graduate committee
- Fulfillment of any additional requirements as specified by the major and minor areas
- A 3.00 GPA on the minor coursework

## 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. See the Transfer Credit (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study/#transferstext>) section and the Transferred and Shared Credit Hours (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study/#transferstext>) section for additional details.

## 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.
- 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).
- 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.

- 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.

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. Dissertation

### Dissertation Preparation

All candidates for the Ph.D. must submit a dissertation that exhibits mastery of the techniques of research and a distinct contribution to the field under investigation and study. 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 register for at least the minimum number of required dissertation/research hours (20), although some programs have been approved to require more. These hours may, at the discretion of the student's doctoral committee, include up to 6 credit hours of XXX 9913 Dissertation Seminar, a 3-hour course designed to assist students in starting and/or completing their dissertation. Students can take this course only if their department/program offers the Dissertation Seminar, and they earn a S or U grade. Upon the final submission of the dissertation to Mitchell Memorial Library, the student is awarded credit for the required number of hours of dissertation/research, regardless of the actual number of hours earned.

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

Both a public presentation of the dissertation research and a dissertation defense are required. While the presentation is open to the general public, the defense is open to any member of the Graduate Faculty including the Dean and Associate of the Graduate School. 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 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 and the graduate coordinator. Typically, committee members and graduate coordinator are provided a minimum of two weeks to review the final manuscript prior to the defense.
- The time and location of the presentation and defense must be announced to all faculty, staff, and students in the academic department at least two weeks prior.
- 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, graduate coordinator, or a committee member may request that the Graduate School appoint an outside observer to attend the dissertation defense.
- The student's graduate committee will evaluate content 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.
- 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 whether pass or fail and submit both the original and a copy to the Graduate School 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 requirements and deadlines. The student must be enrolled at MSU for at least one graduate credit hour when each submission is made.

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 to the Library before the dissertation will be reviewed. Signatures represent that the signer is satisfied with the contents of the document and that no further changes will be made to content. Any subsequent content changes will require a newly signed signature page to allow for each member to re-evaluate the document including the new changes. 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 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, and if desired, the dissertation will be copyrighted with the copyright in the name of the author. The hard-bound copies will be made available for purchase through ProQuest. The author is also free to use any other method available to create physical copies of their approved work.

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. A student may submit a request for a one-year extension of time, using the Request for an Extension of Time ([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)) form if needed under well-justified, extenuating circumstances. The request must be approved by the major professor and Dean of the College and submitted for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. In the rare circumstance that a second request is made, additional approvals are required, including approval of the Dean of the Graduate School and the Provost. This request must be made using the Request for Additional Extension of Time ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/files/extend\\_time.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/files/extend_time.pdf)) form.

## **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.