Doctoral Degree Requirements

To earn the doctoral degree, a candidate must demonstrate mastery of a particular field of knowledge, of the techniques of research, and of the correlation of their specialty with the larger areas of knowledge, especially those directly related to their field of interest.

- Refer to Graduate Degrees and Majors Offered (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/degrees-majors-offered/) for a complete list of Doctoral programs.
- Check Requirements Quick Reference (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/requirements-quick-reference/) for admission requirements for specific programs.
- Consult Admissions Information (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/) and the specific doctoral program description in the correct College and Degree Programs (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/colleges-degree-programs/) section.
- To apply online, please go to the Graduate School (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/) website at https://www.grad.msstate.edu/. (https://www.grad.msstate.edu/).

Program of Study Course Requirements

Completion of a doctoral degree requires substantial academic work beyond the bachelor's level and includes both formal coursework and research (dissertation credit hours). At the program level, students are encouraged to develop a plan of study in consultation with their major professor and committee at the inception of their program, ideally no later than upon completion of 9-12 credit hours of coursework.

- Mississippi State University requires that doctoral students earn at least 54 hours of graduate credit beyond the bachelor's level, which includes required dissertation research hours. Of the 54 hours, at least 24 must be from GPA-graded graduate coursework with a minimum of 9 credit hours at the 8000 level or higher (or equivalent and excluding dissertation research credit), and at least 20 must be dissertation research credits. Course credits earned from other institutions will be evaluated by the relevant program for equivalency and for fulfillment of degree requirements; transfer rules apply. Courses accepted from international institutions designated with an S grade may count towards the GPA-graded hour requirement. The remaining 10 hours can be earned with coursework credits, dissertation/research credits, or a combination of both. Enrollment in LIB 9010 during the final semester is mandatory to meet the Graduate School requirements for graduation.
- A maximum of 1/3 of the total coursework hours, exclusive of research/dissertation hours, can be taken ad Directed Individual Study (DIS) and applied toward degree requirements. DIS courses are designated as 7000-level credit hours and may be used to meet the 8000-level course requirement.
- Directed Individual Study (DIS) courses taken at the 7000-level may be used to fulfill 8000-level degree requirements. Up to 1/3 of graded coursework can consist of DIS courses.
- 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.
- Course requirements must be approved by the student's committee.
- Courses taken in previous graduate work that fulfill current degree requirements but are not part of the program must be noted in DegreeWorks to record the student's fulfillment of those requirements.
- 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. Dissertation hours in which a student receives a U grade are not eligible for use towards the 20-hour minimum requirement.
- For direct admit doctoral students who earn a Masters' degree in conjunction with a doctorate, a minimum of 26 hours (6 Master's and 20 Doctoral) must be completed.

Examinations

Qualifying Examination

Some departments require doctoral students to take a qualifying examination. Details for these exams can be found in the program descriptions. Since the Graduate School does not require this examination, qualifying examination results are not sent to the Graduate School.

Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive exam is required of all doctoral students. This exam can be either written, oral, or both. Additional information is provided below:

- A doctoral student must be enrolled in a graduate course at MSU during the semester the exam is administered. A student taking a comprehensive examination during the summer semester can be enrolled in any summer term.
- The student must have a minimum 3.00 GPA when sitting for the examination.
- The student takes the preliminary/comprehensive examination in the terminal semester of coursework or when within 6 hours of coursework completion excluding any internship/practicum courses.
- When the examination is scheduled, the student's CAPP Compliance must be complete and the committee request form submitted to the Graduate School.

- The student's graduate committee serves as the examining committee, except for programs where the examining committee is prescribed. 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.
- The student's committee must complete and submit the examination results report form no later than one week from the date of the pass/fail decision. This form must be submitted by the deadline stated in the Graduate Academic Calendar (https://www.grad.msstate.edu/calendar/) for the student to be eligible for graduation. **The form must be submitted by a faculty or staff member of the program.**
- A student who fails this examination can apply to schedule a date for another examination after a period of three 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, unless the program has a more stringent protocol.

Admission to Candidacy

A doctoral student is admitted to candidacy when they successfully pass the comprehensive exam. A student's time frame for completing the degree will begin in the semester following Admission to Candidacy.

Graduate Committee

Please refer to the Graduate Committee Section. (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/)

Dissertation

Dissertation Preparation

All candidates for the doctoral degre 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 and the initial and final submissions. Dissertation research is subject to review and approval by an appropriate University regulatory committee or unit (Office of Research Security, Office of Research Compliance, etc.).

The student must register for at least the minimum number of required dissertation/research hours (20), although some programs require more.

Dissertation format guidelines can be accessed at http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/index.asp (http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/). Students ae required to prepare their dissertations following these guidelines and are subject to the review and approval of the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review in the MSU Libraries. (http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/)

Dissertation Final Defense

Both a public presentation of the dissertation research and a dissertation defense are required. The presentation is open to the general public but the defense is open only to members of the Graduate Faculty affiliated with the program (listed on program Graduate Faculty (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/)). The following requirements must be met:

- 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.
- The defense must occur by the deadline posted on the Graduate Academic Calendar if the student wishes to graduate during the semester of defense.
- A student must have a 3.00 or higher GPA when sitting for the defense.
- The student must be within the last 6 hours or in the terminal semester of coursework excluding internship/practicum courses to defend.
- Typically, committee members and the Graduate Coordinator are provided a minimum of two weeks to review the final document prior to the defense.
- 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.
- The student's committee must complete and submit the examination results report form no later than one week from the date of the dissertation defense. This form must be submitted by the deadline stated in the Graduate Academic Calendar for the student to be eligible for graduation. **The form must be submitted by a faculty or staff member of the program.**
- A student who fails to defend their dissertation successfully can apply to schedule another defense after a period of three months has elapsed from the date of the original. Two failures to defend the dissertation will result in the student's removal from the program, unless the program has a more stringent protocol.

Dissertation Submission

- The student must meet the initial and final submission requirements and deadlines set by the program, college, MSU Libraries, and the Office of the Graduate School. Some colleges and/or programs may have deadlines that precede the deadline in the Graduate Academic Calendar.
- The student must be enrolled in at least one graduate credit hour and LIB 9010 at MSU during the semester(s) of both the initial and final submissions to the Library. A student submitting in the summer semester may be enrolled in any summer term.
- The student submits the dissertation electronically through CANVAS as part of LIB 9010. The final submission must be in Portable Document Format (PDF) and uploaded to the Library's Institutional Repository (Scholar's Junction) 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 signers are 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.
- The University has an agreement with ProQuest Information and Learning Company (ProQuest) for the archiving of all dissertations. Under this agreement, and if desired, the documented will be copyrighted with the copyright in the name of the author. The author is also free to use any other method available to create physical copies of their approved work. Fees for copyrighting the document can be found on the Thesis/Dissertation webpage of the MSU Libraries website.

Time Limit

A doctoral student must complete the degree program within five years after passing the comprehensive examination. The time limit begins with the semester immediately following that in which the student successfully passed the comprehensive examination. A student may submit a request for a two-year extension of time, using the Request for an Extension Time form under well-justified, extenuating circumstances. The request must be approved by the major professor, Graduate Coordinator, Department Head (if applicable), and Academic Dean before being submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. In the rare circumstance that a second request is made for a two-year extension, 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 (https://www.grad.msstate.edu/files/Additional_Extension_of_Time_2018.pdf)form.

Additional Requirements

Language and Research Skills

Foreign language or research skill requirements for the doctoral degree are determined by the major department or program.

Residency Requirement

Departments, schools, and colleges may set degree-specific residency requirements.