Doctoral Degrees

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The doctor of philosophy is offered in administration of elementary and secondary education, administration of higher education, administration of supervision and curriculum, adult education, aerospace engineering, animal sciences, biological sciences (botany, microbiology, and zoology), career and technical education, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, computer science and software engineering, counselor education, counseling psychology, discrete and statistical sciences, early childhood education, educational psychology, electrical and computer engineering, elementary education, English, English language arts education, fisheries and allied aquacultures, forestry and wildlife sciences, history, horticulture, human development and family studies, industrial and systems engineering, kinesiology, management, materials engineering, mathematics, mathematics education, mechanical engineering, music education (instrumental and vocal), nutrition and food science, physics, plant sciences (agronomy and soils, plant pathology, and entomology), poultry science, psychology, public administration and public policy, reading education, rehabilitation and special education, science education (biology, chemistry, general science and physics), and social science education (general social science and history), plus interdepartmental programs in biomedical sciences (anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology; large animal surgery and medicine; pathobiology; radiology; and small animal surgery and medicine), economics (agricultural economics and forestry), integrated textile and apparel science (consumer affairs and polymer and fiber engineering), and pharmaceutical sciences (pharmacal sciences and pharmacy care systems).

Admission

Prospective candidates for the degree of doctor of philosophy are admitted under the same procedures and requirements outlined in the general regulations elsewhere in this Bulletin. A student must be admitted to a specific doctoral program, but admission does not mean admission to candidacy for the degree, which occurs only after satisfactory completion of the general oral examination.

Summary of Procedures for Doctoral Degree Programs

The student should:

1. Obtain application forms from the Graduate School and apply by submitting all required materials to the Graduate School by the deadlines published in this Bulletin. The Graduate School forwards the application to the appropriate departmental screening committee. The department head or chair then makes a recommendation to the dean of the Graduate School, who sends a letter notifying the applicant of the decision.
2. Apply for an assistantship, if applicable, through the department involved.
3. Become familiar with the requirements for the doctoral degree as published in this Bulletin.
4. Consult with the departmental advisor and become familiar with departmental procedures.
5. Plan a schedule of study for the first semester with advisor.
6. Submit a proposed schedule for fulfilling the residency requirements.
7. Acquire necessary forms at the Graduate School or on the Web at www.grad.auburn.edu.
8. Establish an advisory committee through the major professor and department head or chair. Official appointment of the advisory committee occurs when the Plan of Study is approved by the Graduate School.
9. Prepare a Plan of Study approved by the advisory committee and department head or chair and submit to the Graduate School.
10. Complete course work, including language requirements, if any, as detailed in the Plan of Study.
11. Arrange for the general written and oral examinations through the advisory committee. After the written examination, schedule the general oral examination at least one week in advance using a form obtained from the Graduate School.


13. Request graduation check in the Graduate School no later than the last day of the semester (graduation day) prior to the semester of graduation.

14. Register for at least one course the semester of graduation.

15. Prepare dissertation and submit a committee-approved first draft to the Graduate School for review and approval by the University Reader, who serves as the representative of the graduate faculty.

16. Study recommendations of the University Reader and make appropriate changes in the dissertation.

17. On approval of the dissertation by the dean of the Graduate School, arrange for final oral examination.

18. File an Academic Residency form.

Advisory Committee and Plan of Study

After the student has enrolled in the doctoral program, an advisory committee should be selected by the student, major professor and department/program head or chair. The advisory committee is responsible for developing the student’s Plan of Study and conducting the doctoral general and final examinations. It should consist of at least four members of the Auburn University Graduate Faculty. Additional voting members may be appointed to the committee (including no more than one non-Auburn University faculty member, who must hold the terminal degree in the field). A majority of the Auburn University affiliated committee members, including the major professor, must be members of the Graduate faculty at Level 2. The major professor must also be a graduate faculty member in the department/program granting the degree. The formal appointment of the advisory committee occurs when the Plan of Study is approved by the Graduate School.

The Plan of Study should be prepared by the student and the advisory committee and filed with the Graduate School at least one term prior to the term in which the student plans to graduate. The Graduate School recognizes that changes may be warranted, and a form is available for amendments as required by student needs, research interests and course availability.

Course Requirements

The minimum number of hours in a doctoral program is 60 semester hours earned through instruction beyond the bachelor’s degree, including 1) a minimum of 30 semester hours graded (e.g., A, B) graduate course work (6000-level and above); and 2) a minimum of 30 semester hours of additional graduate course work (6000-level and above) that may include ungraded courses, 7990 and 8990 and must include at least 10 hours of 8990. Some departments require more than 60 semester hours, and requirements may vary according to a student's background and interest.

The total number of credit hours that may be transferred from another accredited institution toward a doctoral degree varies by program but must be less than 50 percent of the credit hours listed on the Plan of Study. Such transfer credit 1) must fall within the time limits of the degree; and 2) must be approved by the advisory committee and the dean of the Graduate School. A maximum of four hours of 7990 (Research and Thesis) from a completed master’s program may be counted.

All doctoral students must complete a minimum of 10 hours of 8990. Enrollment in 8990 may take place at any time the student and the advisory committee deem appropriate. During any one semester, the number of hours of 8990 in which the student enrolls should reflect the amount of instructional time being spent on the dissertation and the degree to which university resources are being utilized. Students may enroll, during any one semester, for as few as one hour or as many as 16 hours of 8990. Dissertation students submitting their dissertation, awaiting committee review and approval, or taking their final examination must register for 8990 Research and Dissertation in the semester(s) when these steps in the process take place. The requisite 10 hours of 8990 should be included in the Plan of Study. No grade is assigned.

The dean of the Graduate School is authorized to approve alternatives to these course work requirements in exceptional cases and on an individual basis.

Time Limit

Programs and departments should conduct annual reviews of doctoral candidates to assess progress toward the completion of the degree. Students are expected to achieve candidacy within six years and to complete all requirements for the degree within ten years. Upon admission to candidacy, the student has four calendar years to complete all remaining requirements for the doctoral degree. The student’s time to completion begins with the earliest completed course approved for inclusion in the plan of study. If unable for any reason to complete the requirements on time, the student may petition, with the approval of the advisory committee, the dean
of the Graduate School for a one year extension. Students failing to complete the degree in the allotted time revert to the status of an applicant and must petition, with the approval of the advisory committee, the dean of the Graduate School to retake the oral examination.

Dissertation

A dissertation is required of all candidates for the degree of doctor of philosophy. It shall constitute an original contribution to knowledge. The student conducts the research and prepares the dissertation under the direction of the major professor. Only dissertations prepared according to Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide, available on the Web at www.grad.auburn.edu/etd_guide.html, are accepted by the Graduate School. Submission of a dissertation is defined as the time at which the first complete draft of such is submitted to the major professor for review. All dissertations must be published by ProQuest/UMI. The student is required to pay for this service. Auburn University reserves the right to make copies of the dissertation, but the student retains all publication rights. Effective summer 2005, all dissertations must be published electronically through AUETD.

Annual Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants and Doctoral Students

Policy: Effective beginning Fall 2014, the Graduate School will require that each department conduct -- at least on an annual basis -- an evaluation of the progress of each Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) and each graduate student enrolled in a doctoral program.

Reporting: Annually, each department will report to the Graduate School, confirming that the evaluation of all GTAs and doctoral students has been completed. In addition, the department will provide the Graduate School with a summary report of all instances in which a GTA or doctoral student has received an unsatisfactory review.

Expectations: Each department will be responsible for developing procedures (if not already in place) for the annual evaluation of the progress of GTAs and doctoral students. Following guidelines for best practices, the review should include at least the following:

- A student self-report and assessment of academic progress; teaching (if applicable); and research (if applicable) [prepared in advance of the review conference];
- A report prepared by the student’s advisor (and preferably at least one other faculty member, e.g., a member of the student’s advisory committee) that assesses the student’s academic progress; teaching (if applicable); and research (if applicable) that identifies strengths and weaknesses, and establishes expectations for the next year. The report may be augmented by reports from teaching supervisors or other members of the student’s advisory committee.
- An opportunity for the student to discuss the report in person.
- A signed copy of the written assessment should be placed in the student’s file and a copy given to the student.

The Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The doctor of philosophy is conferred in recognition of the mastery of a special field of learning as shown by the satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study and investigation, the successful passing of general examinations covering the major and minor fields, the preparation of an acceptable dissertation reflecting high achievement in scholarship and independent original investigation, and the passing of a final examination on the dissertation and related subjects. The degree is a research degree. It is not conferred merely upon fulfillment of technical requirements, but awarded in recognition of the ability to think and work independently, originally, and creatively in a chosen field. Some departments have special requirements for the degree, and the student will be governed by those, including the ones listed in departmental statements under Courses of Instruction elsewhere in this publication.

General Doctoral Examination

A general examination, often called the “preliminary examination,” is required of all applicants for the degree of doctor of philosophy. It consists of written and oral testing by the student’s advisory committee (or by an examination committee designated by the student’s academic program) in the student’s major and minor. The written portion of the examination does not require approval in advance by the Graduate School. The oral portion, however, does require such approval. Arrangements for the oral examination must be made by application to the Graduate School at least one week in advance of the examination. The primary purpose of the general examination is to assess the student’s understanding of the broad body of knowledge in a field of study. The examination also affords the advisory committee an opportunity to review the student’s proposed research and understanding of research methods and literature in the chosen field. If the general examination reveals deficiencies in any of these areas, the advisory committee may recommend remedial work, re-examination, or discontinuation of doctoral study.

The general oral examination should be conducted immediately after the successful completion of the written examination and well before the final examination. At least one complete semester (preferably more than one) must intervene between the general oral and final examinations. The two examinations thus cannot be taken either in the same semester or in consecutive semesters. Some departments have specific requirements for conducting these examinations, and the student should become familiar with these.
Successful completion of the oral examination requires unanimous support of the student's advisory committee. If the general oral examination is failed, a re-examination may be given on recommendation of the committee and approval by the dean of the Graduate School. Further examinations require exceptional circumstances and approval by the Graduate Council.

The student becomes a candidate for the degree on successful completion of the general examination.

**Final Examination**

After the dissertation has been completed (except for minor revisions) and has been approved by the student's advisory committee, it is submitted to the Graduate School. A University Reader (a member of the graduate faculty [Level 1 or 2] who serves to represent the university's graduate faculty and the Graduate School) will be appointed to review the dissertation. However, the student's advisor may request appointment of the University Reader at any time rather than waiting until after the dissertation is drafted. When the Graduate School has received an approved evaluation from the University Reader, the student may apply for the final examination on a form sent by the graduate School. The application must be filed with the graduate School at least one week in advance of the final examination. The examination is administered by the student's advisory committee. The University Reader also attends and participates. The examination, which generally is oral but may be both oral and written, includes the major and minor fields and a defense of the dissertation. Successful completion requires unanimous support of all members of the committee, including the University Reader. Any member of the Graduate Faculty may attend.

**Language Requirement**

Language requirements for graduate degrees vary with departments. The Department of Foreign Languages offers proficiency courses in a number of languages. The department also offers reading proficiency examinations for those students who wish to demonstrate proficiency without taking a course. Such students must apply to the Graduate School for these examinations by the deadline listed in the Graduate School calendar at the beginning of this Bulletin.

**Residency Requirement**

Resident, on-campus study is the foundation for research-based graduate degree programs at Auburn University. Any graduate student enrolled in a degree program culminating in a thesis or dissertation must directly engage in research with the major professor, must have access to the research tools needed for the research activity, must be immersed in the culture of graduate education, must engage in the professional activities of the discipline, and must complete the research activity in a reasonable period of time. Graduation requires the major professor to certify compliance with these requirements.