

# 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, 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.

## 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 through the Graduate School website and apply by submitting all required materials to the Graduate School by the departmental deadlines. 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. Discuss and develop a plan of study during the first semester with an advisor or major professor.
6. Acquire necessary forms at the Graduate School or on the Web at [www.grad.auburn.edu](http://www.grad.auburn.edu).
7. Establish an advisory committee through the major professor and department head or chair. Official appointment of the advisory committee occurs when the Committee, Transfers, Exceptions, and Candidacy (CTEC) Form is approved by the Graduate School.
8. Prepare a plan of study worksheet and have it approved by the advisory committee and department head or chair. Submit the Committee, Transfers, Exceptions, and Candidacy (CTEC) Form.
9. Complete course work, including language requirements, if any, and as detailed in the plan of study worksheet.
10. Arrange for the general written and oral examinations through the advisory committee. Students must have completed 30 graded credit hours of coursework in order to proceed with the General Oral Examination. After the written examination, schedule the General Oral Examination by submitting the Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination. The advisory committee, as

identified in the Committee, Transfers, Exceptions, and Candidacy (CTEC) Form, must be approved by the Graduate School prior to scheduling the General Oral Exam.

11. Submit the dissertation proposal for approval by the advisory committee and become familiar with Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide, available through the Graduate School website.
12. Submit the graduation application through AU Access at least one semester before graduation.
13. Register for at least one course the semester of graduation.
14. 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.
15. Study recommendations of the University Reader and make appropriate changes in the dissertation.
16. On approval of the dissertation by the Dean of the Graduate School, arrange for final oral examination.

## Advisory Committee and Plan of Study Worksheet

After a student has enrolled in the doctoral program, an advisory committee should be selected by the student, student's advisory committee chair (sometimes called the major professor), and department/program chair. As described in the following paragraph, the committee chair and members should be formally selected and approved using the Committee, Transfer, Exception and Candidacy (CTEC) form. If change(s) in the committee makeup are required (either chair or member(s)), the committee chair (for committee makeup) and/or department head (for chair changes) should assist the student in identifying replacement members. Please note that a student must have a full committee (committee chair and at least the minimum number of qualified committee members) in order to continue in the program after the CTEC form has been submitted. Committee chair/membership replacements should be made within one academic term to avoid the student being placed on inactive status (link: <https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/registration/#Inactive%20Status> (<https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbulletin.auburn.edu%2Fthegraduateschool%2Fregistration%2F%23Inactive%2520Status&data=05%7C01%7Cwittmm%40auburn.edu%7C3dec4ca0b34f435d2dfe08db4cda3008%7Cccb6deedb294b388979d72780f62d3b%7C1%7C0%7C638188272231877600%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=axDrMiUR1x91Z7nhsJx4IUdskMJsEQ2O1fG4nlW6%2BrU%3D&reserved=0>).

The advisory committee is responsible for developing the student's plan of study worksheet 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). Three 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 Committee, Transfers, Exceptions, and Candidacy (CTEC) Form is approved by the Graduate School.

Changes to the plan of study worksheet may be warranted as required by student needs, research interests, and course availability. If so, submit a new CTEC Form if there are changes such as transfer courses and/or exceptions.

## 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 worksheet. 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 the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide, available through the Graduate School website, 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 are published electronically through AUETD and disseminated by ProQuest. Auburn University reserves the right to make copies of the dissertation, but the student retains all publication rights.

## 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. Students must have completed 30 graded credit hours of coursework in order to proceed with the General Oral Examination. After the written examination, the General Oral Examination is scheduled by submitting the Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination. The advisory committee, as identified in the Committee, Transfers, Exceptions, and Candidacy (CTEC) Form, must be approved by the Graduate School prior to scheduling the General Oral Exam.

The primary purpose of the General Oral 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. The two examinations should not be taken in the same semester. Some departments have specific requirements for conducting these examinations, and the student should become familiar with these. Successful completion of the General 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 upon successful completion of the General Oral 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 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 15<sup>th</sup> class day of the semester.