



STUDENT and ADVISING GUIDELINES
FOR THE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

INTRODUCTION

This document provides you, as a doctoral student, with helpful information about policies and procedures in the doctoral degree process. It is designed to enhance the quality and consistency of advising, ensure equity and integrity in the degree process, and promote continuous progress toward completion of the degree.

The College of Education offers a variety of academic concentrations leading to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Education. Please note that the School Psychology Program leads to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in School Psychology. A goal of these concentrations is to contribute to the preparation of education leaders and scholars in all educational settings.

The seven major steps to the doctoral degree are shown below. In the course of completing these steps, you are required to fill out a series of forms that will mark the completion of a milestone (see Doctoral Forms – Milestones) towards your doctoral degree.

1. Admission and Assignment of Initial Advisor
2. Formation of Guidance Committee and Development of a Proposed Program of Study
3. Formation of Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination Committee
4. Preparation for and the Completion of Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination
5. Formation of Dissertation Committee
6. Completion of Dissertation Proposal
7. Preparation for and Completion of the Dissertation and Oral Examination

Graduate School regulations, requirements, and administrative processes which affect your progress toward receipt of the degree are found in [the Graduate School Handbook](#) :

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Refer to those documents for additional information, regulations, and procedures concerning enrollment status, statute of limitations, grading policy, academic average for graduate degree satisfactory or reasonable progress, maximum credit loads, course withdrawal, incomplete grades, academic dismissal, transfer of credits, leave of absence, program fee, and readmission.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION POLICIES

FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The guidelines that follow provide information which reflects elements unique to the College of Education (www.umass.edu/education) or items which have proven especially helpful to College of Education graduate students. Within the framework of the University Graduate School regulations and with the advice and approval of a guidance committee, students plan academic programs of study which include two consecutive semesters of full-time residency (see Residency Requirement).

For further clarification of graduate procedures and processes, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs in the College of Education.

PROGRAM OF STUDY

A doctoral concentration leads to the highest degree awarded in the profession. You should carefully plan your academic program of study during the early part of your second semester with the help of your faculty guidance committee. Previous academic work and professional experience should be considered in planning academic goals and scholarship.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The PhD in the College of Education requires a Program of Study that meets the following criteria:

- A **minimum** of 36 credits of non-dissertation coursework must be taken as part of the program of study. Credit requirements vary across concentrations. Applicants and students should check on the College's website concentration page for the curriculum outline for concentration specific requirements.
- In addition to the 36 credits above, Dissertation Credits are also required to meet the dissertation requirement for the PhD degree and vary by program. Please refer to your program of study for further information.
- No more than 9 of the credits can be independent studies or practica.
- Audited courses do not count toward degree requirements.
- All credits must be earned within the Statute of Limitations period (see Statute of Limitations)

All credits you plan to use towards your doctoral degree must be approved by your advisor.

Comprehensive Examinations

The purpose of the exam is to demonstrate a student's foundational knowledge and preparation to do the dissertation research. The comprehensive exam must be clearly described by the concentration/specialization. If an area of concentration/specialization offers more than one option to fulfill its comprehensive exam requirement, it must clearly describe all such options and make them available to all students pursuing that area of concentration/specialization. Specific time-lines for the completion of the comprehensive exam must be clearly described by the concentration (one year from completion of the formation of your comprehensive examination committee is strongly recommended).

Dissertation

The Dissertation must be a formal manuscript that addresses a specific research problem. The dissertation should meet the scholarly standards required by refereed publications. The dissertation should involve systematic empirical/theoretical inquiry. The manuscript should include five chapters, including an Abstract; Introduction; Literature Review; Design and Methods; Results; and Discussion of Findings.

ENROLLMENT STATUS

Degree Status

Students admitted as fully qualified to undertake a program toward a graduate degree are termed degree-seeking students as opposed to non-degree students.

Full/Half/Part-Time Degree Status

Degree status is often critical to College of Education students because of the way it relates to student loan payments or loan deferments. The Graduate School defines full-time status as **nine (9) or more** credits; part-time status as **eight (8) or fewer** credits; and (for loan deferments) half-time status as **six (6) or more** credits per semester. Audited courses do not count toward degree requirements or enrollment status.

STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

The Statute of Limitations (SOL) is the period within which all degree requirements must be completed. Doctoral students are required to complete their program within a given number of years of achieving candidacy, which is defined as completing the comprehensive examination. Refer to the Graduate School's policy on Statute of Limitations (SOL).

If your Statute of Limitations is due to expire you must either request an extension of your SOL or apply for the upcoming degree period. To request an extension, you should write to your Committee Chairperson (i.e. advisor), stating the rationale for the extension and outlining your

academic progress to date. This correspondence should include a time line projecting the month and year you plan to complete each remaining part of the program (comprehensive examination, formation of dissertation committee, dissertation proposal, final oral defense, and date of graduation). Your Committee Chairperson must then endorse this request and forward it to the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs **at least one month before the Graduate School deadline.**

INDEPENDENT STUDY AND INDIVIDUALIZED PRACTICUM

An Independent Study or Individualized Practicum is intended to serve as an opportunity for students to develop a specific knowledge base or set of professional competencies which cannot be developed through regular course offerings.

Students choose an instructor whose knowledge or professional competency will provide depth in a particular area. The student and the instructor work out an explicit contract which specifies the goals, procedures, and outcomes of the Independent Study or Individualized Practicum. Note: If the instructor is an adjunct or is not a member of the College of Education faculty, a faculty sponsor from their concentration will have to sign. Contracts are available on the College's website. As students cannot register for these kinds of courses, they must submit the form to the Curriculum Coordinator in Academic Affairs who handles the registration.

A student's completed program of study cannot have more than 9 credits of Independent Studies or Individualized Practica.

COURSE REGISTRATION

Registering for a Course

To register for a course, students use SPIRE, the University's secure online student information system.

Registering for Dissertation Credits Doctoral students are required to register for dissertation credits in consultation with their primary advisor. A maximum of nine (9) dissertation credits may be taken during any one semester. You may find that registering for dissertation credits during the summer session is more cost effective.

It should be noted that summer session registration will not fulfill the residency requirement. Dissertation credits are recorded on the transcript by the Graduate School with the grade of IP (In Progress) until the degree is completed, at which time they will be converted to SAT (Satisfactory). Refer to your Program of Study to determine the required number of dissertation credits for your program.

MAXIMUM CREDIT LOAD

Students may routinely register for up to sixteen (16) credits during the fall and spring semesters, nine (9) credits during the summer session, and four (4) credits winter session.

If you want to register for more than the maximum credit load, you must complete a Course Credit Overload Form obtained from the College website. Signatures must be obtained from your advisor and the Graduate Program Director indicating approval. Submit your completed form to the the Graduate Program Director's Office.

ADDING, DROPPING OR CHANGING A COURSE

You may add and/or drop courses on Spire up to the tenth class day of the semester. This period is referred to as the Add/Drop period. Only your final selections will appear on your permanent record. A student is not able make any changes on their own after this date.

You can request a change to your course schedule after the Add/Drop period by obtaining a Late/Add Drop form from the Curriculum Coordinator in the College of Education's Academic Affairs Office and obtaining the appropriate signatures. Return the form to the Curriculum Coordinator.

You can drop a course after the Add/Drop period providing approval is obtained by your instructor. You will receive a grade of Drop (DR) from the 3rd to the 8th week of the semester.

If you drop a course after the 8th week of the semester, your instructor will assign you a grade of Withdraw Passing (WP) or Withdraw Failing (WF). You cannot withdraw from a course after final examinations begin.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE UNIVERSITY

Graduate students voluntarily withdrawing from the University must send a letter to the Graduate Program Director, indicating the reasons for the request. Please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator in room W114 for more information.

CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

Graduate students not enrolled for any course credits, but who are candidates for a degree, must pay a Continuous Enrollment Fee each semester (excluding summer terms) to maintain continuous registration until the degree for which the student has been accepted has been formally awarded. Deadline for payment of this fee is by the deadline indicated on your Spire account. Any student who does not pay this fee by the appropriate deadline, and later seeks readmission or applies for graduation, must pay the accumulated program fees plus a readmission fee. Students seeking readmission must file a written request with the Graduate Program Director, endorsed by their Chair/Advisor, for review. If approved, the Graduate Program Director will request readmission with the Graduate Dean.

GRADING POLICY

Grades

Instructors of graduate courses determine whether the courses are graded with letter grades or a SAT/UNSAT. Faculty must clearly describe the grading policy and options at the beginning of the semester. Many courses will allow the student to request the grading option. However, you must request a change in the grading policy at the beginning of the semester. If you want to follow this course of action, contact your instructor.

Letter grades carry the following numerical equivalents for purposes of computing grade point averages: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, D = 1.0, F = 0.

Incomplete Grades

You can obtain credit for an Incomplete (INC) only by finishing the work required by that course. If a grade has not been submitted by the end of one year after initial enrollment in that course, the Incomplete (INC) changes to an Incomplete Failure (IF). The initiative in arranging for the removal of an Incomplete rests with you.

SATISFACTORY AND REASONABLE PROGRESS

A student must make satisfactory and reasonable progress toward completion of a degree program within the Statute of Limitations for that degree. A student who is not making satisfactory or reasonable progress is subject to academic dismissal. See Graduate School Bulletin for more information.

ACADEMIC AVERAGE

In the courses you are taking to satisfy your degree requirements, a minimum standard for satisfactory work is a 3.0 grade point average. If you have a semester grade point average below 2.8 in any two semesters (consecutive or otherwise), you will be subject to academic dismissal.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

A minimum of one continuous academic year as a full-time graduate student in residence at the University is required. The residency year must consist of two consecutive semesters, either a fall/spring or a spring/fall sequence of nine (9) credits each. **The summer session cannot be considered for residency.** Dissertation credits can be used to fulfill this residency requirement.

In order to qualify for full-time status, a doctoral student must be enrolled for **nine or more credits** per semester, either in regular graduate courses, Doctoral Dissertation Credits (899), or in some combination of both. If a doctoral student is registered for less than 9 credits but is

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working full time on their comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal or dissertation, they must **petition their Chairperson/Advisor** who must then endorse and forward the petition to the Graduate Program Director.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Graduate students who request a leave of absence must petition the Graduate Program Director through their Committee Chairperson who, in turn, provides justification for the request to the Dean of the Graduate School. If the Dean of the Graduate School grants a leave of absence, the student's statute of limitations is extended appropriately. **A student on leave of absence must maintain continuous enrollment by registering for Continuous Enrollment and paying the Program Fee every semester during the leave. A student on leave is not considered to be actively completing a degree program, relinquishes full-time status, and loses deferred standing student loans**

READMISSION

You must reapply and pay all associated fees if you are:

- an applicant who has previously been admitted to the College of Education, but did not enroll on the entrance date stated in the acceptance letter, nor did they defer admission to the following academic year.
- a graduate student at the College of Education who was accepted for one degree program and wishes to apply for another degree program.
- a degree candidate who has not continuously enrolled in courses or has not registered for Continuous Enrollment and paid the Continuous Enrollment/Program Fee.

COMPLETION OF DEGREE

Your degree is not automatic after the completion of coursework. You must complete required paperwork and apply for the degree.

You must complete the Doctoral Form D-9 Results of Final Oral Exam, the Doctoral Degree Eligibility Form, Dissertation Signature Page and obtain all the appropriate signatures. Submit these three at the same time to the Graduate Program Manager in the Academic Affairs Office, by the deadline posted.

You must also upload your complete dissertation to ScholarWorks and complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates by the Graduate School's posted deadline.

Earning a Master's Degree or Education Specialist Degree en Route to a Doctorate

For doctoral programs that do not require a Master's degree at the point of admission, doctoral students who do not have a Master's degree (M.Ed.) may file for the Master's degree (M.Ed.) after the completion of the M.Ed. credit-hour requirement for their program. To then satisfy doctoral degree requirements, a minimum of 36 credits (beyond the Master's degree) of non-dissertation coursework is required with the additional dissertation credits required by each

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program.

Doctoral students may also file for an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree after the completion of 30 semester hours beyond the Master's degree*. Students apply for an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree by completing the Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree paperwork and submitting it to the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Academic Affairs Office.

Doctoral students who discontinue doctoral study after they complete at least 30 credit hours may apply for a terminal Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree. In this instance, the student must also submit a statement affirming that they are terminating their doctoral program for an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree.

**Does not apply to School Psychology students*

DOCTORAL FORMS and MILESTONES

D-1 Advising Information

Form D-1 assures you meet with your advisor, receive appropriate academic advising, and receive and review appropriate catalogs, handbooks, guidelines, rules and regulations.

The Form D-1 must be submitted **by the end of the first semester of study** in the concentration to your Department Administrator in the College of Education.

D-2 Formation of a Guidance Committee and a Proposed Program of Study

Form D-2 establishes your doctoral Guidance Committee, including your Chair as the primary advisor, and records a proposed program of study.

In effect, it is an academic plan developed by you and your committee. Your Form D-2 will be reviewed prior to the scheduling of your Comprehensive Exams to assure that requirements agreed upon have been satisfactorily completed. You should attach any additional documents which are required by individual concentrations to Form D-2.

If you have taken graduate level courses as a non-degree student at UMass Amherst or at other universities (provided they are not used for another degree) you may use up to 9 credits toward the minimum of 36 course credits required by your concentration. You should discuss this possibility with your Guidance Committee. If the committee agrees, list the course(s) on the Form D-2.

The Form D-2 must be submitted **by the end of the second semester of study** in the concentration to your Department Administrator in the College of Education

D-2A Amendments to Program of Study

Since the Program of Study is a *proposed* plan, there may be changes or revisions. Use the Form D-2A to record any changes to your Program of Study and your Guidance Committee approval of those changes. The Form D-2A should be submitted to your Department Administrator in the College of Education

D-3 Committee Membership/Comprehensive Qualifying Examination Committee

Form D-3 is used to establish your Comprehensive Examination Committee, your Chair and primary advisor, and to record the information in both student and faculty databases. This committee should be established and convened prior to completion of your formal course work. Committee members, including a student's Chair, may be changed, but note that students have found it very helpful to have a committee membership which carries through all phases of the degree process. Submit the Form D-3 to your Department Administrator in the College of Education.

D-3A Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The following is a change to the IRB process, please read carefully and follow directions. Students are required to submit proof of IRB approval to their Department Administrator along with the D-3A prior to beginning their research.

Any scientific research being conducted by a University of Massachusetts Amherst affiliate that involves interacting or intervening with human subjects/participants must undergo a review by the IRB. The IRB ensures that research plans are in compliance with all laws and regulations, and that the risks to subjects are properly balanced against potential scientific gains. This is in accordance with federal law, and all research with human subjects, regardless of location or category of review, is subject to IRB review.

Before submitting an IRB application, all researchers must also complete an ethics education online training course via CITI. Certification of completion of the CITI training Group 2 Social Behavioral and Education Research Investigators & Key Personnel – Basic Course must also be attached to the protocol application whether the research is funded or unfunded. CITI courses are free and usually take about two hours to complete.

Link to Compliance Homepage - <https://www.umass.edu/research/compliance/human-subjects-irb>

D-4 Announcement of Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination

Form D-4 verifies the completeness of your coursework, content of your exam, and represents notice to the College that your Comprehensive Examination is to take place. **You must submit the Form D-4 to your Department Administrator in the College of Education at least two weeks prior to the Comprehensive Examination.**

D- 5 Results of the Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination

Form D-5 notifies the College and Graduate School of the results of your Comprehensive Examination. This form should be submitted to your Departmental Administrator after exam completion. The Graduate Program Director will review this form during the nomination to candidacy process.

D-6 Formation of Dissertation Committee

Form D-6 establishes your Dissertation Committee. It is used by the College and Graduate School to review the Graduate Faculty Status and academic appropriateness of the membership of the members and to record that information in the student and faculty databases.

Your Dissertation Committee is composed of a Chair and a member from the College of Education faculty **in your own department**, and a third faculty member who must be *outside* of your department. You should check with the Office of Academic Affairs to verify each faculty member's Graduate Faculty Status (GFS) to be sure they are eligible to serve on your Dissertation Committee. You should complete your Form D-6 at the time of or soon after completion of your Comprehensive Examination and submit it to the Graduate Programs Manager.

D-7 Dissertation Proposal Approval

Form D-7 notifies the Graduate School that your proposal has been approved and that your committee members have agreed to review and evaluate your proposed research. You must submit copies of Form D-7 and your proposal to the Graduate Program Manager. They are used for review and processing by the College of Education and the Graduate School.

D-7A Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The following is a change to the IRB process, please read carefully and follow directions. Students are required to submit proof of IRB approval along with the form D-7 (Dissertation Proposal) prior to beginning their research.

Any scientific research being conducted by a University of Massachusetts Amherst affiliate that involves interacting or intervening with human subjects/participants must undergo a review by the IRB. The IRB ensures that research plans are in compliance with all laws and regulations, and that the risks to subjects are properly balanced against potential scientific gains. This is in accordance with federal law, and all research with human subjects, regardless of location or category of review, is subject to IRB review.

Before submitting an IRB application, all researchers must also complete an ethics education online training course via CITI. Certification of completion of the CITI training Group 2 Social Behavioral and Education Research Investigators & Key Personnel – Basic Course must also be attached to the protocol application whether the research is funded or unfunded. CITI courses are free and usually take about two hours to complete.

Link to Compliance Homepage - <https://www.umass.edu/research/compliance/human-subjects-irb>

D-5 Announcement of Final Oral Examination

Form D-8 notifies the Graduate School and the University when and where your final oral examination is to take place and that the committee members will attend the examination and that they agree the dissertation is complete and ready for presentation. **You must submit the Form D-8 to the Graduate Program Manager at least four (4) weeks plus 2 additional business days by 10:00am before the oral defense.** Both the College of Education and the Graduate School publish scheduled oral examinations.

D-6 Results of Final Oral Examination

Form D-9 informs the College of Education and the Graduate School of the results of your oral examination. When successfully completed, you proceed with final required revisions of the dissertation: you submit your dissertation electronically and complete the Graduate School protocols associated with receipt of the degree and graduation.

D-7 Change of Committee Membership

Form D-10 is used at any stage of the doctoral process to change the composition of your committee. Form D-10 indicates that the new member has agreed to serve and that the previous member agreed to withdraw from the committee. The Office of Academic Affairs and the Graduate School use the information to revise appropriate databases. Submit the Form D-10, if necessary, to the Graduate Program Manager.

We recommended that you keep a copy of ALL forms for your files.