

The Doctor of Philosophy

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a research degree designed to prepare students to discover, integrate, and apply knowledge as well as to communicate and disseminate it. The degree emphasizes development of the capacity to make significant original contributions to knowledge within the context of free inquiry and expression. Students pursuing this degree are expected to develop the ability to understand and to evaluate the literature of their field and to apply appropriate principles and procedures to the recognition, evaluation, interpretation, and understanding of issues at the frontiers of knowledge. In contrast to the PhD, other doctorates such as the Doctor of Education, the Doctor of Audiology, the Doctor of Nursing Practice, and the Doctor of Musical Arts are designed for professional training.

Course Requirements

The Program of Work for the Doctor of Philosophy degree must have a minimum of 30 semester hours of advanced coursework, including dissertation hours. All the completed coursework that is included in a degree program at the time of admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree must have been taken within the preceding six years (exclusive of a maximum of three years of United States military service). Work over six years old may be reinstated upon recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee. All doctoral work is subject to review by the graduate dean.

Foreign Language Requirement

The Graduate School has no foreign language requirement. However, many graduate programs require the study of one or more languages. These requirements are given in [Areas of Study](#) or are available from the graduate advisor.

Graduate Studies Committee Requirements

The Graduate Studies Committee specifies the coursework the student must complete, the qualifying examinations (written or oral or both) the student must pass, the conditions under which the student may retake all or part of an examination, and the procedures the student must follow in developing a dissertation proposal.

In consultation with the graduate advisor, the student proposes a Dissertation Committee to advise or direct the student on the research and writing of the dissertation. The student selects the chair of the Dissertation Committee, with the consent of that person.

Admission to Candidacy

Each student seeking the PhD must be admitted to candidacy on the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee in the major area. Students may not register for the dissertation course until they are admitted to candidacy, and completion of coursework does not in itself constitute admission. Formal admission to doctoral candidacy consists of the submission and approval of the following:

- a. **Program of Work.** The Program of Work comprises a list of courses taken and proposed, the prospective dissertation title, and similar information. The Graduate Studies Committee must approve the Program of Work. The Dissertation Committee may, in a review of the Program of Work, recommend additional course requirements to the Graduate Studies Committee.

- b. **Dissertation Committee.** The Dissertation Committee advises the student on the research and writing of the dissertation, conducts the final oral examination, and approves the dissertation. The membership of the Dissertation Committee, proposed by the student with the consultation and approval of the graduate advisor, is submitted to the Graduate School for approval by the graduate dean. Individuals serving as a member of a thesis, report, dissertation, or treatise committee are generally expected to hold a terminal degree in the field and have an earned degree equivalent to or higher than the degree being pursued by the candidate. An equivalent record of exceptional professional accomplishment within the field may be considered in lieu of the terminal degree requirement. The committee consists of at least four members. At least three of the committee members, including the student's supervisor or co-supervisor, must be Graduate Studies Committee members in the student's major program, and at least one committee member must be from outside the student's Graduate Studies Committee. The purpose of the outside committee member is to provide an independent assessment of the student's mastery of their subject. The dissertation supervisor or co-supervisor serves as the committee chair. Changes to the Dissertation Committee after admission to candidacy require the approval of the student, current and new committee members, and the Graduate Advisor, with final approval by the Graduate Dean. Exceptions to this process may be granted by petition to the Graduate Dean.
- c. **Dissertation Proposal.** A brief statement of the proposed dissertation must be submitted.

The Dissertation

The student must register for at least six hours of dissertation courses in order to graduate. A dissertation is required of every candidate.

The format of the dissertation today ranges from the traditional "book" authored by a single student to a series of unrelated papers and/or journal articles with multiple authorship. Graduate School policy recognizes that approaches to the dissertation vary across disciplines, and specifies only that the format chosen for students of a doctoral program be consistent with practices of similar programs in AAU institutions.

Dissertations containing one or more papers or articles must include brief introductions and conclusions that put the work in context and an acknowledgement of any previous publication of each paper in another dissertation or other venue. In the case of multi-authored papers, dissertators are allowed to include any portion of multi-authored works in their dissertations only after receiving the approval of all other co-authors. In addition, a statement must be included explaining the contribution of the dissertator to each paper. The contribution statement might include, for example, information about the dissertator's contribution to designing research, performing research, contributing new reagents or analytic tools, analyzing data, writing the dissertation or other area-specific classification of research activities. When papers or articles that have been previously published are included, the dissertation must include permission(s) of the copyright holder(s) for reproduction in the dissertation. The supervisor and dissertation committee should review the stated contributions and be satisfied that the dissertator's collective contribution to the multiple-authored papers or articles is sufficient to represent a dissertation.

The dissertation is normally written in English. Requests for permission to write in another language pertinent to the research are granted when there are circumstances warranting an exception. An insufficient command of English is not justification for an exception. The formal petition from the graduate advisor should include assurance that faculty members competent both in the language and in the field are available

and willing to serve on the Dissertation Committee. The request must be approved by the graduate dean when the student is admitted to candidacy. The abstract and a substantial summary and conclusions section in English must be submitted with the dissertation.

The dissertation must be approved by the Dissertation Committee.

Review of Progress

During their first semester all students intending to pursue doctoral study are required to review and sign the Milestones Agreement Form with their program. The purpose of the form is to ensure that the student has been advised of the degree requirements, has been shown a list of major academic milestones for obtaining the PhD degree, and has been provided with an estimate of the timelines for reaching milestones.

The Graduate Studies Committee will review the program of every student yearly; the results of this review will be provided to the student in writing.

Final Oral Examination (Defense of Dissertation)

A satisfactory final oral examination is required for the approval of a dissertation. The exam is open to all members of the University community and the public, unless attendance is restricted by the Graduate Studies Committee. Every student has the right to defend their dissertation.

The dissertation, reviewed by the supervisor, should be submitted to each member of the dissertation committee at least four weeks in advance of the date of the defense. At least two weeks before the defense, a written request to hold the final oral examination must be submitted to the Graduate School.

The examination covers the dissertation and the general field of the dissertation and such other parts of the student's program as the committee determines. If the members of the committee are satisfied that the dissertation is a scholarly investigation in the major field which constitutes a contribution to knowledge and that the student has passed the final oral examination, they indicate approval on the Report of Dissertation Committee.

In the event that a committee cannot reach a unanimous decision concerning the dissertation, the matter is referred to the graduate dean for review. The results of the review are communicated to the student, the graduate advisor, the chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, the committee members, and the department chair, if applicable.

Submission of the Dissertation

After defending the dissertation, the student must submit it in an approved electronic format to the Office of Graduate Studies. The dissertation is retained by the University Libraries. Information about format requirements is available from the Office of Graduate Studies.

Dissertations must be made available to the public. A list of ways of doing this is available from the Office of Graduate Studies. The student may request permission from the graduate dean to temporarily delay making the dissertation available to the public in order to protect patent or other rights. This request must be supported by a written recommendation from the dissertation supervisor. The graduate dean makes the final decision regarding delayed publication.

Students may arrange for registration of copyright, at their own expense, by making arrangements directly with the copyright office at: <https://www.copyright.gov/registration/>.

Approval of the Degree

Upon approval by the Dissertation Committee of the dissertation and its defense, the Graduate Studies Committee certifies that the student has completed all degree requirements, has passed all required examinations, and is entitled to the award of the doctoral degree.