

# PHD DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The only doctoral degree offered by The Graduate School is the doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree. In some cases, this degree is offered in conjunction with another degree through an approved dual degree program, whether from another program administered by The Graduate School, from another school at Northwestern University, or through an agreement with a partner University.

The PhD degree is oriented toward research that will advance knowledge. Study for a specified time and accumulation of credit for courses taken are not by themselves sufficient to earn the PhD degree. A student must demonstrate scholarly distinction and the ability to advance knowledge through independent research by achieving admission to candidacy and writing a dissertation.

Each student enrolled in a PhD program must have a principal research adviser and a committee.

The principal research adviser (also known as mentor, PI, dissertation director, adviser) is a member of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/for-faculty/graduate-faculty-membership.html>) who works with the student to develop a research topic, formulate ideas and structure for, and guides the progress of the thesis/prospectus/dissertation. In some cases, although rare, there is a principal research co-adviser who also works with the student to develop a research topic, formulate ideas and structure for, and guides the progress of the thesis/prospectus/dissertation.

The committee members are those who have expertise in and inform the student's area of research, serve as a reader of the thesis, prospectus, or dissertation, and vote on the outcome of the proposal defense/final exam. The committee chair is a member of the Graduate Faculty who leads the committee for the defense of the prospectus or PhD final exam (dissertation). In some cases, there is a committee co-chair who co-leads the committee. The committee chair may or may not be the same individual as the principal research adviser. A minimum of three individuals must serve on the final exam committee. At least two members of this committee, including the chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty.

All Northwestern University PhD students must fulfill a set of requirements regarding:

- Coursework and registration (p. 1)
- PhD candidacy (qualifying exam) (p. 1)
- PhD prospectus (p. 1)
- PhD dissertation (p. 2)
- PhD completion and filing for graduation (p. 2)
- PhD time to degree (p. 2)

## PhD Coursework and Registration

A student who enters a doctoral program must successfully complete at least nine quality letter-graded course units (ABC, not P/NP or S/U) authorized for graduate credit. Students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA. The Graduate School does not accept transfer credit in lieu of the nine letter-graded minimum unit requirement.

Two types of advanced courses, 499 Independent Study (or 499 Projects) and 590 Research bear restrictions:

- *499 Independent Study* - For doctoral students, independent studies may not represent more than half of the total units taken in the first three quarters of enrollment in a PhD program.
- *590 Research* - Departmental 590 research may be taken for one, two, three, or four course units per quarter. All 590 Research registrations must be taken on a P/N/K grading basis.

All coursework requirements for a doctoral program are expected to be completed by the end of the 12th quarter. Students who are funded and who register for less than three course and/or research units in any given quarter must also register for TGS 500-0 Advanced Doctoral Study.

Students in quarters 13 and beyond may register for non-required coursework in addition to TGS 500-0 Advanced Doctoral Study if the courses are related to the student's area of study.

No credit will be awarded by The Graduate School for work completed in a graduate program prior to admission to and enrollment in the PhD program in The Graduate School. Individual programs may waive program-specific course requirements based on work completed outside of the graduate program (either prior to or after enrollment at Northwestern), but all doctoral students must complete nine quality letter-graded (ABC) course units authorized by The Graduate School for graduate credit and maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA.

## PhD Candidacy

Admission to The Graduate School does not constitute or guarantee a student's admission to candidacy for the PhD degree. Admission to candidacy is contingent upon the recommendation of the student's program and upon approval of The Graduate School.

A student must be admitted to candidacy by the end of the third year of study, which falls on the last date of the 12th quarter. A student failing to meet this milestone will be considered not in good academic standing and therefore will be placed on academic probation (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/satisfactory-progress/>). Deadlines will be altered in the case of an approved leave of absence or parental accommodation.

- Admission to candidacy is reached by passing a comprehensive qualifying examination, written or oral or both. Individual departments or programs determine the character of this examination. At the time of admission to candidacy, proficiency in the major and related fields is certified and additional requirements for the PhD degree are stipulated.
- The student submits the PhD qualifying exam form online via TGS Forms in GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu/>). The Director of Graduate Studies (or DGS designate) must submit approval of this form before the end of a student's third year of enrollment in the PhD program. Following the submission of the approved qualifying exam form students are admitted to candidacy. Students are notified via email by TGS of approval of their qualifying exam form and admission to candidacy.

## PhD Prospectus

Students must have a prospectus (dissertation proposal) approved by their committee no later than the end of the fourth year of study, which falls on the last date of the 16th quarter. A student failing to meet this milestone will be considered not in good academic standing and therefore will be placed on academic probation (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/satisfactory-progress/>). Deadlines will be altered in the case of an

approved leave of absence or parental accommodation. The prospectus must be approved by a faculty committee. A minimum of three individuals must serve on the prospectus committee. At least two members of this committee, including the chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. The student must submit the PhD prospectus form through TGS Forms in GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu>). The program must approve this form before The Graduate School enters the final approval. Students are notified via email by The Graduate School of approval of their prospectus form.

## PhD Dissertation

Every candidate for the PhD degree must present a dissertation that gives evidence of original and significant research.

### Dissertation Assistance

All dissertators should consult with their advisers about appropriate forms of assistance before assistance is rendered. Dissertations must acknowledge assistance received in any of the following areas:

- Designing the research
- Executing the research
- Analyzing the data
- Interpreting the data/research
- Writing, proofing, or copy editing the manuscript

### Formatting

Dissertations must be formatted according to the Dissertation Formatting Requirements (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/dissertation-publication/dissertation-formatting-requirements/>). Dissertations not conforming to these instructions will not be accepted by The Graduate School.

### Depositing the Dissertation

Dissertations must be deposited into the ProQuest Database (<https://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/home/>). In addition, the University Library receives a copy of the dissertation that may be used at its discretion for reasons including but not limited to long term archiving, library use and interlibrary loan, and dissemination through an institutional repository or other means. The library also archives electronic copies of dissertations to help ensure that the content is preserved for future generations.

### Dissertation Embargo

With the permission of a faculty member well-versed with the student's work, presumably the primary adviser, students may request to embargo (delay release of) their dissertation for a period of six months, one year, or two years. To request an embargo, the student must submit the Dissertation Embargo (Delayed Release) Request form ([https://www.forms.northwestern.edu/form\\_templates/fillFormSection/57/](https://www.forms.northwestern.edu/form_templates/fillFormSection/57/)) and provide a clearly stated rationale. The faculty mentor must approve the request and provide a brief rationale for the approval of the embargo request.

An approved request to place an embargo has the effect of restricting online access to the dissertation through the library's discovery systems and ProQuest for the period of the embargo. Metadata (author, title, abstract, keywords and subjects) about the embargoed dissertation will be available through the ProQuest system and the library catalog. Users of those systems are able to search for and see the metadata, but not the actual text or other content of the dissertation.

The dissertation will automatically be released in the University repository (<https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/>) and ProQuest (<https://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/home/>) after the approved embargo expires. To extend the embargo with ProQuest (<https://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/home/>) and/or the University Library, students must contact The Graduate School Student Services at least thirty days prior to the point of expiration. The student may request a one-time extension of the embargo for up to six years and must provide a sufficient intellectual and/or professional rationale in seeking approval from The Graduate School.

## PhD Completion

Scheduling the final examination (dissertation defense) is the responsibility of the candidate and the members of the committee.

- The PhD final exam must be approved by a faculty committee. A minimum of three individuals must serve on the final exam committee. At least two members of this committee, including the chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty.

### Filing Requirements and Forms

Students pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy degree must file the following required documents prior to graduation and by the published deadlines (<https://www.registrar.northwestern.edu/calendars/academic-calendars/>):

- **Application for Degree form:** this form must be filled out via GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu/>). Students should login to GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu/>), click on the "TGS Forms" tab and create a new "Application for a Degree" form.
- **PhD Final Exam form:** this form must be filled out via GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu/>). Students should login to GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu/>), click on the "TGS Forms" tab and create a new "TGS PhD Final Exam" form.
  - Each PhD Final Exam committee member must approve the form after the final exam (defense) date. Committee members render their approval by clicking the embedded link in the email they automatically receive once the exam date passes.
- **Dissertation submission via ProQuest's website** (<https://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/home/>). Once the dissertation has been approved by the committee and all edits and revisions are complete, the student must submit online via ProQuest. The dissertation must conform to The Graduate School formatting standards on the Dissertation Formatting Guidelines document (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/policies/dissertation-format-guidelines.pdf>). Once the student has submitted the dissertation online, a Student Services representative will review its formatting and confirm via email that the dissertation is acceptable or notify the student if changes need to be made.
- **Change of Grade form(s):** Students with incomplete (Y, X, K) or missing (NR) grades on their transcript must work with their program/department to ensure the appropriate change of grade forms are submitted to The Graduate School by the published deadline.

## PhD Timeline

All requirements for the doctoral degree must be met within nine years of initial registration in a doctoral program, which falls on the last day of the 36th quarter. For students on an approved leave of absence (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/leaves->

absence/) or approved parental accommodation, milestones will be extended accordingly.