Doctoral Degree Policies

Degrees Offered

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)
Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.)
Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.)

Didactic Credit-Based Doctoral Degrees

In didactic-credit based doctoral programs, students gain knowledge through coursework of which the majority are didactic. Didactic courses are numbered 601-689, 691; 700-789, 791; 800-889 and 891.

Outcomes-Based Doctoral Degrees

Students in outcomes-based doctoral programs must meet Graduate Council and program specific outcomes through credit-based academic activity. There are no didactic credit requirements for these programs, though 90 credits post-baccalaureate degree must be earned.

Residence Requirements

Graduate study for the Doctor of Philosophy degree normally requires a minimum of three (3) years of full-time study beyond the baccalaureate degree. A student who has a master's degree or equivalent must devote at least one of the two remaining academic years of study in residence at North Dakota State University.

Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee is comprised of the student's advisor (committee chair) and supporting committee members. The goal in selecting a supervisory committee is creating a team to help the student develop a Plan of Study to align with the student's desired professional goals, provide support in the growth of the student as a professional, and oversee the student's preliminary and final examinations and dissertation completion.

Students may not bring food or beverages for the committee members to supervisory committee meetings, preliminary examinations, or final examinations. If a program wishes to provide refreshments at these meetings, it is the responsibility of the program to pay for and obtain them.

The supervisory committee members should be identified before the plan of study is formulated so that all committee members have a chance to contribute. The supervisory committee, agreed upon by the major advisor and student, is approved by the graduate program coordinator and the graduate dean at the time the Plan of Study is submitted.

If any committee member is not a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty, the approval of the Graduate College is required. To request approval, the Plan of Study must include 1) a memo from the program/department chair explaining the qualifications of and rationale for this person to serve on the committee and 2) a copy of the person's curriculum vitae.

• The supervisory committee will have at least four members. The members consist of: the major advisor, who must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty Level 1, will be the committee chair. The major adviser-student relationship must be a mutually acceptable one.
• A second member, who must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty. The second member may serve as co-adviser on the supervisory committee. The co-chair designation implies equally shared responsibilities in guiding the student through to degree completion.
• A third member, who could be either a faculty member from outside the advisor's home department, affiliate member of the graduate faculty, or a qualified off-campus expert in the field.
• The Graduate School Representative (GSR), chosen by the student in consultation with the committee chair ensures
  • Graduate College policies are followed,
  • expectations for the student's performance are reasonable,
  • interactions with the supervisory committee are conducted on a professional basis.

GSR Eligibility Requirements

The GSR must be a full member of the graduate faculty and
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• be either a tenured faculty member outside the committee chair's/co-chairs home department(s) OR a faculty member outside the primary college of the committee chair/co-chairs
• be clear of any conflicts of interest with either the student or the committee chair/co-chairs. Examples of possible conflicts of interest may include budgetary or financial relationships, family or personal relationships, or research and/or publication relationships.

If the student is in an interdisciplinary program, the GSR must not be listed as a faculty member on that program’s catalog page.

advisor or Supervisory Committee Changes

advisor changes and changes to the supervisory committee may be made with the Request to Form or Change Supervisory Committee (https://powerforms.docusign.net/1c3281c5-f567-4702-8620-3d62724d1518/?env=na3&acct=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7&accountId=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7) form. The student, advisor, graduate program coordinator, and the Graduate College must approve changes.

Plan of Study

Some programs do not require a Plan of Study to be filed with the Graduate College. Refer to your program handbook for more information.

The Plan of Study is an agreement between the student, the academic program, and the Graduate College that specifies all courses required to earn the graduate degree. This includes:

• any qualifying transfer credits (see transfer credit policy below)
• up to 10 credits taken as a non-degree NDSU graduate student toward the degree
• any previously earned master’s degree if being used toward the total 90 credits

The Plan of Study must be approved by the student, the supervisory committee, the graduate program coordinator, and the Dean of the Graduate College and must be filed with the Graduate College by the end of the student’s second semester of study and at least one month prior to scheduling the comprehensive/preliminary examination.

NDSU has minimum requirements for doctoral degrees, which are outlined below. Each program is responsible for defining the requirements for a major in its disciplinary area and making this information available to students. Each student is responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements, rules, and recommendations.

Bachelor’s to Doctoral Degree

• Minimum of 90 graduate credits total; minimum of 86 graduate credits for the DNP
• 27 credits must be from didactic courses
  • 15 of which must be 700 or 800 level course work
  • Didactic credits requirements do not apply to outcomes-based programs.
• Specific programs may require completion of additional credits

Master’s to Doctoral Degree

• Minimum of 90 graduate credits total; minimum of 86 graduate credits for the DNP
• Thirty credits from a previously earned master’s degree may be approved to fulfill 30 of the 90 doctoral program credits required. The previous master’s degree must be meaningfully related to the discipline in which a doctoral degree is pursued.
• Up to 15 transfer credits from another doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from an accredited doctoral institution may be allowed in individual cases.
• Minimum of 45 credits total completed at NDSU
• 15 credits must be 700-800 level didactic courses
  • Didactic credits requirements do not apply to outcomes-based programs.
• Specific programs may require completion of additional credits

Course Deletions or Substitutions

Course deletions or substitutions may be made with the Change to Plan of Study (https://powerforms.docusign.net/20c075c4-741c-4c43-8767-4c4838ddfafa/?env=na3&acct=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7&accountId=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7) form. The student, advisor, graduate program coordinator, and the Dean of the Graduate College must approve changes.

Transfer of Credit

NDSU graduate –level course work is not considered transfer credit, even if those credits were taken while in a different graduate program.
Official transcripts with grades posted from the transfer institutions must be on file in the Graduate College prior to approval of the Plan of Study. Transfer credits are reviewed by the supervisory committee and program administrator during Plan of Study creation for confirmation of use in the student’s NDSU program.

Departments and programs have the right to further restrict or eliminate acceptance of transfer credits for their degree programs. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the respective academic department or the Graduate College for information on exceptions to this graduate credit transfer policy.

To be considered, transfer credits:
- must be graduate-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions)
- must be approved in a Plan of Study by the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of Graduate Studies
- must not be courses graded Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
- must carry only grades of A or B on a 4-point scale
- must have been earned within a 10-year period at the time of the final examination
- must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course
- must not be internship, individual study, special problem (equivalent to NDSU’s 696/796 Special Topics credits), or research courses
- must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a previous baccalaureate degree
- must be verified by an official transcript
- will not be used in calculation of the cumulative grade point average

Examinations

A preliminary examination consists of a written portion and an oral portion. Passing the preliminary examination allows the student to be formally admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

- The Plan of Study must be approved at least 30 calendar days prior to scheduling the oral portion.
- A student may not complete the preliminary examination in the same semester in which they attempt the defense.

The final defense (examination) is an oral examination in which the author of the dissertation demonstrates to the supervisory committee a satisfactory command of both the focus area of their project and the broader field.

Examination Notice and Report

The Notification of Scheduled Examination (https://powerforms.docusign.net/0abb6387-c124-45e6-bc80-337a7635ff0b/?env=na3&acct=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7&accountid=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7) form is required for the oral portion of the preliminary examination and for the defense. This form must be submitted to the Graduate College at least seven (7) calendar days prior to the defense date.

- A successful submission requires all signatures, not only that the graduate student has initiated the form.
- If the form is not filed seven (7) calendar days prior, it will not be approved by the Graduate College.

Pre-examination Document Distribution (Final Defense only)

The dissertation work must be distributed to the committee members for review at least seven (7) calendar days prior to the defense.

- If this seven-day stipulation cannot be met, the student’s committee holds the right to cancel the defense. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Graduate College if their examination does not take place as scheduled and to complete a new Notification of Scheduled Examination.

Examination Attendee Policy

- Due to the role of the GSR, they are required to attend each examination.
- If another supervisory committee member cannot participate in an examination, the defense may be held; however, their absence is considered a “Disapproval” of the student’s examination.
  - If more than one supervisory committee member cannot participate in an examination, the defense must be rescheduled.
  - It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Graduate College if their examination does not take place as scheduled and to complete a new Notification of Scheduled Examination.

Examination Outcomes

It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the appropriate examination report, ensure it is signed by all committee members, and submit it to the Graduate College within 14 calendar days following the defense.
• A successful submission requires all signatures, not only that the graduate student has initiated the form.

• If the completed form is not submitted within 14 calendar days following the examination, the examination is considered void and must be rescheduled.

The student must pass each examination as part of earning the doctoral degree.

• A negative vote by two or more members of the student's committee will signify failure of the defense.

• The student may repeat the examination only upon permission from a majority of the supervisory committee.
  • The committee will set a date at least one month after the failed examination and a new Notification of Scheduled Examination must be submitted 14 calendar days prior to the defense date. Exceptions to this time limit will be considered by the graduate dean upon presentation of written justification from the chair of the committee in consultation with the committee.
  • Should the examination be failed twice, the student cannot continue in their graduate program.
  • The student will not be given a third examination except by recommendation of the examining committee, program administrator, and special approval of the Dean of the Graduate College following consultation with the Graduate Council.

Filing the Dissertation

After the final examination, the student incorporates all revisions into the dissertation as required by the supervisory committee. Once a student makes the corrections, submit the following items to the Graduate College:

• signed approval page
• IRB/IACUC/IBC Compliance Notification
• dissertation
• dissertation processing fee

The student will have one (1) year from the date of the final defense to complete the Graduate College dissertation format review process and all other degree requirements. Should the dissertation not receive final approval or any other degree requirements not be completed within this time limit, the student must repeat the final defense. If a period of time two (2) years or greater lapses before the final copies are submitted, the student must reapply to the Graduate College, retake the final defense, register for a minimum of two (2) credits and request an extension.

A degree posts at the end of the semester in which the dissertation is approved and other degree requirements are completed.