

Doctoral Degree Policies

Degrees Offered

Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.)

The D.M.A. is the terminal professional practical degree in music, designed for performers and conductors wishing to acquire the highest performance abilities.

Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.)

The Doctor of Nursing Practice degree is a clinical doctorate offered for post baccalaureate nurses with specialization as a Family Nurse Practitioner. An individually-tailored program of study for the D.N.P. is also available for the certified advanced practice nurse with a master's degree.

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) is available with two options: 1) Institutional Analysis and 2) Occupational and Adult Education. The degree requires extensive field service involving qualitative and/or quantitative research, leading to a dissertation that will apply a theory at an institution.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is awarded in recognition of high scholarly attainment as evidenced by a period of successful advanced study, the satisfactory completion of prescribed examinations, and the development of an acceptable dissertation covering some significant aspect of a major field of learning.

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.

Language Requirements

Some graduate programs have a language requirement and, if so, the program will determine the language or languages applicable to the candidate's field of study. International students whose native language is not English may satisfy the language requirement in their native language, providing their graduate program approves. In these cases, the basis for proficiency will be the candidate's use of English, rather than the foreign language.

Language proficiency is certified by the Department of Modern Languages.

Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee should be formed during the term immediately after the major adviser is identified for the student, and members should be identified before the plan of study is formulated, so that all committee members have a chance to contribute to the Plan of Study.

The supervisory committee will have at least four members. The members consist of:

1. The major adviser, who must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty Level 1. The student selects the adviser with approval of the program administrator and the Dean of the Graduate College. The major adviser-student relationship must be a mutually acceptable one. The major adviser will act as the chair of the student's supervisory committee and will be in charge of the Plan of Study. The remaining members of the committee must be agreed upon by the student and the major adviser.
2. A second member, who must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty.
3. A third member, who could be either a faculty member or a qualified off-campus expert in the field. If this committee member is not a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty, the approval of the Dean 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) curriculum vitae.
4. The Graduate School Representative (GSR) is chosen by the student, in consultation with the committee chair, at the time of the supervisory committee formation.

Eligibility Requirements

The GSR must be

- a full member of the graduate faculty, AND
- 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.
- If the student is in an interdisciplinary program, the GSR must also be outside of that program.
- 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 relationships, family or financial, personal relationships, or research and/or publication relationships between the GSR and either the student or the committee chair.

The role of the GSR is to ensure that

- Graduate College policies are followed,
- expectations for the student's performance are reasonable,
- interactions with the supervisory committee are conducted on a professional basis.
- The GSR will sign the exam form as a confirmation that these conditions have been met.

Graduate School Representatives serving on a committee for a program that has been approved by the Graduate College to use an outcomes-based approach to assess doctoral student performance also have the responsibility to document that the process and assessment of the student's performance in the doctoral program match the defined program outcomes.

NOTE: Other qualified individuals may participate as committee members following approval by the graduate dean upon a recommendation accompanied by rationale and curriculum vitae by the appropriate program administrator and academic dean. The supervisory committee agreed upon by the major adviser and student, and approved by the program administrator and the academic dean shall be recommended to the Dean of the Graduate College for final approval.

Each committee member shall have an equal vote in committee decisions. The committee is to assist the student in the preparation of a plan of study and to advise him or her during the period of graduate work. The supervisory committee is encouraged to convene at least once per semester and meet at least once per year to review the progress of the student.

Plan of Study

The Plan of Study should be submitted to the Graduate College for approval at the end of the first year of graduate study and at least one month prior to scheduling the comprehensive/preliminary examination. Revisions may be made with the Request for Change form. Plans of Study, and all changes to them, must be approved by the student, the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader of the student's program, and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Each program has the responsibility of defining the requirements for a doctoral degree in its disciplinary area. This information should be made available to students on the website and in the program handbook. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements, rules, and recommendations.

Didactic Credit-Based Doctoral Degrees

Didactic credits are courses that are taught in a class setting by an instructor; they are numbered 601-689, 691; 700-789, 791; 800-889 and 891. A doctoral degree is made up of both didactic credits and non-didactic credits, such as practicums, seminars, or research credits. The 600 number range indicates a stacked undergraduate/graduate course, 700 and 800 are master's and doctoral level courses, and 800 courses are reserved for doctoral students only.

Bachelor's to Doctoral Degree

- Minimum of 90 graduate credits total for a PhD; minimum of 86 graduate credits for the DNP
- 27 of the 90 must be didactic credits
- 15 of the 27 didactic credits must be 700 or 800 level course work

Master's to Doctoral Degree

- Minimum of 60 graduate credits total
- Minimum of 45 credits total completed at NDSU
- 15 of the 60 credits must be 700-800 level or equivalent didactic courses
- Only 30 credits from a completed master's degree can be used as transfer credit except where expressly allowed by policy or transfer agreement; any additional graduate credits to be transferred to NDSU must have been earned as part of a doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline at another accredited doctoral institution.
- Specific programs may require completion of additional credits

Outcomes-Based Doctoral Degrees

Ph.D. programs using an outcome-based curriculum are not expected to include a minimum number of didactic credits. The total number of credits required for a degree is the same as didactic credit-based programs, but the credits can be earned through any credit-based academic activity.

Programs must have an approved statement of expected program outcomes and a strategy for measuring the desired outcomes. The program outcomes must include, but are not limited to:

1. Ability to synthesize information
2. Demonstrated ability to think critically
3. Effective written and oral communication skills
4. Mastery of major methods or analytical approaches of the field
5. Ability to contribute creatively to the discipline
6. Professional and ethical behavior standards consistent with the expectations of the discipline
7. Professional and workplace skills necessary to succeed in chosen career path

Changes in curriculum must be submitted through the proper curriculum approval channels (<https://www.ndsu.edu/facultysenate/acadaffairs/channels/>).

Transfer of Credit

All graduate credits used to meet the requirements of a doctoral degree must be approved by the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Bachelor’s to doctoral students: The doctorate requires a minimum of 90 graduate credits (86 credit for the DNP). A minimum of 27 credits of didactic coursework are required; no more than 15 didactic credits may be transferred as part of the Plan of Study. All transfer credits for students with a bachelor’s degree working toward a doctoral degree at NDSU:

- must be graduate-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions) to be eligible for acceptance in transfer;
- 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 no more than 10 years prior to graduation with a doctoral degree at NDSU
- must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course;
- must not be internship, individual study, special problem, or research (disquisition) courses;
- must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a previous baccalaureate or master’s degree (with the exception of accelerated master’s degrees);
- must be verified by an official transcript; and
- will not be used in calculation of the grade point average.

Master’s to doctoral students: The doctorate requires a minimum of 60 credits beyond the master’s degree; therefore, no more than 30 credits from a previously earned master’s degree may be transferred into a doctoral program at NDSU, except where expressly allowed by policy or transfer agreement. The previous master’s degree must be meaningfully related to the discipline in which a doctoral degree is pursued.

In addition to a maximum of 30 credits applied toward an earned master’s degree, transfer of up to 15 credits from another doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from an accredited doctoral institution can be allowed in individual cases, for a total of 45 transfer credits. Strict limitations apply. Approval from the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of Graduate Studies is required as part of an approved Plan of Study.

All transfer credits in addition to the 30 for a prior master’s degree for students working toward a doctoral degree at NDSU:

1. must be doctoral-level coursework in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from a doctoral program offered by a regionally accredited university (or equivalent for international institutions) to be eligible for acceptance in transfer;
2. must be approved in a Plan of Study by the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of Graduate Studies;
3. must not be courses graded Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory;
4. must carry only grades of A or B on a 4-point scale;
5. must have been earned no more than 10 years prior to graduation with the doctoral degree at NDSU;
6. must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course;
7. must not be internship, individual study, special problem, or research (disquisition) courses;
8. must be verified by an official transcript; and
9. will not be used in calculation of the grade point average.

Notes:

1. The petition for transfer of credits is part of the development process for the Plan of Study. Individual courses at the master's or doctoral level that have been accepted in transfer have to be listed in the transfer credit section of the Plan of Study, and they are to be counted toward the required credit total for the Plan of Study.

If 30 credits are accepted in transfer from a previously earned master's degree into a doctoral degree program, the accepted master's degree is listed in the header for the Plan of Study, and the Plan of Study lists only the required courses beyond the master's degree (for a minimum of 60 credits). If individual doctoral credits are accepted for a doctoral degree at NDSU, these additional courses need to be listed in the transfer credit section of the Plan of Study, and they are to be counted toward the required total for the Plan of Study.

2. It is the responsibility of the student to provide official transcripts of graduate courses taken elsewhere to the Graduate School.
3. Departments and programs have the right to further restrict or completely eliminate acceptance of transfer credits for their degree programs. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the respective academic department or the Graduate School for information on exceptions to this graduate credit transfer policy.

Time Limitation

Graduate credit for any coursework that is more than 10 calendar years old at the time of the final examination cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements unless a petition for exception was approved. The final examination is valid for one year. Should a student not have his/her disquisition approved by the Graduate School or fail to meet other degree requirements within that timeframe, the final examination must be retaken.

If a period of time two years or greater lapses before the disquisition is approved by the Graduate School, the student must reapply, re-defend the dissertation and must register for a minimum of two (2) credits. The student's degree will post at the end of the semester in which the disquisition is approved by the Graduate School.

IRB, IBC, and/or IACUC Approval

If a proposed graduate research project involves human, animal, or biohazard subjects, it must be submitted for review and approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and/or the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). This process should be initiated by the student after his or her supervisory committee has approved the final research design, because IRB, IBC, and/or IACUC approval must be obtained **before** the research project commences and cannot be granted retroactively. A copy of the appropriate approval letters are to be included when the dissertation is submitted for editing.

Disquisitions that involve research using humans or animals as subjects or using biohazard materials will not be approved by the Graduate College if such research has not been previously approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) as appropriate. Every effort should be made by advisers to ensure that students are aware of these University requirements.

Examinations

The supervisory committee shall serve as the examining committee of which the major adviser shall serve as chair.

A **comprehensive/preliminary examination** will be required of each student after the greater portion of courses has been completed. This examination consists of a written part and an oral part. After passing the comprehensive/preliminary examination, the student will be formally admitted to candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. At least one academic semester must elapse between the comprehensive/preliminary examination and the final examination.

The **final examination** will be taken after the candidate has completed the course work and dissertation. This oral examination will be concerned primarily with the dissertation, but it may also cover material from course work, especially those courses fundamental to the dissertation. The dissertation in a near final form must be given to the committee members at least seven (7) days prior to the final examination.

Once a date is finalized with the student's supervisory committee, the Notification of Scheduled Examination form (<https://powerforms.docuSign.net/0abb6387-c124-45e6-bc80-337a7635ffb0/?env=na3&acct=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7&accountId=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7>) must be filed with the Graduate College at least two (2) weeks prior to the examination.

At the conclusion of each oral examination, the examining committee shall record, in writing, its approval or disapproval of the candidate and file the appropriate report of examination form to the Graduate College within 14 days following the exam.

A negative vote by more than one member of the student's committee will signify failure of either the comprehensive/preliminary examination or the final examination. Upon permission of a majority of the supervisory committee members, a candidate is allowed to take each examination twice. The supervisory committee will set a date at least one month after the failed examination. Exception to this time limit will be considered by the Dean of the Graduate College upon presentation of written justification from the chair of the supervisory committee in consultation with the committee members. Should both attempts to pass an examination result in failure, the candidate may request to take the examination a third time. A request for a third

examination requires the support of the supervisory committee and program administrator, and the approval of the Dean of the Graduate College after consultation with the Graduate Council.

Continuous enrollment is required (fall and spring semester) until all degree requirements are completed, including Graduate School approval of the dissertation. Students defending in the summer semester must register for credit.

To participate in commencement, the student must pass the final examination. Students who complete graduation requirements during the summer are eligible to participate in either May or December commencement ceremonies within the calendar year of their graduation. To participate in the May commencement exercises, students must be registered in the remaining graduation requirements for the summer session of the same year.

Dissertation Video

Doctoral students are required to submit a three-minute video summarizing their dissertation research for a lay audience. The video should be produced during the final semester of study (specific timing varies by program). Some programs require these videos to be shown to the supervisory committee at the time of final defense, while others do not. Students should consult with their adviser regarding program policies. At a minimum, a student cannot successfully produce the video until the results of his or her research are known.

Dissertation

The dissertation must show originality and demonstrate the student's capacity for independent research. It must embody results of research that constitute a definitive contribution to knowledge.

Filing the Dissertation

After the final examination, the student incorporates all revisions into the disquisition as required by the supervisory committee. Once the corrections are made, students must submit the following items to the Graduate School:

- signed approval page
- IRB/IACUC/IBC Compliance Notification
- disquisition
- disquisition processing fee

The student will have one (1) year from the date of the final examination to complete the Graduate School disquisition review process and all other degree requirements. Should the disquisition not receive final approval or any other degree requirements not be completed within this time limit, the student must repeat the final examination. 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 examination, register for a minimum of two (2) credits and request an extension.

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