

# Doctoral Degree Policies

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## 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.)

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## 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 examination and final defense 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 at the time the Plan of Study is submitted.

To add an external member (not full or affiliate graduate faculty) to a graduate committee, the Plan of Study or Supervisory Committee change form (if the Plan of Study is already filed) must include a letter of support from the department chair and a copy of the external member's curriculum vitae (CV). The chair's letter should indicate the chair and department's support for this person to be on the committee and list the expertise this person brings to the committee. There is a paperclip icon on both forms that allows the student, advisor and graduate program coordinator to add the letter and CV.

- The letter must come from the department chair only, not the advisor. An advisor may add a letter of support, though this letter alone is not sufficient.
- The external member cannot be an affiliate graduate faculty member of the advisor's home department/program.
- For doctoral students, the external member (Graduate School Representative) must be a full member of the graduate faculty. An affiliate graduate faculty or non-tenured or tenure-track faculty member cannot serve in this role. If a previously approved GSR has left NDSU, a new GSR must be found and a supervisory committee change form be filed with the Graduate School

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 advisor-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-advisor 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 full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty, 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.
  - the process and assessment of the student's performance is documented and, for outcomes-based doctoral programs, matches the outcomes defined

## GSR 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
- 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 also 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 Supervisory Committee Change ([https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current\\_students/forms/#:~:text=Change%20Supervisory%20Committee](https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current_students/forms/#:~:text=Change%20Supervisory%20Committee)) 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 Graduate College and must be filed with the Graduate College by the end of the student's second semester of study and at least 30 days prior to scheduling the preliminary examination. A student must be in good academic standing to submit the Plan of Study.

NDSU has minimum requirements for degrees, which are outlined below. Students in outcomes-based programs must complete the minimum number of credits for the degree. 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
  - No more than 15 didactic credits may be transferred as part of the Plan of Study
  - 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-4c43-8767-4c48338ddfaf/?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.*

Transfer of credit is requested at the time a Plan of Study or Change to Plan of Study is filed in the Graduate College. A maximum of 15 credits of graduate-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions) may be eligible to be used in completing the student's degree program.

Transfer credit coursework must:

- meet degree program requirements
- be graduate level
- be verified by an official transcript from the transfer institution with grades posted
  - Transcript(s) must be filed in the Graduate College at the time the transfer of credit is requested
- must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a baccalaureate degree
- carry only grades of A or B on a 4.0 scale
  - Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory graded courses are not eligible for transfer
- not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension education, or workshop course
- not be internship, individual study, special topics, or research courses
- have been earned within a 10-year period at the time of the student's final defense

Departments and programs have the right to further or eliminate acceptance of transfer credits for their degree programs. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the respective academic department or the Graduate College with transfer credit questions.

## 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 attempt the final defense in the same semester in which they complete the preliminary examination.

The **final defense** 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.

A student must be in good academic standing to schedule the preliminary examination or the final defense.

## Notification and Report

The Notification of Scheduled Examination (<https://powerforms.docusign.net/0abb6387-c124-45e6-bc80-337a7635ffb0/?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 final defense. This form must be submitted to the Graduate College at least seven (7) calendar days prior to the examination 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.
- An oral preliminary examination or final defense takes place without an approved notification form is considered void. A new examination or defense date must be scheduled and the Notification of Scheduled Examination (<https://powerforms.docusign.net/0abb6387-c124-45e6-bc80-337a7635ffb0/?env=na3&acct=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7&accountId=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7>) filed seven days prior to the new date.

## Pre-defense 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 defense 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.

## Outcomes

It is the student's responsibility to initiate the appropriate report ([https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current\\_students/forms/#:~:text=Examination%20and%20Degree%20Completion](https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current_students/forms/#:~:text=Examination%20and%20Degree%20Completion)), 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 coordinator, and special approval of the Dean of the Graduate College following consultation with the Graduate Council.

## Filing the Dissertation

After the final defense, 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, and register for a minimum of two (2) credits.

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