

# REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

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## The Doctoral Degree

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy recognizes demonstrated proficiency and high achievement in research. After adequate preparation, the candidate must successfully complete both comprehensive examinations in their academic field and a searching and authoritative investigation of a special area in the chosen field, culminating in a written dissertation. The program of study for each doctoral degree program must include, at a minimum, 30 approved credit hours.

## Admission to Candidacy

Doctoral students customarily apply for degree candidacy after completing at least three semesters of coursework beyond the bachelor's degree.

### To qualify for candidacy, students must do the following:

1. Complete the requirements for training in Responsible Conduct for Research (RCR).
2. Complete all course requirements (except the minor).
3. Achieve a satisfactory scholastic record.
4. Pass the comprehensive examination.
5. Submit a formal statement naming the dissertation reading committee and delineating the research topic for approval to the school chair and Graduate Education (on behalf of the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education).

Upon satisfactory completion of these requirements, the Office of Graduate Education will formally admit the applicant to candidacy for the degree on behalf of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Development.

## Comprehensive Exams

The comprehensive examination assesses both general knowledge of the degree area and specialized knowledge of the student's chosen research field. Each program is responsible for scheduling comprehensive examinations at least once a year and for providing students information regarding exam formats, rules, and scope. Exam retakes are to occur no later than the end of the student's second full term (Fall, Spring, or Summer) in residence following the failed attempt.

## Thesis Topic

Before a student becomes a candidate, they should present a formal statement for the approval of the school chair or college dean and

Graduate Education that outlines the student's dissertation advisor, the topic selected for investigation, the objectives, and the steps by which the student proposes to achieve them. (Note that individual programs may have additional requirements for approving the dissertation prospectus or proposal before approval by the chair/dean and Graduate Education.) The dissertation topic must give promise of being either a genuine addition to the fundamental knowledge of the field or a new and better interpretation of facts already known.

## Time Limit for Degree Completion

Students must complete all degree requirements within seven years from the end of the term in which they pass the comprehensive examination.

## Dissertation

The dissertation must demonstrate that the candidate possesses powers of original thought, talent for research, and ability to organize and present findings. Resources such as the Thesis and Dissertation Manual, deadlines, checklist, and templates are found in the Thesis & Dissertation website. Dissertations must be submitted electronically via the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation link available on that resource site.

The format of the dissertation (in general appearance) must meet the criteria published in the Thesis and Dissertation Manual. For other format or style questions, students should refer to style manuals appropriate to their disciplines.

## Doctoral Examination

If the dissertation advisory committee finds the dissertation satisfactory, it schedules the candidate for an oral examination on the subject matter of the dissertation and the field in which it lies. An examining committee approved by Graduate Education on behalf of the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education will conduct the examination. The candidate's academic unit should forward the announcement of the oral examination, including the names of the examining committee members, to Graduate Education at least 10 working days prior to the exam.

If a candidate should fail to pass the final oral examination, the examining committee may recommend permission for one additional examination. In the case of failure, the Registrar does not receive a report of the examination results.

## Minor Field of Study

In addition to an adequate knowledge of the major field of intended research, the student must demonstrate mastery of another smaller body of knowledge—the minor field—preferably outside the student's school. The purpose of the minor is to encourage a wider interest on the part of the student and can include topics that will help them in their research or those that will allow them to explore and prepare for their future careers.

The minor will normally consist of at least six semester hours of work in related courses, selected by the student in consultation with a guidance committee and approved by the Graduate Education (on behalf of the Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education). These courses should be at the 6000 level or above, but the use of certain 4000 level courses may also be approved. The student must receive a letter grade of C or higher for a course to count towards the doctoral minor. (Courses that are taken as pass/fail are not eligible to count toward the doctoral minor). Courses taken at other institutions may be included in the minor. Once the student has satisfactorily completed the minor, the school chair

will send a confirmation, accompanied by course grades, to Graduate Education for final approval and recording.

Although the student need not complete the minor as a prerequisite to become a candidate, the minor must be completed and approved in order to be cleared for graduation.

must also complete RCR education. For more information, see <https://rcr.gatech.edu/academic-policies>.

## Other Requirements

### Enrollment Requirements

The matriculation requirements for doctoral students are similar to those outlined for the master's degree with the addition of the residency requirement: doctoral students should spend at least one full-time semester in residence at Georgia Tech and should conduct research for their dissertation while in residence. Under special circumstances, candidates may receive permission to pursue their research in absentia, provided the chair of the appropriate school approves and a Georgia Tech faculty member directs the project. Although doctoral students working full-time on thesis research should normally be registered for a full course load of 9000-level dissertation hours each semester, this requirement is at the discretion of the advisor and the department. No minimum number of 9000-level dissertation hours is required for the doctoral degree. Doctoral students must be registered in the semester of graduation.

If a student has completed all degree requirements and will no longer require any of the Institute's facilities or faculty time, the student may request an enrollment waiver available on the Thesis & Dissertation Forms website.

### Additional Graduation Requirements

In addition to the requirements listed elsewhere, the candidate is required to complete the following:

1. Complete an Online Application for Graduation to petition for the degree to the Registrar's Office during the term preceding the anticipated final term of work.
2. Have an overall GPA of at least 3.0.
3. Register for a minimum of one hour of dissertation in the term of graduation. This reduction from the normal minimum course load of three hours may be used only once. If all requirements for graduation, including submission of the final approved dissertation, have been completed prior to the last day of registration and the student was registered for the preceding term, the student may apply for a waiver of the enrollment requirement, where the application is available on the Thesis & Dissertation Forms website.
4. Submit the dissertation to the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation website, linked from the Thesis & Dissertation website, prior to the final submission of the completed dissertation to Graduate Education.

If both the dissertation and the examination are satisfactory, and the candidate has completed the requirements of residence, minor field, and any additional school requirements, Graduate Education will certify the candidate as qualified to receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

### Responsible Conduct for Research (RCR)

All Georgia Tech doctoral students must complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) education, which includes an online training component and a doctoral-level RCR course. All master's thesis students