

Regulations Applying only to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Programs

The formal requirements for the PhD degree are the following: completion of the coursework mandated by the individual degree program, fulfillment of the residency requirement, formal training in the Responsible Conduct of Research for students as appropriate, qualifying and/or comprehensive examination(s) or equivalent if required by the degree program, continuous registration, a final oral examination conducted by the student's PhD committee and submission of a dissertation to the relevant Graduate Office and to ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) for archiving. The dissertation must be based on original and independent research.

Admissions Requirements

All students admitted to a doctor of philosophy program must satisfy the general requirements for admission as a graduate student and the requirements for the specific PhD program.

Academic Classification and Degree Candidacy

1. Doctoral Student: Students in this classification have been admitted to a doctoral program.
2. Doctoral Candidate: Every degree program shall have a policy defining candidacy. Students in this classification will have completed all departmental, college and university requirements except for the dissertation. These requirements vary by program but minimally include completion of approximately 30 semester hours of acceptable graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree or possession of a previously earned master's degree that is acceptable to the department and certification by the Graduate Office. The requirements frequently include a comprehensive examination and/or a proposal defense.

Academic Residency Requirement

In the context of a doctoral degree program, the "residency requirement" refers to either:

1. a minimum number of credits or semesters that must be completed at the degree-granting institution, or
2. a minimum duration which during the degree candidate must be enrolled full-time at the degree-granting institution.

After reaching candidacy, students must register for Dissertation for a minimum of two semesters in order to fulfill their formal residency requirement. Continuation status enrollment is for students who are post-candidacy, have completed all coursework and their residency requirement, and are actively engaged in completing a dissertation.

Responsible Conduct of Research

All doctoral students for whom Responsible Conduct of Research training is required must complete training according to the University's Policy on the Responsible Conduct of Research. (https://www.northeastern.edu/policies/Policy_on_Responsible_Conduct_of_Research.pdf)

Course Requirements

The program committee in charge of the degree program specifies the doctoral course requirements.

Qualifying Examination(s)

In departments that require qualifying examinations, students must be notified in writing of the nature and regulations governing these examinations and of how their performance on the examinations will affect their normal progress towards the degree. The Graduate Office shall be made aware of the department regulations concerning such examinations.

Annual Review of Student Progress

Units shall define milestones for achieving satisfactory academic progress and shall establish a published process by which the academic progress of every PhD student will be evaluated through an annual review. A copy of each review shall be submitted to the student and the Graduate Office.

PhD Dissertation Committee

No dissertation committee shall have fewer than three faculty members, two of whom shall be from Northeastern University. The chair of the dissertation committee will be a full-time tenured or tenure-track member of the faculty of Northeastern University and will hold a PhD. (or other research doctorate). Exceptions to this policy will be considered and, if appropriate, approved by the Provost or their designee.

The PhD committee should be appointed early enough to advise in the formulation of the student's program and in refining the research topic for the dissertation. Within the constraints of the above criteria, the PhD program faculty will determine the process by which dissertation committees are established. The final list of dissertation committee members shall be reported to the college's Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

If a student's major advisor leaves Northeastern (including transition to emeritus status), that person may continue the research direction of the dissertation or thesis. However, a co-advisor must be appointed from the academic department or program. The student will then have two advisors, one an official member of the Northeastern faculty who will be available for research and administrative matters and the ex-Northeastern advisor. If a new major advisor is appointed, the ex-Northeastern faculty member may serve as an outside member of the committee.

Comprehensive Examination(s) and/or Proposal Defenses

Degree programs may require a comprehensive examination(s) and/or an oral defense of the dissertation proposal as the final step before becoming a PhD candidate. The purpose of the comprehensive examination(s) is to test the knowledge and skills of the student in a particular area and his/her knowledge of recent research developments in the field. The administrative home unit for each PhD program shall establish the process by which comprehensive examination committees are established. Units may require an oral defense of the dissertation proposal in lieu of, or in addition to, a comprehensive examination.

Dissertation

Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy must complete a dissertation that embodies the results of extended research and makes an original contribution to the field.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

An oral defense of the dissertation is required and must be held at least 14 calendar days before the degree conferral date. The defense shall be conducted with the committee members present either in person or via electronic means. In the case where neither the candidate nor the committee members are present in person on campus (i.e., the candidate and all committee members are connected only remotely via electronic means), there shall be a location established and technology enabled for public, in person attendance of the defense by the University community, and this accommodation made known to the University.

Submission of the Dissertation

The student must submit the dissertation to ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) in sufficient time to allow for acceptance before the commencement clearance deadline. Information on archiving a thesis with ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) is available in the program-relevant Graduate Office.

Time Limitation for Achieving Candidacy and Degree Completion

Degree candidacy must be achieved within two years of completion of required coursework, and the PhD degree must be completed within a maximum of five years after completion of required coursework. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may request an extension of this timeframe from the Graduate Office.