

# Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress

## Related Policy:

- *Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. **When should students file the doctoral degree plan?**

A degree plan should be approved at least three months before taking the preliminary oral examination; however students may submit the degree plan at any time after matriculating in the degree/major.

### 2. **Who approves the coursework on the degree plan?**

The advisor and DGS (including DGS of the minor field, if applicable) must approve coursework on the degree plan before it is routed to the collegiate unit. Some programs may require full faculty review. Collegiate units may review coursework for compliance with collegiate and University policies.

### 3. [How and when do I request an extension of time for completing my doctoral degree?](#)

[Confer with your advisor and director of graduate studies, obtain their signatures on the Doctoral Degree: Request for Extension to the Maximum Time Limit \(UM 1777\) form, and submit the completed form to your college for final action. While you are encouraged to apply for a time extension at least three months in advance, you must do so no later than the end of the term in which your deadline for degree completion expires.](#)

[Some unexpected circumstances have arisen and I need to request an extension to the maximum time limit for earning the doctoral degree; by when do I need to request an extension?](#)

~~Students must submit the petition for an extension prior to the end of the term in which the time limit will expire. Students are encouraged to apply for an extension at least three months in advance. If the petition for extension is not submitted by the deadline,~~

~~the student will be terminated from the doctoral program (however, see question #4 about readmission).~~

**4. I was terminated from my program for exceeding the time limit for degree completion. Can I apply for readmission to my program?**

Yes, although readmission is not guaranteed. If you are readmitted, it must be with a new deadline for degree completion specified by your graduate program. The program may also establish additional readmission conditions such as additional coursework, a schedule for completing each outstanding degree requirement, or other appropriate terms.

~~4. **If a student is terminated from a program for exceeding the time limit on earning the degree, can the student apply for readmission to the program?**~~

~~Yes. However, readmission is not guaranteed and the faculty in the major field may set any readmission conditions on the student's resumption of work toward the degree, such as registering for additional coursework, completing the degree within a specified time period, or other appropriate terms. If the student is readmitted, the program must specify a time limit for completion.~~

**5. Is there a time limit on the length of oral examinations?**

The expected length of an oral examination may differ by program. However, examinations typically range from 1.5 to 3 hours.

**6. I successfully completed my doctoral preliminary written examination at another institution before transferring to the University. Can I use that examination to satisfy my UM graduate program's examination requirement?**

No. You must take and pass your UM graduate program's preliminary written examination.

~~6. **I took and passed my doctoral preliminary written and/or oral examination before transferring to my University graduate program. Can I use this examination to satisfy the degree requirement at the University?**~~

~~No. You must take and pass the doctoral preliminary written and/or oral examination administered by your University graduate program in order to satisfy the degree requirements.~~

**7. Can I change a committee member after my initial committee has been submitted and approved?**

Yes. Committee changes require program and collegiate approval and must be recorded by the collegiate in the system of record.

**8. Can a collegiate unit delegate responsibility for approving changes in committee membership to the program level?**

No. It is the responsibility of the collegiate unit and the program to ensure that all initial and replacement members are eligible to serve on the doctoral final oral examination committee.

9. An emergency situation has arisen with one of my prelim oral committee members. Am I allowed to identify a substitute?

Yes. Substitutions for the doctoral prelim oral examination necessitated by emergency situations should, if possible, be approved in advance. The advisor should consult with the appropriate collegiate unit staff before the start of the examination.

~~7.10. Must~~ **Is it required that my advisor represent my major field on the preliminary oral examination committee?**

~~Yes, your~~ Yes. Your advisor must be one of the three people representing your major field on the examination committee.

~~8.11. I have co-advisors. Must~~ **Do both of my co-advisors have to represent my major field on the preliminary oral examination committee?**

At least one of your advisors is required to ~~must~~ represent the major field. If you have co-advisors, one may represent the outside/minor field.

~~9.12. Why does my preliminary oral examination committee have to include an outside committee member? Who qualifies as an outside member?~~

An outside committee member is required to both ensure fairness and due process for the student in the examination and to ensure that the student is examined across the breadth of knowledge represented by the student's field of study. An outside member is typically from a ~~different~~ graduate program than the student's major field; however see the next FAQ. question #10.

~~13. I am pursuing a formal track in a graduate program that offers multiple tracks. Can a faculty member from one of my program's other tracks qualify as the required outside examiner on my committee?~~

Yes if approved by the program and collegiate unit.

~~Can a faculty member representing a formal track within a graduate program that is different from the student's track satisfy the requirement that one committee member represent a field outside of the student's major field?~~ Yes if approved by the program and collegiate unit.

~~14. Do the student and the Must~~ **committee members have to be attend physically present on campus for the preliminary oral examination in person?**

No, neither the student nor the committee members are required to attend be physically present on campus for the preliminary oral examination in person as long as ~~all of the~~ conditions required for *remote participation* ~~in the exam~~ are satisfied met.

15. Who is responsible for communicating with a student who passed the preliminary oral examination with reservations, or who failed the examination? What information should be communicated?

10. When a student passes with reservations, the committee chair must inform the student in writing of the reservations, what is needed to remove them, and the deadline for doing so. When a student fails the examination, the committee chair must inform the student in writing why the first attempt at the examination was graded “fail” and what the student needs to do to prepare for a successful retake.

16. I cannot satisfy the “oral” component of the prelim oral examination. What accommodations are available to support completion of this requirement?

Not all students can deliver their oral examination “orally”; for example, a student may need an ASL interpreter or assistive technology to satisfy the oral examination requirement. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is a resource for graduate students and graduate programs to explore formal disability-related accommodations not only for milestone examinations such as the prelim or final oral, but also coursework, program-specific exams, research/writing, teaching, and lab work.

**11.17. I am retaking my preliminary oral examination and need to replace one of my committee members due to an emergency situation. Is this allowed?**

Yes. As with other committee substitutions that are necessitated by emergency situations, the substitution should be approved in advance, ~~if possible~~ and the advisor should consult with the appropriate collegiate unit staff before the start of the examination.

**12.18. ~~Is there a requirement that~~ Must a minimum amount of time elapse between a first attempt at the doctoral preliminary oral examination and an approved retake?**

The University does not require ~~There is no University requirement that~~ a minimum amount of time ~~elapse~~ between the first and second attempts at the doctoral preliminary oral examination. ~~How~~ however, collegiate units and/or programs may set a minimum time requirement.

**19. Can a program assess a pass with reservations to a student’s preliminary written examination?**

Graduate programs decide – at a program rather than a student-specific level – whether to offer the option to pass with reservations, as well as whether/how many retakes of the preliminary written examination are allowed.

~~13. It is within the purview of the program to offer multiple attempts and/or the option to pass with reservations. Only the final outcome of the written examination is recorded in the central system of record as a pass or fail.~~

~~20. **How many S/N course credits can I apply to my degree requirements include on my degree plan?**~~

~~**Up to one-third of the course credits applied to your degree requirements can be graded S/N. Courses offered only on the S/N grading basis are not included in the one-third calculation. Courses for which you earn an N grade cannot be applied to degree requirements.**~~

~~14. A maximum of 1/3 of the courses on the degree plan may be S/N. Courses only offered S/N (that is, without the option of A/F grades) will not be counted as part of the student's permissible number of S/N registrations.~~

~~15.21. **I was given "S" grades for a course credits that I transferred from an international institution where were assigned "S" grades because an equivalent A/F grades could not be determined. Do these credits count toward the S/N limit?**~~

~~No, the international courses graded "S" transferred credits will be treated similar to credits for courses only offered S/N, and will not be included in the one-third calculation. counted toward the S/N limit on the degree plan.~~

~~16.22. **I left the University after completing my master's degree and want to come back to complete my doctoral degree in the same program. How will my time to degree be counted?**~~

~~A student who completes a master's degree in a program, leaves the University, and returns to enroll for the doctoral degree in the same program will have their time to degree clock stopped after the master's and restarted upon enrollment in the doctoral program.~~

~~23. **Can a student pursue two Ph.D. degrees at the same time?**~~

~~**Pursuing concurrent PhD degrees is not allowed. Students may pursue a second PhD after completing the first, although are generally discouraged from doing so. A second PhD is considered only under special circumstances, and only if the second PhD is in a distinctly separate graduate program. Students cannot apply milestone examinations or the dissertation completed for the first PhD to the second PhD's degree requirements.**~~

~~17. Students are not permitted to earn two Ph.D. degrees at the same time in two fields using the same program of study and dissertation. Although students are generally discouraged from doing so, special circumstances may warrant taking a second Ph.D. degree at a later date, but only when a completely separate program and dissertation are involved.~~

**18-24. I have been admitted to take graduate courses as a Graduate Professional Development (GPD) student. Do I have to register every term?**

Yes. Students admitted for GDP Graduate Professional Development status must adhere to the same registration requirements as other admitted students and must register in the fall and spring semesters. Registration during the summer is not required.

**19-25. My graduate program ~~has~~ admitted a student for Graduate Professional Development. How long can a may the GPD student remain in the program?**

For domestic students~~If the student is a domestic student~~, the graduate program determines how long the student can may continue to take courses as a GPD student. ~~Ideally, the~~ The period for which the student can register as may remain a GPD student should be clearly stated in the letter of admission.

For international students~~If the student is an international student~~, the period for which the student may remain a GPD student is in part determined by federal visa regulations and SEVIS requirements determine how long the student can take courses as a GPD student. International students admitted to GDP are given an I-20 for one year and must be admitted to a degree program if they wish to continue their advanced education at the University after that the one-year period.

**26. A student admitted for Graduate Professional Development (GPD) in my program is performing poorly and ~~the program would like we want to terminate the student~~ discontinue them at the end of the semester. Can we the program do this?**

The program can discontinue the student if expectations, as well as consequences for not meeting those expectations, were clearly communicated at the time of admission. If this information was not provided in the admission letter, the program should communicate to the student in writing its performance expectations, what is needed to satisfy them, and consequences if they are not met. If the stated expectations then are not satisfied, the program is positioned to discontinue the student.

20. Yes. ~~The program can terminate the student if clear expectations were set at the time of admission and the consequences of the student's failure to meet them were also clearly stated. If this information was not included in the letter of admission, the program should communicate performance expectations to the student in writing, along with the consequences for failure to meet them, before making a decision to terminate the student.~~

**21-27. Our program wishes to restrict the role of the advisor in the preliminary oral examination. Can we do this?**

The advisor must be a member of the preliminary oral examination committee, and all committee members are expected to participate in the examination proceedings, either in person or remotely. Committee members participating remotely must meet

~~the conditions described in the policy appendix *Required Conditions and Best Practices for Remote Participation in Graduate Examinations*. Programs, may however, define the advisor's participation more narrowly (e.g., not allowing the advisor to chair the examination).~~ Programs that choose to limit the role of the advisor in the preliminary oral examination must do so for all students in the program. Programs cannot may NOT impose such restrictions on other committee members ~~and especially not on the external member.~~

~~22-28.~~ **My program would like wants to require a higher GPA for its master's and doctoral students. Can May we impose higher GPA requirements?**

Yes. Graduate programs can may impose more stringent GPA requirements for their students. The higher GPA requirement may pertain to the overall GPA or to the degree plan coursework.

~~29.~~ **My program would like wants to require higher grades for courses applied to our degree requirements than the C- required by on the degree plan than specified by the University policy. Can May we do this?**

Yes. ~~Graduate programs may impose more stringent requirements for grades included on the student's degree plan.~~

~~23-30.~~ **Can a committee member abstain from voting in the doctoral preliminary oral examination?**

No, all committee members are required to vote.

~~24-31.~~ **My program wants would like to require its graduate students to earn higher grades for specific major-field courses, particular courses in the major. May Can we do this?**

Yes. Graduate programs may impose more stringent grading requirements for courses its students complete in the major.