

Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress

Responsible University Officer(s):

- Executive Vice President and Provost

Policy Owner(s):

- Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education

Policy contact(s):

- Karen Starry

Date Revised:

Jun 21, 2017

Effective Date:

Jul 10, 2012

Policy Statement

This policy sets minimum standards for doctoral students to maintain academic good standing and satisfactory progress in their degree programs, and establishes requirements and procedures for the administration and evaluation of doctoral written and oral preliminary examinations. Programs and collegiate units may have additional and/or more stringent requirements.

I. Requirements Upon Matriculation

- a. Students are responsible for knowing all program requirements of their doctoral program when they matriculate.
- b. Upon matriculation, programs must:
 - i. Provide each student a current graduate program handbook, specifying the program's requirements and policies governing successful degree completion.

- ii. Assign each student a temporary advisor.

II. Progress Review

a. Annual Review

- i. Programs must have a procedure to review the progress of each doctoral student at least once a year and must provide the results to the student in writing.

b. Degree Plan

- i. Doctoral students must have an approved degree plan on file with their collegiate unit prior to taking the preliminary oral exam. It is recommended that the degree plan be filed a minimum of three months prior to the exam date.
- ii. If a student intends to complete a minor, the [proposed](#) minor must be [declared on/included as part of](#) the degree plan prior to taking the preliminary oral exam.
- iii. The [approved](#) degree plan must be centrally archived in the system of record.

III. Performance Standards

- a. **Continuous Enrollment** Students are required to enroll every semester (fall and spring) from the time of matriculation until degree conferral except for cases with an approved Leave of Absence on the student's record.
- b. **Time Limit for Earning the Doctoral Degree** All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed and the degree awarded within eight calendar years after initial enrollment to the graduate program or the more restrictive time frame specified by the program.
 - i. [Students unable to complete the degree within the time limits described above may submit a Request for Extension to the Maximum Time Limit for approval by their advisor/s, program director of graduate studies, and collegiate unit for one extension of up to 24 months. The extension petition must be submitted by the student prior to the end of the term in which the time limit expires. Students who are unable to complete the degree within the time limits described above may, with the approval of their advisor/s and program DGS,](#)

~~petition the program and collegiate unit for one extension of up to 24 months. Students must submit the petition for an extension prior to the end of the term in which the time limit will expire.~~

- If a petition is approved, the student is notified in writing of the expectations for progress and of the expected timeline for completion and award of degree.
- If the petition is denied, the student is notified in writing that the student will be terminated from the doctoral program.

ii. Students may, under exceptional circumstances, file a second Request for Extension to the Maximum Time Limit for an additional extension of up to 24 months. Petitions after the initial extension must be approved by the advisor/s, program director of graduate studies, collegiate unit, and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. The extension petition must be submitted by the student prior to the end of the term in which the initial extension expires.

~~Under extraordinary circumstances, students may file a second petition for an additional extension of up to 24 months; however such petitions after the initial extension must be reviewed and approved by the student's advisor/s, program DGS, and Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. Students must submit the petition for an extension prior to the end of the term in which the initial extension will expire.~~

- a. If a petition is approved, the student is notified in writing of the expectations for progress and of the expected timeline for completion and award of degree
- b. If the petition is denied, the student is notified in writing that the student will be terminated from the doctoral program

iii. Students who have been terminated under such circumstances may apply for readmission to the program; however, readmission is not guaranteed.

- c. **Minimum Grade Requirements** To remain in good academic standing students throughout their doctoral studies must meet the minimum GPA requirement specified by the graduate program or 3.000 (on a 4.000 scale) for courses being applied toward program requirements, whichever is higher. Students who have filed a doctoral degree plan must maintain a 3.000 GPA for courses included on the degree plan. Only courses with grades of A, B, C (including C-) and S can may be counted toward the degree. Students who fall

below the program's minimum GPA requirement may be terminated from the program.

- d. **S/N grades for courses** A minimum of 2/3 of the course credits included on a degree plan must be taken A/F.

IV. Doctoral Preliminary Written and Oral Examinations

a. Every doctoral student must pass a written examination in the major field.

i. Students must be notified in writing whether or not they have passed the written examination requirement(s).

ii. Programs must record whether the student has met the written examination requirement(s) in the central system of record. Students who are reported to have failed to meet the written examination requirement(s) will be terminated from the doctoral program.

b. Every doctoral student must pass a preliminary oral examination in the major field. The preliminary oral examination is conducted as a closed examination, attended by only the student and the examining committee.

i. The oral examination may not take place before the program has certified that the candidate has passed all written examination requirement(s).

ii. The doctoral preliminary oral examination will be graded either pass, pass with reservations, or fail.

iii. If a student fails the exam, the student may retake the examination once, if all committee members, or all committee members save one, approve this option [via](#) ~~on~~ the [Preliminary Oral Exam Report for Doctoral Students](#) ~~Doctoral Preliminary Oral Examination form~~.

iv. The second attempt to pass the preliminary oral examination must use the same committee members unless an extraordinary or emergency situation necessitates a substitution.

v. If the committee does not approve a retake, or if the student fails the second attempt, the student will be terminated from the doctoral program.

c. The doctoral preliminary oral committee must consist of at least four members, including the student's advisor/s. All members assigned appointed to the committee must meet the minimum eligibility standards established by the program and college. All members of the committee and the candidate must participate in the preliminary oral examination. Committee members and/or the student may participate remotely as long as all conditions for remote participation in the examination are met.

i. At least three members (including the advisor) must be from the student's major field.

ii. At least one member must represent a field outside the major. If the student has declared a minor, the outside member, or one of the outside members, must represent the minor field.

iii. Members cannot satisfy the requirement with respect to more than one field.

d. Collegiate deans or their designated representatives at the collegiate level must verify eligibility and approve the members of the preliminary oral examination committee.

e. Changes in committee membership may be made if approved by the director of graduate studies and the collegiate unit. Changes must also be archived centrally in the system of record.

f. Voting Requirements for the dDoctoral pPreliminary oOral eExamination:
i. At the end of the closed examination, the candidate is excused ~~from the room~~ and an independent, non-binding vote is taken before discussion of the examination begins. This initial non-binding vote is intended to represent the independent assessment of each committee member of the student's performance free from undue influence of other committee

members. Following discussion, a final vote is taken and is recorded [via the Preliminary Oral Exam Report for Doctoral Students on the examination form](#).

- ii. The outcome of the preliminary oral examination is recorded in one of three ways: pass, pass with reservations, or fail. The voting proportions necessary to pass the exam are shown in the table below:

Number of committee members	<i>Minimum</i> number of votes needed to pass (A vote to pass with reservations constitutes a passing vote)*
Four	Three
Five	Four

Six	Four
Seven	Five

- iii. *The outcome is recorded as “pass with reservations” in situations where to achieve the *minimum* number of votes to reach a verdict of pass, any vote of pass with reservations is included. For example, on a four-person committee, if there is one “pass with reservations” vote and three pass votes, the result is pass. If there is one “pass with reservations” vote, one fail, and two pass votes, the result is pass with reservations.
- g. Students who do not earn the minimum number of passing votes fail the examination. *A vote to pass the student with reservations still constitutes a passing vote.*

Exceptions

Programs with a distinctive student population or approved joint-degree programs may request a program-wide exception to the eight-year time limit for earning the doctoral degree.

Doctoral programs with approved degree performance standards and progress requirements that do not require preliminary written and oral examinations are exempt from IV.

This policy does not apply to the J.D., M.D., Pharm.D., D.V.M., D.D.S, L.L.M. degrees.

Effective Date

This policy applies to all students admitted after January 1, 2013. Students who matriculated before January 1, 2013 [and maintained active student status since that time](#) may choose to continue under the policies in effect when they initially matriculated in their graduate program.

Reason for Policy




This policy creates the framework for communications to students about degree requirements and degree progress expectations; sets minimum standards for satisfactory progress in doctoral programs; establishes standards and procedures for administering and grading doctoral written and oral preliminary examinations. This policy establishes uniform procedures for doctoral preliminary examinations.

The policy also assists the student and advisor in planning for timely completion of program requirements [and](#), provides timely evaluations to students as they proceed through program; alerts student and advisors to problems, and provides the opportunity to develop best approaches for addressing those problems; and creates a clear record in cases where a program decides to terminate [a](#) student from the doctoral program.

Procedures

- *Canceling or Recessing the Doctoral Preliminary and/or Master's or Doctoral Final Oral Examination*

Forms/Instructions

- *UM 1776 - Doctoral Degree: Program-Wide Exception to the Maximum Time Limit*
 [um1776.docx](#)
- *UM 1777 - Doctoral Degree: Request for Extension to the Maximum Time Limit* 
- [OTR 198 - Graduate Degree Plan](#) 
- [Chair Instructions for the Preliminary Oral Examination](#)
- [GPAS Planner submission instructions - Students](#)
- [GPAS Planner reviewing and approving instructions - Faculty and Staff](#)

Appendices

- *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*
- *Annual Graduate Student Reviews: Guidelines*
- *Graduate Program Student Handbook: Guidelines*
- *Mutual Roles and Responsibilities for Faculty and Graduate Students: Guidelines*
- *Required Conditions and Best Practices for Remote Participation in Graduate Examinations*
- *Responsible Conduct of Research and Ethical Teaching and Scholarship*
- *Typical Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Graduate Studies*

Frequently Asked Questions

- *FAQ: Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress*

Contacts

Subject	Contact	Phone	Email
Primary Contact(s)	<i>Karen Starry</i>	612-625-2815	<i>starry@umn.edu</i>
University of Minnesota - Duluth	Erik Brown	218-726-8891	<i>etbrown@umn.edu</i>
University of Minnesota Rochester	<i>Jeffrey Ratliff-Crain</i>	507-258-8006	<i>ratliffj@r.umn.edu</i>

Definitions

Good standing/good academic standing

Students remain in good standing if they: (a) make timely progress towards degree completion as required by the program and by this policy; (b) maintain a GPA at or above the minimum set by the program and by this policy; and (c) pass all appropriate examinations within the time frame specified by the program.

Responsibilities

Collegiate Units

- Ensure appropriate review of coursework on the degree plan (including any subsequent changes to an approved degree plan).
- Approve [and archive](#) committee membership (including any subsequent changes to an approved committee).
- Approve the specific procedures used by programs for administering and evaluating ~~the~~ doctoral preliminary [written and oral](#) ~~and final~~ examinations.
- Review and approve program-wide requests for exceptions to the time limit for completing the doctoral degree.
- Review and approve student requests for extensions to the time limit for completing the doctoral degree.

Departments/Programs

- Clearly state the program requirements for maintaining [academic](#) good standing in the [gGraduate student Program hHandbook](#), even if they are identical to the requirements in this policy.
- Ensure that the graduate student handbook is available in accessible formats.
- Provide students with materials related to their annual review in an accessible and documentable format.
- Establish procedures to review all doctoral students at least once a year and provide the results in writing to the students.
- Review and approve the coursework on the student's degree plan (including any subsequent changes to an approved degree plan).
- Review and approve committee membership (including any subsequent changes to an approved committee); route program-approved requests to the collegiate unit for approval.
- Establish and publicize program-specific standards and processes for the preliminary written examination.
- Notify students in writing regarding the outcome of the preliminary written examination.

- The [director of graduate studies DGS](#) is responsible for ensuring that each doctoral student receives training appropriate to the discipline in the responsible conduct of research and ethical teaching and scholarship.
- Review and approve requests for extensions to the time limit for completing the doctoral degree; notify students in writing of the decision and subsequent actions (i.e., expectations for progress and for the month/year of degree conferral or termination from the program upon expiration of the limit).

Students

- ~~Must k~~Know all program requirements [when matriculated upon matriculation](#).
- ~~If program requirements change, students M~~ay elect to continue under the requirements in effect when they matriculated, provided they have remained in good standing, [if program requirements change](#).
- ~~Must e~~Obtain the required approvals and file the degree plan with the program and collegiate unit.
- ~~Must i~~Initiate the request for an extension to the maximum time limit for completing the doctoral degree, obtain the approval of their advisor/s and program DGS, and submit their request by the deadline.

Related Information

- Administrative Policy: *Admission for Master's and Doctoral Degrees*
- Administrative Policy: *Eligibility to Serve on Graduate Examination Committees*
- Administrative Policy: *Doctoral Degree: Completion*
- Administrative Policy: *Leave of Absence and Reinstatement from a Leave: Graduate Students*
- Administrative Policy: *Readmission or Changes to Master's or Doctoral Degree Objectives*

History

Amended:

June 2017 - Comprehensive Review, Minor Revision. 1) Rewrote introduction to clarify the goal of the policy and distinguish from unrelated policies, 2) Added Leave of Absence language, 3) Clarified language related to conditions that necessarily result in discontinuation from program, 3) Clarified language regarding grading requirements for preliminary examination, removing pass with reservations when recording the final result of the prelim exam, 4) moved language on voting requirements for the prelim from an appendix to the body of the policy. Changes in policy respond to need for greater clarity on policy intent on the part of affected constituencies and enhanced consistency in policy implementation across programs.

Effective:

July 2012 - New Policy, Comprehensive Review. 1. Changes the beginning and ending points for calculating time to degree. Time is currently measured from the conclusion of the oral prelims, to defense of the thesis. This policy measures time to degree from enrollment in the doctoral program to the point at which the degree is awarded. 2. Establishes a minimum GPA for students to remain in good standing (3.0 for doctoral students.) 3. Extends applicability of policy requirements to programs not formerly under the aegis of the Graduate School.