

## Doctoral Timeline and Checklist

### 25 (Giant) Steps to Completing a Doctoral Degree

Inch by Inch, a doctorate is a cinch—Yard by yard, it's very hard.  
(Time Frames Will Vary by Program)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Concentration: \_\_\_\_\_

#### First Year

- 1. Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC).** [The Doctoral Advisory Committee Appointment Form](#) (should be submitted before the student has completed 18 credit hours of coursework). Once the DAC is in place, discussion should begin regarding the student's research interests if it has not begun already. Any subsequent changes in the advisory/dissertation committee must be submitted to The Graduate School for approval.
- 2. Plan of Study (POS).** The first draft of the [Plan of Study](#) should be submitted with the Doctoral Advisory Committee Appointment Form before the student has completed 18 credit hours of coursework.
- 3. Complete** any diagnostic/qualifying examinations that may be required by the program.

#### Second Year/Third Year

- 4. Complete** any language requirement (if required in your program).
- 5. Satisfy** the residence requirement (for residential programs), if not already completed.
- 6. Complete** all course requirements in the student's approved program of study.
- 7. File a [Revised Plan of Study](#)** if needed.
- 8. Become familiar with the [Guide to Theses and Dissertations](#).** Avoid the formatting crunch and inevitable anxiety by register for and completing the Canvas Course on formatting, attending the Graduate School formatting workshops, or making an early appointment with our formatting expert. I highly recommend requiring students to complete all written work for classes and the Dissertation Proposal to adhere to the Guide's standards.



- 9. Ensure** you have a faculty mentor assigned as your dissertation committee chair who is qualified to guide your dissertation research. File [Committee Revision Form](#) if needed. The signature of the Department Head confirms that the faculty member designated as chair is qualified to guide the topic and the process.
- 10. Schedule Doctoral Preliminary Exams.** May be held upon completion of **75% of required course-work.**
- 11. Doctoral Preliminary Exams.** The written and the oral preliminary examinations together constitute a comprehensive examination of the student's command of the field. The examination is preliminary in that you must pass both the written and oral portions before being officially admitted to candidacy for the degree by the Graduate School.

The overarching purposes of the preliminary exam are to:

- assess the extent and currency of the candidate's knowledge in a manner that is as comprehensive and searching as the best practices of that field require;
  - test the candidate's knowledge of any transferred courses;
  - discover any weaknesses in the candidate's knowledge that need to be remedied by additional courses or other instruction; and
  - determine the candidate's competency to continue work toward the doctorate.
- 12.** Satisfactory completion of the preliminary written and oral examination and any additional work that may be required as a result of this examination. [Results of Doctoral Preliminary Exams Form](#)
  - 13. Satisfactory Defense of the Dissertation Proposal.** The purpose of this exam is for students to demonstrate depth of understanding of the research topic, ability to perform independent work, have the requisite technical writing skills, and is able to synthesize material from courses and self-study into a plausible, testable hypothesis. The proposal should state the goals and aims of the dissertation research, justify the research, and provide a detailed plan to carry out the objectives of the research. Proposals should be treated like contracts. When you sign off on a proposal, you are giving up some of your rights to object later on. Done properly, a good proposal protects you and your students from remarks like, *I thought you were going to do X*, or *I'd like you to delve into nostalgia theory because your research revealed X*, or my personal favorite, *where's the originality in that?*
  - 14.** An approved dissertation topic, to be filed in The Graduate School. [Dissertation Topic Approval Form.](#)
  - 15. File the [Dissertations with Multiple Authors Form](#)** if necessary. This information should be included as part of the written dissertation proposal.

- 16. File Final Plan of Study.** Be sure the final POS exactly matches your transcript. [Doctoral Plan of Study Revision Form](#). Be strategic with planning out 799 registration. Doctoral candidates are considered full-time with 3-credits of registration for 799. Once the credits required for the degree are completed, students must register for 9 credits of extension to be considered full-time. (Half-time enrollment is necessary to be considered for Financial Aid.)
  
- 17.** Admission to candidacy upon the satisfaction of the above requirements. File an [Application for Admission to Candidacy](#) with the Graduate School. Doctoral education should focus more on the creation of new knowledge and less of acquisition of content. Therefore, students should be encouraged to advance to candidacy as soon as appropriate for the discipline.

#### Fourth/Fifth Year

- 18. Application for Graduation.** This application is always due by the end of the first week of classes of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. Students should visit the Graduate School website to view all pertinent information regarding graduation, and to file the [Graduation Application Form](#).
  
- 19. Dissertation Document.** In order to provide adequate time for committee input and revisions, students must submit a complete draft of the dissertation document to the Doctoral Advisory Committee chair no later than the end of the first week of classes in the semester you plan to graduate. Students should expect multiple revisions before the document is sent out for Doctoral Advisory Committee review. The Defense Draft must be sent to the rest of the DAC *no fewer than three weeks prior to the scheduled defense*. Students who fail to meet either of these deadlines will not be allowed to defend the doctoral document in that semester.
  
- 20. Schedule the Final Oral Exam.** Upon submission of the completed first draft, the student, in consultation with the DAC, will schedule the final oral exam. It is required that all final oral examinations include a public component. Therefore, AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR to the final oral exam date, you MUST submit the [Final Oral Examination Schedule Form](#) and Dissertation Abstract to the Graduate School for inclusion on the defense calendar. This will be strictly enforced! Please check the Graduate School Calendar for the FINAL day for Final Oral Exam completion. For guidance preparing the Abstract, please consult the [Guide for the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations](#).



- 21. Final Oral Exam.** The doctoral candidate who has successfully completed all other requirements for the degree must defend the dissertation orally. At least two weeks prior, the Graduate School will publish the dissertation title and date, time and location of the final oral exam. The exam is open to the public. **\*NOTE:** On the day of the exam, the student must fill out and submit the [Results of the Oral Examination in Defense of Thesis/Dissertation Form](#) to his or her committee chair, who will sign it and submit it to the Graduate School following the exam.
  
- 22. File one *signed approval copy of dissertation.*\*\*** The process for submitting the approval copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School has two components: submitting the signed approval and title pages, and electronically submitting the document. [https://grs.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Guide\\_Thesis-Dissertation.pdf](https://grs.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Guide_Thesis-Dissertation.pdf)
  
- 23. File a Final [Dissertations with Multiple Authors Form](#)** if there were changes from the proposal.
  
- 24. File FINAL copy of dissertation with the Graduate School.\*\*** After completing the formatting revisions requested by the Graduate School, submit the FINAL electronic copy of the dissertation.
  
- 25. Attend your doctoral hooding ceremony.** There, you may thank and celebrate with your committee members and dissertation mentor.

**\*\* You will need to be very DILIGENT, as deadlines pertaining to the dissertation document change each semester. You may access these deadlines and others by viewing the Academic Calendar (<https://grs.uncg.edu/calendar/>) on the Graduate School or Registrar's websites.**

**Students are Responsible for Meeting All Deadlines!**