Comprehensive Examination

Considerable autonomy is granted to the academic unit in the design, administration, and evaluation of the doctoral comprehensive examination for a Ph.D. student. However, the student must be in regular status and registered for at least one credit of 691 Doctoral Comprehensive Examination during the semester or term of the first attempt at the comprehensive examination, and the examination must be administered in time to process and submit the grade when grade reports are due in the Office of the Registrar. If the student passes the comprehensive examination, a grade of pass (P) is submitted for the 691 credit(s). If the student fails the comprehensive examination, then the academic unit responsible for the program follows the procedure described in Failure of the Comprehensive Examination (below).

Failure of the Comprehensive Examination

Failure of the comprehensive examination (any attempt by a Ph.D. student) is documented by submission of a Report of Failure of a Comprehensive Examination form to the Graduate College and by submitting the appropriate grade for 691 Doctoral Comprehensive Examination as described in this section. A comprehensive examination that is failed on the first attempt can be repeated once, but only if a second attempt is requested by the student and approved by the academic unit responsible for the program. The request by the student for a second attempt must be in writing to the head of the academic unit and must be made within five working days after the student is notified of his or her failure. If a second attempt is not requested by the student, or if a request is made by the student but not approved by the academic unit, then a grade of (F) is assigned to the 691 credit(s) and the student is dismissed from the program by the Graduate College. If the student’s request is approved by the academic unit, then the second attempt must occur within twelve months after the first attempt, and an incomplete grade (I) is assigned to the 691 credit(s) until the result of the second attempt is known. If the student does not make a second attempt within twelve months after the first attempt, or if the student fails the second attempt, then a grade of (F) is assigned to the 691 credit(s) and the student is dismissed from the program by the Graduate College. Any extension of the twelve-month limit on the second attempt must be approved by the academic unit and by the Dean of the Graduate College.

Dissertation

Original research carried out by a student at the doctoral level is documented by a dissertation. A dissertation is characterized by a clearly stated proposition or hypothesis that is investigated using analysis and synthesis of data or other scholarly evidence. The dissertation must demonstrate mastery of the relevant literature and the ability of the student to independently and successfully address a substantial intellectual problem with concepts and methods that are accepted in the major field of study.

Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal must be approved in advance of the dissertation research by the supervisory committee. The dissertation proposal presents the background, objectives, scope, methods and time lines of the dissertation research. Substantive work done by the student prior to the appointment of the supervisory committee or work represented by credit other than 693 Dissertation (such as 596 Independent Study and 696 Directed Research) is not acceptable for the dissertation under any conditions.

Registration for Dissertation Credit

A Ph.D. student must register for at least one credit of 693 Dissertation in any semester or session in which the student is engaged in dissertation activity, including the semester or session of the final oral examination, regardless of the number of 693 Dissertation credits already accumulated by the student. The student cannot undertake the final oral examination unless enough 693 Dissertation credit has been accumulated to meet the degree requirement for such credit. The student is not required to register for 693 Dissertation credit in the semester or session subsequent to the semester or session in which the Graduate College receives the format review copy of the dissertation and the Final Reading Approval pages signed by the chair of the supervisory committee (or designee). The student must submit the format review copy and the signed Final Reading Approval pages to the Graduate College no later than the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session. Failure to meet this deadline will require the student to register for at least one credit of 693 Dissertation in the subsequent semester or session.

Dissertation Grading

All 693 Dissertation credits are graded in-progress (IP) until a final grade of either pass (P) or fail (F) is assigned by the academic unit responsible for the program. A grade of pass (P) is assigned to all 693 credits if the final oral examination is passed, and a grade of fail (F) is assigned to all 693 credits if the student fails the final oral examination. See Final Oral Examination and Failure of the Final Oral Examination (below).

Final Dissertation Approvals and Procedures

It is important for the student to keep in mind that a grade of pass (P) in all 693 credits is not sufficient to satisfy the dissertation requirement for a Ph.D. degree and does not clear a student for graduation. A dissertation that has been successfully defended by the student at the final oral examination must also be granted final reading approval by the major advisor (chair of the supervisory committee), and must pass the format review of the Graduate College. The dissertation in final form must also be approved by the Dean of the Graduate College, and because the dissertation is expected to be available to other scholars and to the general public, the entire dissertation must be archived and made publicly accessible. Please refer to Theses and Dissertations in the Graduate Academic Regulations section of this catalog.

Final Oral Examination

The final oral examination for a Ph.D. student (also called a defense) must consist of three sequential parts in which the student presents and defends the dissertation research: 1) a public presentation, 2) a public question and answer session, and 3) a private question and answer session with a committee of experts known as the defense committee. The final oral examination should occur no later than the date specified in the academic calendar; this date is set to allow time for final revision and processing of the dissertation so that a student who passes the final oral examination has a reasonable chance for graduation in the same semester or session. Announcement of the public presentation to the university community is required and should precede the presentation by at least two weeks.

The defense committee must include the entire supervisory committee plus a nonvoting graduate faculty representative (GFR) appointed by the Dean of the Graduate College. The GFR must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and a member of an academic unit not represented on the supervisory committee. The GFR conducts