

# **Guide to Doctoral Study in Special Education**

Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies  
The University of Arizona  
Tucson, AZ 85721  
<https://coe.arizona.edu/dps>

## The DPS GRADUATE OFFICE

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Our staff Program Coordinators also serve as Graduate Coordinators. Ask your academic advisor to direct you to the appropriate staff person for your program.

At the following link you can learn more about the roles of each member of our DPS Graduate Office. (<https://grad.arizona.edu/about/roles-and-responsibilities>)

### IMPORTANT RESOURCES

The graduate college maintains a highly useful page for new and current graduate students. <https://grad.arizona.edu/new-and-current-students>

The information provided at the above link includes:

- Academic Services, Policies and Procedures
- Funding Your Education
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Child Care Subsidies and Family Friendly Information
- Health, Wellness and Safety
- Other UArizona Resources and Information

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## A GUIDE TO DOCTORAL STUDY

Welcome to doctoral study in the Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies (DPS) at the University of Arizona. We are pleased to have you as part of our department and look forward to guiding and working with you as you pursue your doctorate. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information about the department and the Graduate College's processes, procedures, and forms you will use as you work toward your doctoral degree. To orient you, the following provides some background about the Department and its mission:

### **Brief History**

The Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies (DPS) was first identified as a separate departmental unit in 1955 when the College of Education recognized the need to prepare teachers with the specialized knowledge and competence needed to teach to the unique needs of students with exceptionalities through establishing a Department of Special Education. In 1962, the College recognized the need and established another new department, the Department of Rehabilitation, to develop academic programs that would prepare rehabilitation counselors to meet the needs of youth and adults with disabilities.

During 1987, the College of Education reorganized and the Departments of Special Education and Rehabilitation were combined; joint programs of study at the bachelors, masters, and doctoral degree levels were developed. In the Fall Semester of 1995, academic offerings and faculty

in School Psychology joined the Department, which was later named the Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and School Psychology.

In 2009, the Department was renamed the Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies (DPS). Through the integration of these specialties into one department, DPS is uniquely positioned nationally to attract research, personnel preparation, and model development funding. It is recognized as one of few programs in the United States that prepares special education teachers, rehabilitation specialists, school psychologists, school counselors, administrators, researchers, and university faculty with expertise in all areas of exceptionality among children and adults, including those with disabilities and giftedness.

### **Land Grant Mission**

The goal of the University of Arizona as a land grant institution is to improve the quality of life for the people of Arizona and the nation. Evolving from this is the mission of DPS: to advance human and economic development through the empowerment and effective inclusion of culturally diverse individuals with disabilities across the life span. The overall uniqueness of the Department relates to its mission, and the department's teaching, research, and service reflect excellence in the pursuit of that mission. Professionals throughout this and many other countries recognize the quality of DPS and graduates readily refer students because of the Department's international reputation.

Our mission is accomplished by research and development activities that advance the knowledge and understanding of disabilities and special abilities and the systems serving those individuals; preparation of personnel to educate and facilitate the development of abilities and of individuals within global communities; and application and dissemination including technical assistance to educational and other human service agencies. The department's research, teaching, and service activities address the needs of individuals and families who have physical and mental disabilities and special abilities in Arizona, the United States, and other developed and developing countries.

### **What is the Graduate College?**

While pursuing your degree, you are a student of the Graduate College at The University of Arizona. This can be confusing because your major is in special education, which is your professional discipline. However, all graduate students at the University of Arizona are administratively organized under the Graduate College. This administrative unit, located in the Administration Building, establishes policies and standards for the completion of graduate degrees. They need to receive verification of your comprehensive exams and your dissertation progress. Early in your program, you will submit a Plan of Study through GradPath so that there will be a record of your plan for completing the required coursework for your degree.

### **Using This Guide**

We are glad that you are joining us for your doctoral study and look forward to working with you as we pursue the mission of DPS. As you will see, the process of obtaining your doctoral degree includes a number of steps, and you will be in touch with many individuals and units within the University. This Guide has been developed to clarify the process and answer many of the questions you might have. It is not meant to be all inclusive; there are questions and procedures that you will need to address with your major advisor and/or committee, particularly those related to the content

of your program. Other doctoral students can also provide invaluable information and support. This Guide provides an initial resource for understanding the overall process.

The process of doctoral study is usually an individual process that depends upon your background and goals. There are, however, a number of steps all doctoral students in DPS complete. This manual describes the following steps in the process as they relate to our department.

- Doctoral advisor and committee
- Qualifying exam
- Doctoral Plan of Study
- Program portfolio
- Progressing toward the degree
- Comprehensive Examination
- Dissertation proposal
- Advancement to Candidacy
- Oral defense and final submission of dissertation

The Graduate College timelines and deadlines for these steps are available at the following link.

<https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/degree-requirements/important-degree-dates-and-deadlines>

## DOCTORAL ADVISOR AND COMMITTEE

Faculty members fulfill many important roles for PhD students. This includes academic and research advisement, as well as modeling the roles, values, and skills needed for professional practice. Throughout your doctoral studies you will have a faculty advisor and committee to guide and support you and to serve as your examination committee as you complete the Qualifying Examination, the Comprehensive Examination, and the Oral Dissertation Defense.

### Advisor (Dissertation Chair)

As a new doctoral student, you are assigned an initial advisor prior to your entry to the program whose function is to guide you through the Qualification Exam. This includes selecting an initial committee. This approach allows you to work with various faculty members before deciding on a permanent advisor and committee. This initial advisor assignment represents temporary matching of students and faculty members. Students often retain the same advisor throughout their time in the program; however, students are free to select a new advisor at their own discretion at any point during their program of study. When selecting an advisor, students should consider a faculty member whose research, practice, and professional goals closely align with their own.

### Committee Members

The Graduate College requires a minimum of three members, all of whom must be current University of Arizona faculty members that are tenured, tenure-track, or approved as tenure equivalent. Two of the three faculty members on your dissertation committee *must be full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members in the Special Education Program*. One of these two special education faculty members *must be the chair or co-chair of the dissertation committee*. One of the three faculty members *can be*

non-tenure eligible faculty or external committee members who are important in supporting your goals. In consultation with their advisor/chair, you will identify committee members based on their expertise.

### **Making Changes**

The relationship between you and your advisor/committee is one of mutual agreement. Your advisor and members of your committee can change across your doctoral studies. It is not unusual for changes to occur after the Qualifying Exam and the Comprehensive Examination. If you are considering changing your advisor or committee members, you are responsible for scheduling a meeting with the new prospective faculty member to discuss this change in advance. If the new prospective advisor or committee member and student agree to the change, the student will then notify their initial advisor or committee member.

Every graduate student committee and any changes must be reported and approved on the relevant form in GradPath. If necessary, you will also have to submit the *Request to Approve Special Member Graduate Committees Form*. The form is necessary *only* if a committee member has not yet received approval from the Graduate College to serve on doctoral committees.

## **QUALIFYING EXAMINATION**

### **What is the Qualifying Exam?**

The Qualifying Exam is to be held during the first year of course work (and after the first 12 units are completed) or, at the latest, at the beginning of the third semester. During the exam, the committee will decide if you are qualified to continue in the program and agree upon your Plan of Study. The examination consists of a brief student presentation related to a major paper, and a question/answer discussion with the committee members. There is no required length of time, however a 2 hour Qualifying Exam is customary in DPS. Following the determination of the student's qualification, the student and committee members will review the student's Plan of Study and proposed Program Portfolio.

### **Preparing for the Qualifying Exam**

**Portfolio.** For the Qualifying Exam, students should prepare a virtual portfolio for the committee members that includes:

- Date, time, location of exam and list of committee members
- Statement of student goals
- Current vita
- Scholarly paper (APA style) on a relevant topic
- Proposed plan of study. This consists of a list of courses completed and to be completed grouped by major and minor areas of study. The semester the course was completed or is proposed to be completed should be listed. Students work with their advisor and other committee members to develop the program of study.
- Program portfolio. The student will prepare a list of the products that will be completed during the time the student is taking courses. Instructions for preparation of the portfolio are provided on page 9 of this manual.

**Arranging the Exam.** To arrange for the Qualifying Exam, establish an agreeable date and time with the Committee members. Please contact your Graduate Coordinator (through your advisor) to reserve a room with a 2-hour block. If a room is not available through the Department, contact Christy Bustillos-Rodriguez ([cbrodriguez@arizona.edu](mailto:cbrodriguez@arizona.edu)) in the Dean's Office to reserve a room in the College. When you have arranged for the meeting, use the UAccess portal to update your information in GradPath with the committee members, the date, and the time for the exam.

Send a reminder email to the committee members with the date, time, and place of the exam. On the day of the exam, your advisor should pick up your file and the *Report on the Doctoral Qualifying Exam* form (Appendix C) from the Graduate Coordinator and take them to the exam. After the exam, your advisor should return the file and signed form to the Graduate Coordinator.

### **During the Meeting**

During the meeting, you and your committee members will discuss your professional background, your paper, and your future plans. Through questioning, the committee will explore your knowledge of the field to determine your current knowledge and to assist in planning your program of study. If the committee approves your continuation, they will review and negotiate the Plan of Study that you prepared for the exam. The Plan of Study is discussed in further detail in other sections of this handbook.

### **Retaking the Exam**

If you fail the Qualifying Examination, you may be allowed one more opportunity to take it at the discretion of the committee. The reexamination may not be taken during the same semester but must be taken within one calendar year.

## **DOCTORAL PLAN OF STUDY**

### **Program Mission**

The Special Education Doctoral Program is aimed at preparing leaders in special education who will influence the community and the field through innovation and creativity. The program will prepare individuals who a) are committed to equity and justice rooted in socially responsible and ethical practices, b) possess advanced research skills, and c) can research, critically examine, and develop, special education policy, administration, and practice. Our goal is that graduates of the program will advance equity and justice for children with disabilities in the field of special education.

Students in the program will develop knowledge and skills in four core areas:

- **Core 1: Culturally Sustaining Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education**  
Students will gain an understanding of evidence-based practice in special education, issues of equity and justice, and the impact of race, culture, and language. Students will apply their knowledge to real-world situations.
- **Core 2: Research Methods**  
Students will understand research design, quantitative research (e.g., statistical methods), and

qualitative research methods. They will apply these research skills in conducting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting their own research project.

- **Core 3: Personnel Preparation**

Determined in collaboration with the major advisor, students will engage in effective teaching within teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education and/or service in preK-12+ schools. They will understand teaching methods, program coordination, school collaboration, and issues related to service delivery in preK-12+ schools.

- **Core 4: Professional Knowledge and Career Skills**

Students will gain skills in professional leadership development, survival skills, ethics, professional writing, and grant writing. They will apply these skills in various contexts, such as job searches and professional presentations.

## Coursework

In consultation with the major advisor, you should prepare a list of the courses to be taken to fulfill the doctoral degree. This Plan of Study should be provided to and approved by the committee at the Qualifying Examination. Occasionally, changes in courses might be necessary due to course availability or relevance, but the written Plan of Study represents your working program plan. Once approved by the committee, you will need to input your committee-approved Plan of Study online for University approval. This should be done through GradPath on UAccess: <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/gradpath>

The Doctoral Plan of Study should include a minimum of 75 credit hours, 18 of which are dissertation credits. Dissertation credits cannot be taken until you have successfully passed your Comprehensive Exam. Generally, some hours from your master's degree credits can be included if they meet program requirements for the Ph.D. At least 18 credits must be completed at the post-master's level. This is determined in conjunction with your advisor and committee.

Below is the required coursework for the Ph.D. degree. If you are pursuing an Ed.D. degree, see your advisor for modifications. For course descriptions, please refer to the University of Arizona course catalog. Note that SERP 595D, Evidence-Based Practice in Special Education, should be taken as early in the program as possible, preferably in the first semester of study.

## Major Area Courses

### Core 1: Culturally Sustaining Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education (12 credits)

- SERP 595D Evidence-Based Practice in Special Education (3)
- SERP 603 Equity and Justice in Special Education (3)
- SERP 604 Race, Culture, and Language in Special Education (3)
- SERP 605 Leadership, Policy, and Administration in Special Education (3)

### Core 2: Research Methods (38-41 credits)

- SERP 590 Single Case Research Design (3)
- EDP 541 Statistical Methods in Education (4)
- EDP 641 Selected Applications of Statistical Methods (4)



TLS 605 Qualitative Research Methods in Education (3)  
 EDP 667 Research Design and Techniques (3)  
 SERP 900 Research Experience Before Dissertation (3-6)  
 SERP 920 Dissertation (18; 9 per semester)

### **Core 3: Personnel Preparation (1-15 credits)**

SERP 791 Preceptorship - College Teaching/Student Supervision (1-6)  
 SERP 693 Internship/Externship (1-9)

### **Core 4: Professional Knowledge and Career Skills (9 credits)**

HSD 649 Survival Skills and Ethics (3)  
 SERP 695E Grant Writing (3)  
 SERP 695M Professional Writing (3)

### **Minor Area Courses**

All students will have a minor area of study that supports the focus of their main area of study. Identify a minor area of study either in a related discipline or as a specialty area within special education. A minimum of 9 credits of coursework are required for the minor. The content of the minor will be agreed upon by the committee, usually during the oral Qualifying Exam meeting. The minor committee members will determine the number of credits.

## **PROGRAM PORTFOLIO**

Portfolio activities and the expectations for each activity will be determined in consultation with the major advisor and approved by the committee at the Qualifying Examination. The student will complete the selected activities and save the products/evidence of completion in an electronic portfolio (e.g., website). Products/ evidence of completion will be reviewed annually by the student's advisor.

### **Portfolio Activities**

**Required Activities:** Each student must complete each of the following activities during their program including the products/evidence of completion in their portfolio.

- Initiate or assist with committee-approved research before the dissertation, including developing, collecting, and/or analyzing data
- Write and submit a minimum of two scholarly paper for publication (e.g., research, position, practitioner, theoretical, literature review, book review). We encourage first authorship on at least one.
- Submit and present a minimum of two scholarly presentations at state, national, of international conferences. Must be first author on at least one.
- Write a grant proposal for funding a personnel preparation, research, or service project (submission not required)
- Teach or assist with teaching a university course

- Develop a professional curriculum vitae

**Additional Activities:** Each student must complete at least three of the following and include the products/evidence of completion in their portfolio.

- Write and submit a third scholarly paper or review.
- Plan and conduct in-service training programs/workshop relevant to program
- Conduct a community or school-based project relevant to program
- Develop a multimedia product for teaching (e.g., web-based course)
- Complete an internship (e.g., teacher licensure supervision) or externship relevant to program
- Participate in a service activity related to program, department, college, and/or university operations
- Complete any other activity approved by committee

## PROGRESSING TOWARD THE DEGREE

The following policies are important in promoting and maintaining your continuous progress toward the doctoral degree.

### Continuous Registration

You must be continuously registered at the University (Fall and Spring) or you will be required to apply for readmission. Doctoral students are required to register for at least 1 unit each Fall and Spring, until all coursework, comprehensive exams and the required 18 dissertation units have been completed. Non-credit courses do not count towards continuous enrollment. International students may have different requirements to maintain their visa status. Graduate students who have maintained continuous enrollment and are only taking comprehensive exams during summer or winter term do not have to register for graduate credit during that summer or winter term. However, if you need library privileges, plan to use university facilities, or need significant time from your faculty during summer or winter, enrollment is required. (<https://grad.arizona.edu/policies/enrollment-policies/continuous-enrollment>)

### Leave of Absence

A student may request a Leave of Absence (medical or non-medical) for up to one year. The Leave of Absence does not automatically extend your official time to degree. You will need to file a Graduate Petition for Program Extension. Students on a Leave of Absence are not enrolled in classes, may not hold an Assistantship and may not receive grant related funding. You are not eligible for paid Parental Leave during a Leave of Absence. However, if you are a Graduate Assistant you can apply for a paid Parental Leave instead of a Leave of Absence. (<https://grad.arizona.edu/funding/gaships/ga-parental-leave-policy>)

### Graduate Petition for Program Extension

If your degree is not completed within 5 years of passing the comprehensive examination, you will be required to re-take your exams. You must also file a petition with the Graduate College

for an extension of time. Reach out to your advisor and the department Graduate Coordinator for assistance in filing this petition and planning the completion of your degree.

### **Yearly Progress Report**

In the spring of each year your advisor will ask you to complete a “yearly progress report”. A committee of program faculty will review your progress and send you feedback/suggestions.

## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

The comprehensive examination is a required element of all doctoral degrees at the University of Arizona. The purpose is to evaluate the student’s comprehensive knowledge (depth and breadth) in the major and minor subjects. The examination should not be taken until you have completed all or nearly all your coursework. You must be in good academic standing to sit for the comprehensive exam. Once you pass the comprehensive examination, you will advance to the status of *doctoral candidate*.

The Special Education PhD program has a comprehensive examination that consists of three parts.

- Portfolio review and scoring by major area faculty
- Examination or paper as required by minor area
- Oral presentation of portfolio products and accomplishments

### **Comprehensive Exam Committee**

Graduate College policy requires that the comprehensive exam committee must include at least four faculty who are approved by the Graduate College as “Graduate Faculty”. The committee should include your major advisor and additional members that represent the major and minor. A fifth member who does not meet this standard must have approval from the Graduate College as a “special member.” If there is any question about the validity of the planned committee, check with the Graduate College prior to the written and oral comprehensive exams.

### **Portfolio Review**

The Special Education PhD requires students to engage in activities that become part of a portfolio. When all portfolio activities have been completed and you are in the last semester of courses, you should create an online collection of your portfolio documents. Your committee members will review your online portfolio and score the materials according to a rubric. Major area faculty will submit their completed rubrics to the advisor, who will score the reviews and determine whether you have passed the portfolio review and minor requirements. When you have passed, you can schedule the oral presentation portion of the comprehensive exam.

### **Minor Exam**

The minor area may require a paper or examination, and you must fulfill this requirement as required by the minor department before applying for the Oral Comprehensive examination.

### **Oral Presentation of Portfolio**

**Schedule Your Presentation.** Following committee approval of the portfolio products and the minor exam, contact committee members to schedule the oral exam. Three hours should be scheduled, although most examinations do not require that much time.

**Submit GradPath Form.** Prior to taking the Oral Comprehensive Exam, you should submit the Grad Path form “Results of the Oral Comprehensive Examination”.

**During the Comprehensive Exam.** The following rules are in place to promote the quality and fairness of the exam.

- The Oral Comprehensive Exam is not open to the public. You may not have observers or guests at the exam in addition to your committee members.
- The Oral Comprehensive Exam must last a minimum of 1 hour but will not exceed 3 hours.
- You and all the committee members must be present throughout the entire exam. If a member must take a break, then the exam should be paused until all members are present. If one of the major or minor committee members is not able to attend, a substitute member must be present for the exam. However, this change must be approved by the Graduate College before proceeding with the exam.
- Committee members may attend via video or phone conference. As with other members, this member must participate for the entire duration of the exam.

**Committee Vote.** At the conclusion of the presentation, the committee will vote in secret. The student will be invited back into the exam to learn the results of the exam. The major advisor reports the results of the exam to the Graduate College.

**After Passing.** If you pass the oral comprehensive exam, you can proceed with scheduling your dissertation proposal meeting. Upon passing the written and oral comprehensive examinations, you will be advanced to doctoral candidacy by the Graduate College, provided all coursework on the Plan of Study has been completed. You will be charged the graduate candidacy fees (\$35). The Graduate College will notify you by e-mail when you have been advanced to candidacy and charged fees.

**Retaking the Exam.** If you fail the exam, you may be allowed to retake it. The Graduate College allows no more than one retake of a failed oral comprehensive exam. A second attempt to pass the comprehensive oral must be recommended by your committee and endorsed by the major department. The committee for the second attempt must be the same as the committee that administered the initial exam, unless a change in committee is approved by the Graduate College. If you fail the Oral Exam a second time, your status will convert to “Non-Degree” and you will not be allowed to continue in the program.

## **DISSERTATION PROPOSAL MEETING**

### **Proposal and Format**

During their program of studies, most doctoral students begin formulating ideas for their dissertation research. During the last two semesters of coursework or just after completing the oral

exam, you should work with your advisor(s) to develop and write a dissertation proposal. The format and content of the proposal are guided by your advisor.

### **Committee Appointment**

When you have an approved Plan of Study, completed all coursework, and passed the written and oral portions of the comprehensive exam, you must file a Committee Appointment form in Grad Path. Your committee may differ from your comprehensive exam committee. Graduate College policy requires that the dissertation committee include at least three UA faculty members who are approved by the Graduate College as Graduate Faculty. It is not required to include a member from the minor on the dissertation committee.

### **Proposal Meeting**

Once you and your advisor agree the proposal is ready for a proposal meeting, contact your committee members and schedule a Dissertation Proposal Meeting. At least 3 members of the committee must be present. Provide copies of your proposal to your committee members at least 2 weeks prior to the Dissertation Proposal Meeting. The agenda of the meeting varies and may be decided by the committee at the meeting itself. Usually, you will be asked to make a short presentation on the dissertation proposal. The committee then will ask you questions about your study, including how you became interested in the research, the rationale for the research, the methodology, the study's significance, and its implications. The major purpose of this meeting is to make final decisions regarding how your study will proceed.

### **Approval**

If your committee approves your research and dissertation proposal, your advisor will ask a department Graduate Coordinator to submit the proposal in Grad Path.

### **Changes**

If your committee requires minor changes to your research or proposal, they may choose to approve the proposal on the condition that the advisor reviews the revisions before submitting the proposal in Grad Path. If the committee requires major changes to your research or proposal, you may need to schedule another meeting for committee review.

## **HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW**

### **What Constitutes Human Research?**

**Research.** This is a systematic investigation, including the development, testing, and evaluation phases, aimed at creating or contributing to generalizable knowledge.

**Human Subject.** A human subject is a living individual about whom a researcher (professional or student) conducting research either (a) gathers information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction and subsequently uses, studies, or analyzes these; or (b) collects, uses, studies, analyzes, or produces identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens.

If your proposed study aligns with both definitions, you are engaged in Human Subjects Research and must obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to commencing your research.

If you are uncertain whether your research qualifies under these definitions, further clarification on Human Research is available.

### **What is the IRB?**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is an independent review committee responsible for protecting human research subjects. The IRB must review all research and related activities involving human subjects that are conducted at the University of Arizona or in which the University plays a responsible role.

At the University of Arizona, there is a dedicated Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) that provides the administrative and regulatory support for the IRB. The HSPP collaborates with the research community to ensure the maintenance of an ethical and compliant research program.

### **Investigator Eligibility**

Serving as a Principal Investigator (PI) on a human research project carries important responsibilities. The PI bears ultimate responsibility for the design, conduct, reporting and management of human research. The Office of Research, Innovation & Impact (RII) has set guidelines that must be met for the consideration of granting status as a PI to any individual.

If a graduate student at the College of Education is serving as the PI, then an eligible PI is required to serve as Co-PI per RII guideline. The advisor must have current human subject training and attest on the IRB submission that they will mentor and oversee the student. They must also be listed as a Co-PI on the protocol

### **Research Team Training Requirements**

All study team members engaged in human subjects research for your project are required to complete the University of Arizona human subjects component of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online training program. For social/behavioral projects, researchers must complete the CITI Social Behavioral and Native American Research modules. For biomedical projects, researchers must complete the CITI Biomedical and Native American Research modules.

The CITI certificate is valid for four (4) years, after which refresher training must be completed. You should receive an email 90 days before your training expires. Once received, follow the instructions to complete the refresher courses.

For projects that involve Banner Health electronic medical records (EMR), researchers must also complete the UA HIPAA Privacy training. All researchers are also required to complete Conflict of Interest (COI) training.

### **Submitting a Research Project for Human Subjects Approval**

Following are the basic steps to take in submitting a request for approval.

1. **Review Human Subjects Protection Program Guidance.** The HSPP has comprehensive guidance on all aspects of IRB submission including
  - A 10-step guide to submitting a protocol to the IRB.

- Comprehensive guidance documents for all aspects of IRB
  - Full training on how to use the new eIRB submission system.
  - All the forms and template required for submission
2. **Complete the Forms.** Work with your advisor to complete the proper HSPP documentation.
  3. **Obtain Advisor Approval.** Student PIs should request review and approval of the proposal from their advisor or committee chair. The advisor's approval email should clearly state the approval level (Advisor Approval).
  4. **Obtain Scholarly Review.** Faculty PIs should obtain a scholarly review from a DPS Faculty Chair or approved DPS faculty member. A student PI's advisor or committee chair may provide the signature for scholarly review. The advisor or committee chair may request that the student PI obtain scholarly review through a Faculty Chair or approved DPS faculty member. The Scholarly Reviewer may request changes and edits before providing authorization. Faculty PIs and student PIs will work directly with the Scholarly Reviewer on any requested edits. However, if the Scholarly Reviewer is not the student's advisor, the Scholarly Reviewer may ask the student PI to work on changes/edits with the student's advisor. Scholarly reviewers should send approvals to PIs as email. The scholarly reviewer's approval email should clearly state the approval level (Scholarly Review Approval). If an Advisor conducts the scholarly review for a student PI, the approval email should clearly state that the advisor is providing both Advisor Approval and Scholarly Review Approval.
  5. **Departmental/Administrative Review.** After obtaining scholarly reviewer approval, Faculty and Student PIs should submit all materials for departmental review. The departmental review will be conducted by the DPS department head or acting DPS department head. The DPS department head may request changes and edits before providing authorization. Faculty PIs will work directly with the DPS department head on any requested edits. For minor changes, the DPS department head may work directly with student PI. For major changes, the DPS department head may ask the student PI to work with the Scholarly Reviewer and/or student's advisor. The DPS department head should send approvals to PIs as email. The DPS department head approval email should clearly state the approval level (Department Head Approval).

## **ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY**

When you have passed the written and oral portions of the Comprehensive Examination and the Graduate Student Academic Services office has confirmed completion of the required courses on the approved doctoral Plan of Study, you will advance to doctoral candidacy. You will be billed the graduate candidacy fees and will be notified by e-mail of the advancement and fees. The candidacy fees are one-time fees and you will not be billed again if the reported graduation date is changed.

## **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT**

After passing the Oral Comprehensive Examinations and at least 6 months prior to graduation, submit the Committee Appointment Form to the Graduate College. Forms can be accessed in GradPath. If you are awaiting IRB approval, submit the Committee Appointment Form early and provide evidence of IRB approval to the Graduate College later.

## MAINTAINING CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION

Maintain continuous registration of at least 3 units during the Fall and Spring semesters until you have completed the required 18 dissertation units. After completing the 18 dissertation units, register for 1 unit per semester. If you are not enrolled in coursework or dissertation units, enroll in supplementary registration units (course number 930). Continue your registration every Fall and Spring semester or request a Leave of Absence to avoid needing to reapply for admission.

## DISSERTATION RESEARCH AND THE DISSERTATION

Work with your advisor in conducting your research and writing your dissertation. Your advisor and your committee members may be able to provide you with sample dissertations that are similar to yours. It is best to provide drafts of your dissertation to your advisor and committee members regularly as requested. This will ensure that there are no problems or discrepancies in the research before you move forward. For the rules related to the format of the dissertation, refer to the information at: <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/dissertations-theses>

## DISSERTATION ORAL DEFENSE

### Preparing for the Dissertation Defense

**Maintain Registration.** You must be registered in the semester or summer session in which the oral defense is held. The requirement for the final semester is the same as for other semesters; if you defend during the summer, you must register for at least 1 unit in either of the summer sessions (not both).

**Set a Date.** When your committee agrees that you have a penultimate draft of your dissertation and are ready to defend, establish an agreeable date, time and room for the exam, allowing a maximum of three hours. Schedule a room by contacting your program's Graduate Coordinator through your advisor. Schedule the room for at least three hours. Be sure to schedule your defense for a date that will allow you to meet the Graduate College deadline for submission of the dissertation for graduation in the desired term.

<https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/degree-requirements/important-degree-dates-and-deadlines>

**Announcement of Final Defense.** Complete the *Announcement of Final Oral Examination Form* in GradPath **at least 10 working days** prior to the Oral Defense Examination. The committee members and department head must approve the Announcement, thus indicating that the dissertation is ready for defense, and agree to examine you at the time and place specified for the defense.



**Provide Dissertation to Committee.** Provide the committee members a copy of the penultimate draft of your dissertation at least **10 working days** before the examination.

**Prepare Dissertation Approval Page.** Before the final examination date, you should prepare your dissertation approval page (aka “page 2”). You can find samples, a template, and instructions for obtaining electronic signatures at <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/dissertations-theses>.

## During the Exam

**Format for the Exam.** The format and content of the Oral Defense may vary depending on the committee. A public presentation of your research is required and may be followed by questions and discussions. Discuss the format ahead of time with your advisor. The Graduate College places a notice of the defense on the University’s master calendar, as visitors are welcome for the presentation of the research, but only the committee can be present during the question and discussion period.

**Revisions.** If the committee requires revisions, those must be done in a timely manner, not to exceed one year. If the revisions are not completed by the dissertation submission deadline for the term when the student defends, the student will be required to register for the next semester and will graduate in the semester when the revisions are complete and approved. If revisions are not done by the end of the time to degree period, the student will have to re-take comprehensive examinations to demonstrate currency of knowledge.

**Exam Policies.** A good source of information about Graduate College policies and procedures can be found at: <https://grad.arizona.edu/policies>

## After the Exam

**Submitting Your Dissertation the Graduate College.** Dissertations are submitted to the Graduate College electronically. Detailed information about the process and required steps can be found at: <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/dissertations-theses/submitting-your-dissertation>  
The Graduate College posts deadlines for submission of dissertations for each semester at: <https://grad.arizona.edu/gsas/degree-requirements/important-degree-dates-and-deadlines>.

The submission of the dissertation is the last step of the doctoral degree. Your Ph.D. will be awarded by the Graduate College once your dissertation submission is complete and the graduation term is over.

**Convocation and Graduation.** At the end of your graduation semester (or in December for Summer graduates), you can enjoy the pride and satisfaction of joining the faculty and fellow students in the College convocation and the University Commencement ceremony. If you have not received information about graduating by the middle of your final semester, contact the Department Graduate Coordinator for information about how to register for the ceremonies.

Congratulations! As a professional with a Ph.D. in Special Education, you are one of a small number of people who has advanced skills in knowledge in leadership, teaching, and research in your field. We are pleased that you chose to pursue your degree at The University of Arizona.

