

Harrisburg University of Science and Technology  
Ph.D. Program Guidebook

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# PhD Guidebook

## Purpose of this Handbook

This Program and Guide Handbook contains the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures of the Ph.D. programs as established by the Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. The student should become familiar with the material contained in this handbook and work with a faculty advisor to make certain that a selected plan of study complies with the pertinent requirements. The most current handbook is posted on the Records & Registration Communications Site:

<https://myharrisburgu.sharepoint.com/sites/academics>. Students are responsible for being aware of current policies.

## Governance

### Program Lead

The Program Lead of the doctoral program is responsible for all oversight of administrative affairs within their program, including the administration of academic conduct, standards, and requirements as indicated in the university catalog. In addition, the Program Lead is responsible for recommending admissions and financial support, assigning advisors to incoming students, advising the Doctoral Dissertation Committee and faculty on the interpretation of policies and requirements, and performing other administrative duties as delegated by the provost.

### Doctoral Dissertation Committee

The student will be required to have a Doctoral Dissertation Committee established before the end of the Research Seminar courses. The student will establish their Doctoral Dissertation Committee in two stages. In the first stage, the student will identify their committee chair before the end of the coursework portion (18 semester hours) of the program. The rest of the committee members will be identified in stage two before the end of the Research Seminar courses. The committee typically will consist of five members, for example: a committee chair, faculty members within the PhD program, faculty members from another PhD program, an external member from outside the institution that is from the student's field of study or industry. The program lead must approve the committee members selected and provide the Records and Registration office with a list of the committee members and their contact information.

## PhD Curriculum

Doctorate education focuses on enabling students to make original contributions to their respective fields of study. There are two phases of the doctoral program at HU: (1) a learning phase that includes coursework, seminars, research, and fieldwork that contributes to the student's knowledge in the program of study; and, (2) a research phase that focuses on student's original research culminating in his/her final examination. Upon a student's defense of the dissertation and completion of all other requirements, the student is awarded the doctoral degree in the program of study.

The doctoral programs offer a course of study that emphasizes a strong foundation in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics disciplines. Doctoral candidates are required to complete at

least 6 doctoral-level courses (18 semester hours); 6 semester hours in a formal research seminar; and 12 semester hours of dissertation work.

All doctoral candidates participate in a research symposium to provide exposure to current and interesting research in the student's field of interest and industry needs, seeking trends for research and innovation. The student enrolled in a program that requires a qualifying examination will have details of the examination provided by the program lead. Should a student not pass the second attempt at the qualifying examination, the student may pursue a terminal master's degree unless already earned.

A partnership may be formed with another institution in order to utilize that institution's facilities for research and project development, enlist doctoral faculty from another institution as a dissertation or project committee member, or take appropriate post-master's courses from that institution (courses are not eligible for transfer).

Upon completion of the doctoral research seminars (6 semester hours), the candidate will work with their committee to schedule a comprehensive examination and/or a dissertation proposal defense. The candidate must receive the Doctoral Dissertation Committee's approval of their dissertation proposal before being enrolled in dissertation courses (12 semester hours). Please see the doctorate catalog for specific program requirements.

## Milestones

The milestones a student must complete to earn a PhD are as follows:

### Milestone 1

Complete at least 18 semester hours of coursework as identified in the Doctorate Catalog. The PhD student must pass a qualifying examination prior to admission or following coursework (depending upon the program of study) to fulfill the requirements of Milestone 1. Please see the doctorate catalog for details of specific programs.

In addition, the student must pass program approved, web-based training modules on human subjects and ethical research offered through Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) training program. The student must submit a certificate of completion to the Records and Registration office via their Student Support Portal found at <https://reghelp.harrisburgu.edu/support/home> before advancing to Milestone 2. Harrisburg University's policy requires that all research involving human subjects, including the use of secondary and primary data, be reviewed by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure protection of the rights of human subjects.

The student will be required to have their degree audit reviewed before moving to Milestone 2. The degree audit review is initiated by Records and Registration at the time of registration for the student's final semester of coursework. The degree audit will have specific requirements based on the student's PhD program. The student will not be advanced to doctoral candidacy until the student has completed all the requirements of Milestone 1.

### Milestone 2

Complete the Doctoral Research Seminars (6 semester hours) specific to the candidate's area of research. Upon completion of the research seminars, the candidate will submit the dissertation proposal to their doctoral thesis committee. If a candidate needs more time to complete their proposal, the

candidate can enroll in up to 12 hours of Doctoral Research Seminar. An additional 6 hours, for a total of 18 hours, may be taken with the approval of the Program Lead. The candidate will achieve Milestone 2 once the proposal defense is submitted and scheduled with the doctoral thesis committee.

### **Guidelines for Writing a Dissertation Proposal**

The main purpose of the proposal is to clearly and convincingly demonstrate the significance of the contribution the student's research will make to the field of study. Significance is measured by the potential to publish the student's work in reputable journals in the field. The proposal focuses on the student's research question and on the methodology(ies) and how the student applies them in the research. The student's PhD program may have specific templates or expectations that would be provided, but the following is an example of a typical APA style dissertation proposal.

#### **Dissertation Proposal Title**

The proposal should contain the following elements:

- **Statement of Research Questions or Hypothesis**  
A statement of research question(s) and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested.
- **Literature Review**  
Concise and critical review of the relevant literature. Weaknesses and important gaps in the literature should be noted.
- **Theoretical or Conceptual Model**  
A fully developed theoretical or conceptual model. The logical connection between the conceptual model and the research questions or hypothesis should be detailed.
- **Data and Analytic Methodology**  
Identify needed existing databases and assess their appropriateness or the data collection strategy. Sample questionnaires or documentation of existing data files should be included as appendix materials. Also, include a detailed description and justification of the analytic procedures to be used.
- **Implications for the Field of Study**  
The likely significance of the research and its implications for the field of study.
- **Publication Plan**  
A detailed statement of the expected impact of the student's research, including the significant contributions it will make, noting the journals where the research might be published. The length of the proposal should be determined in consultation with the doctoral thesis committee.

### **Milestone 3**

To achieve Milestone 3, the student must pass the comprehensive examination and/or successfully defend their dissertation proposal. To begin the comprehensive examination/proposal approval process, the student must meet the following requirements: (1) have a minimum grade-point average of 3.00 and have no deferred or missing grades; (2) be registered as a full-time student; and, (3) submit their dissertation proposal to their doctoral thesis committee.

The examination is administered by the candidate's doctoral thesis committee. The doctoral thesis committee determines the content of the examination. A significant portion of the examination will focus on the student's area of specialization. The student and the doctoral thesis committee should meet and select a date for the comprehensive examination at least one month in advance. At this meeting, any clarifications about content, format and expectations for the examination can be discussed.

The student and the doctoral thesis committee chair should notify the program lead and Records and Registration of the examination date. The examination is scheduled and announced officially by the Records and Registration office upon recommendation of the program lead. Two weeks' notice is required by the Records and Registration office for scheduling this examination, so the student and the doctoral thesis committee chair must provide notification several weeks in advance. At least three members of the doctoral thesis committee must be physically present at the comprehensive examination/proposal defense. The candidate must also be physically present at the examination. Special arrangements, i.e., requirements for meeting participation via distance, should be communicated to the student and the doctoral thesis committee members well in advance of the examination.

Grading of the examination is determined by the doctoral thesis committee. A favorable vote of the majority of the committee members is required for passing. The results of the examination are reported to the program lead and the Records and Registration office. In case of failure, it is the responsibility of the doctoral thesis committee to determine whether the candidate may take another examination. The committee will determine the timing of the re-examination and may require additional coursework before the reexamination occurs. When more than three years has elapsed between the passing of the comprehensive examination and the completion of the program, the student is required to pass a second comprehensive examination before the final oral examination of the dissertation will be scheduled.

#### Milestone 4

Complete the dissertation courses (12 semester hours of Doctoral Studies). IRB approval will be required before students begin the research component of his/her dissertation. If the student needs additional dissertation courses to complete their dissertation work, the student will automatically be registered in the next semester of dissertation courses until dissertation approval. The candidate will complete Milestone 4 once the doctoral thesis committee makes a request to the program lead and Records and Registration for the scheduling of the oral examination and defense of the thesis.

#### Milestone 5

The final milestone toward the Ph.D. degree is an oral examination administered and evaluated by the candidate's doctoral thesis committee. It consists of an oral presentation and defense of the thesis by the candidate followed by a period of questions and responses. The questions will relate largely to the thesis but may cover the candidate's entire program of study, since one of the purposes of the examination is to assess the general scholarly attainments of the candidate. The portion of the examination in which the thesis is presented may be open to the college community.

The candidate must be registered full-time for the semester in which the oral examination is taken. The candidate is not permitted to do their final oral examination until at least two semesters have passed since the comprehensive examination or the completion of 12 semester hours of dissertation courses. The program lead may grant a waiver in appropriate cases. The final oral examination is scheduled through the Records and Registration office on the joint recommendation of the committee chair and the student. The oral examination must be scheduled two months in advance and the deadline for holding the examination is five weeks before the end of the semester in which the oral examination is scheduled.

The candidate's dissertation must be in its final draft form before a final oral examination will be

scheduled. Both the content and style should be correct and polished by the time this draft is submitted to the doctoral thesis committee. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide a copy of the thesis to each member of the doctoral thesis committee at least one month before the date of the scheduled examination.

Final oral examinations are graded as pass/no pass. A favorable vote of the majority of the doctoral thesis committee members is required for passing. Even with a “pass” decision for the final oral examination, the candidate may be required to make revisions in the thesis or conduct additional analyses. If the candidate does not pass the examination, the doctoral thesis committee has the responsibility to determine whether another examination will be granted.

Following a successful oral defense of the thesis, the candidate should have a copy of the thesis signatory page signed by each member the doctoral thesis committee. In addition, the thesis requires the approval and signature of the provost and the program lead. A copy of the approved thesis and copies of the signatory page should be given to the Records and Registration office at least a week prior to the end of the semester for a final degree audit that certifies the completion of all milestones. After verification of completion, the doctoral degree will be conferred by the next eligible graduation date.

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

### Non-Discrimination Grievance Procedure - Federal

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. To ensure compliance with Title IX and other federal and state civil rights laws, Harrisburg University of Science and Technology has developed internal policies that prohibit discrimination and sexual misconduct based on sex, such as sexual misconduct and sexual violence. A copy of the Title IX non-discrimination procedure is available upon request.

### Sexual Misconduct Policy

Harrisburg University’s Sexual Misconduct Policy is located in the Student Handbook posted on MyHU.

### Non-Discrimination Policy - State

**The Pennsylvania Fair Educational Opportunities Act** provides student access to benefits and services of the University and prohibits discrimination without regard to race, color, gender, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, age, civil union, marital status, veteran status, handicap or disability, perceived handicap or disability, relationship or association with an individual with a handicap or disability, use of a guide or support animal, and/or handling or training of support or guide animals. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, admissions, course offerings, transfer of credit, financial aid, scholarships, student employment, internships, educational and social programs, and student advisement and counseling.

**Any complaint of an alleged act of discrimination must be filed within 180 days of the incident by contacting the PA Human Relations Commission located at 1101-1125 Front Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17104-2515 (717) 787-9784.**