Doctoral Student Specific FAQs

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Please plan appropriately for this process as it may take two months or more to go through all levels of approval.
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Please see the General Student FAQs document available on the website of the Office of Student Services for more General Student FAQs, such as:

Who should I contact about....?
I need “Dean’s Signature” or “Dean’s Approval” on a form, how can I obtain this signature?
What happens if I miss the online registration period?

What should I do if I want to drop a course after the semester has already begun?
Where can I find more information about grading and academic standing requirements?
What does it mean to “break enrollment”? What happens if I break enrollment?
When will I sit for my comprehensive examination? How do I apply to sit for the exam?
What do I need to do to graduate and receive my certificate or diploma? How soon will my certificate or diploma arrive?
Where can I find more information about GW and GSEHD policies?
Doctoral Student Specific FAQs

What is the Official Program Plan?
The Official Program Plan, developed in consultation with your program faculty and advisors, indicates the courses you need to complete during your doctoral study. This form is signed by your primary and secondary advisors and is submitted to the Office of Student Services after you complete 18 credit hours or three semesters – whichever comes first.

To make changes to your program plan of study after it has been submitted, complete a Program Plan of Study Change Request Form, which must be signed by your primary and secondary advisors.

What are the minimum course requirements?
You must complete a minimum of 36 credits of content coursework in residency (e.g. in doctoral degree status at GW) and at least 12 credits of dissertation research (8999) at GW. Most programs require more than the minimum number of credits.

Can I apply credits earned from another institution or in another degree status at GW towards my doctoral degree requirements?
Although doctoral students cannot receive transfer credit, prior graduate credits earned at GW or another institution and not applied to another awarded degree may be used in lieu of other course requirements. If approved by your faculty advisor, they will be listed on your Official Program Plan but they will not appear as transfer credits on your official transcript. The conditions for approval are specified in the Additional Information section near the end of the Doctoral Student Handbook, just before the appendices. Credits completed at another institution (or in another degree status at GW) cannot be applied to your minimum residency requirement (see question above).

What is the Half-Time/Full-Time Certification Request Form and when might I need to use it?
Student loan agencies often require students to enroll in half- or full-time study to remain in deferment status. Full-time status is defined at GW as at least 9 credits per semester (6 in the summer) and half-time status is defined as at least 4.5 credits per semester (3 in the summer).

Under certain circumstances students may be certified as half- or full-time while registered for less than the required number of credits. The Half-time/Full-time Certification Request Form is used to request certification as a half- or full-time student.

Doctoral students typically use this form when in dissertation research status (8999 or 0940 after 24 credits of 8999 have been completed). Please note that 8998 is not dissertation research and cannot be certified as such. The other common time to use this form is when students are preparing to sit for the comprehensive examination.

The form must first be approved by your faculty advisor and then submitted to your representative in the Office of Student Services. Final approval for certification rests with the Registrar’s Office. Forms are not approved by the Registrar’s Office until the first day of classes during the semester in which certification is requested.

Note: This form is not to be used by international students on F or J visas. Please contact ISO for the correct form. Forms are found on the ISO web site at http://internationalservices.gwu.edu/.
**When might I request a Leave of Absence (LOA)?**

University policy requires students to maintain enrollment each fall and spring semester while in degree status. If you are unable to enroll one semester, you may request a Leave of Absence.

Please note that if you are in the dissertation phase of your program and request a Leave of Absence, faculty members should not help you with your dissertation during that Leave of Absence. You also will not have access to the University Library System while in Leave of Absence status.

To register for additional semesters of Leave of Absence beyond one academic year, you must request approval from the Post-Master’s Appeals Committee. In such case, consult with your representative in the Office of Student Services in the semester prior to when you wish to use Leave of Absence.

**When might I request Continuous Enrollment (CE)?**

Doctoral candidates who are unable to defend in the semester in which the dissertation defense materials are filed—usually because they filed too late in the semester—may register for Continuous Enrollment in the subsequent semester and defend in that semester (assuming that a minimum of 12 credit hours of 8999 have already been completed). Continuous Enrollment may also be used during attendance at another institution to waive a GSEHD course requirement (requires prior approval from the Senior Associate Dean) or for completion of outstanding coursework in GW courses in which a grade of “Incomplete” was received.

Continuous Enrollment status is generally limited to not more than one academic year (two semesters). To register for additional semesters of Continuous Enrollment beyond one academic year, you must request approval from the Post-Master’s Appeals Committee. In such case, consult with your representative in the Office of Student Services in the semester prior to when you wish to use Continuous Enrollment.

**When can I register for one credit hour of Continuing Research (0940)?**

If you have completed ALL the course requirements of your program in the semester preceding the one in which you take the comprehensive exam, you should register for one credit of Continuing Research (CNSL, CPED, EDUC, HOL, or SPED 0940) for the semester in which you will take the exam.

If you have not defended your dissertation after 24 credit hours of 8999, you should register for one credit hour of Continuing Research each fall and spring semester (and summer if necessary) until you defend your dissertation.

**What is the policy for registering for Dissertation Research (8999)?**

Once you have passed your comprehensive examination and completed all content coursework (including 8998 and your Level B Research Methods course), you should begin registering for 8999. You must enroll in 8999 at a rate of 3-6 credits per semester each fall and spring semester until you graduate or until you have enrolled for a total of 24 credits. If you have not graduated after 24 credits of 8999, you can then register for one credit hour of Continuing Research (0940) each fall and spring semester until you defend your dissertation. Students must have a minimum of 12 credits of 8999 in order to graduate.
**Do I need to register for Dissertation Research (8999) in the summer?**

Students who defend their proposal or dissertation in the summer must be registered. Your dissertation chair may also require you to be registered if s/he is actively working with you on your dissertation during the summer.

**I am trying to defend my dissertation proposal this semester. What are the deadlines and what paperwork is required?**

Proposal defenses are handled at the department level so please speak with your program regarding scheduling a date and time for the defense. The only paperwork required by the Office of Student Services is the Dissertation Committee Membership and Proposal Approval form.

**I successfully defended my proposal and am now ready to submit everything to IRB. What are the next steps?**

Please plan appropriately for this process as it may take two months or more to go through all levels of approval.

Once you have successfully defended your dissertation proposal, you must do the following:

1. Submit **two** copies of your proposal approval form, **two** copies of your proposal, and **two** copies of your IRB paperwork **signed by both your Dissertation Chair (as P.I.) and the Chair of your department** to your representative in the Office of Student Services. Notes: (1) If a non-GW faculty member is serving on your committee, you must submit a copy of their curriculum vita (CV). (2) Under no circumstances should you submit your proposal directly to the Office of Human Research.
2. Once you have received your approval notice from IRB, forward the email to the Office of Student Services at docgsehd@gwu.edu. The Senior Associate Dean cannot review your proposal until this email is received from you as the Office of Student Services does not receive official notification from IRB when your study is approved.
3. Wait until you receive an official letter from the Senior Associate Dean formally approving your dissertation proposal before beginning to collect any data.

**I am trying to defend my dissertation this semester. What are the deadlines and what paperwork is required?**

Current deadlines can be found on the [Critical Dates](#) section of our website. You will need to submit your paperwork by the deadline listed for the semester in which you defend or 30 days prior to your defense- whichever comes first. The Office of Student Services will reserve the room for the defense.

The following documents are required:

1. 1 electronic copy of your dissertation – e-mailed to docgsehd@gwu.edu
2. 1 electronic copy of your abstract - Word format, 350 words or less
3. Dissertation Approval form (signed by your chair and committee members)
4. Request for Dissertation Oral Examination form (including date/time of defense and names/titles of external readers)
5. Application for Graduation for the appropriate semester