



DOCTORAL STUDENT JOURNEY  
2023-2024 EDITION

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Please note: Important forms are available online at [gsehd.gwu.edu/student-services](http://gsehd.gwu.edu/student-services) and/or [registrar.gwu.edu/forms](http://registrar.gwu.edu/forms). Please contact Doctoral Student Services at [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu) with any questions.

## INTRODUCTION: OVERALL FRAMEWORK

This document discusses the phases of the doctoral student journey in sequential order. The stated information applies to all doctoral degree programs, but each doctoral program may also have additional considerations; please be sure to contact your program faculty for additional program-specific information. Your student services representative at the Office of Student Life can also answer questions about your doctoral studies or direct you to appropriate and helpful resources at the broader university. Please reach out to the Office of Student Life at [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu) or 202-994-9283 at any time.

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## PHASES AND STEPS OF DOCTORAL STUDY

### Phase 1: Pre-Candidacy

### Phase 2: Candidacy



Doctoral work at GSEHD is divided into two phases: pre-candidacy and candidacy, which involve specific sequential steps:

1. **Phase 1: Pre-Candidacy**
    - Program Planning
    - Course of Study
    - Comprehensive Examination
  
  2. **Phase 2: Candidacy**
    - Dissertation Proposal
    - Dissertation Research
    - Dissertation Defense
    - Graduation
-

## PHASE 1: PRE-CANDIDACY

### Phase 1: Pre-Candidacy

### Phase 2: Candidacy



Pre-Candidacy is the period from formal admission and first enrollment in a doctoral program through successful completion of the comprehensive examination.

### Your Primary Advisor

A doctoral primary advisor provides the doctoral student with guidance through the pre-candidacy period. This advisor may also become the chair or a member of the student's dissertation committee and provide further guidance through the dissertation work, if desired. You might also be assigned a secondary advisor at the time of admission, who can serve in a similar role. Your advisor will guide you in the selection of appropriate electives and research courses and help introduce you to appropriate field, research, and publishing experiences.

## Step 1: PROGRAM PLANNING

### Program Plan of Study

Your program, as described by the [GW Bulletin](#), is your contract with the university. Your program plan of study is also available electronically via [DegreeMAP](#). This plan outlines the coursework and any additional requirements you will need to complete in order to graduate.

Your program plan is a working agreement between a doctoral student and the faculty and may be modified only with agreement of the faculty. If you find inconsistencies in your program plan of study, please contact [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu).

## Step 2: COURSE OF STUDY

### Monitoring Your Progress Using DegreeMAP

[DegreeMAP](#) allows you to see how many credits you have completed, your current GPA, and what courses you have remaining, providing a helpful "snapshot" of where you are in your program. GW uses DegreeMAP to clear students for graduation, so please check it frequently to make sure that it is accurate. If you have any questions about your DegreeMAP, please feel free to contact [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu).

### **Accessing DegreeMAP**

1. Log in to [GWeb](#) and click on the Student Records and Registration link.
2. Select the Student Records Information Menu.
3. Click on the DegreeMAP link.
4. Click “Launch DegreeMAP” to view your degree requirements and your individual academic history.

## **Step 3: COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

You must successfully complete the doctoral comprehensive examination at the end of your doctoral coursework and within five years of beginning your program.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible to sit for the comprehensive exam, students must meet all of the following requirements:

- Be currently registered.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Have successfully completed all coursework or currently registered for the last semester of coursework. (In some programs, 8998 and one Level B Research Methods course may be taken after the comprehensive exam; please confirm applicability with your advisor.)
- Have no grades of I, Z, or IPG (In Progress) from a previous semester (with the exception that Counseling PhD students may have IPGs in CNSL 8961, 8259, and 8260).

### **Scheduling Comprehensive Exams**

Comprehensive exams may be administered by your program or by the GSEHD Office of Student Life; please check with your program to see which applies to you. Regardless of who administers the exam, all students must submit an online application for the comprehensive examination by the published deadline; please see deadlines and more information [here](#).

Programs that administer their own exams set individual exam dates. The Office of Student Life administers examinations once per semester, usually in December, April, and July. If a student cannot take an OSL-administered exam during the scheduled date, the advisor must coordinate a separate date for the student and arrange for proctoring if necessary.

### **Comprehensive Exam Structure and Preparation**

All doctoral programs include a comprehensive examination. The program faculty construct the exams and determine the criteria for satisfactory responses; students should consult with them for guidance. We strongly recommend you download all course materials from Blackboard throughout your program to ensure that you have these materials available for review while preparing for the exam.

## PHASE 2: CANDIDACY

### Phase 1: Pre-Candidacy

### Phase 2: Candidacy



After completing all coursework and successfully passing the comprehensive examination, you become a doctoral candidate and are ready to begin dissertation research.

The dissertation research and defense is the culminating, integrative, scholarly experience of doctoral study. The purpose of the dissertation research is to: (a) make an original contribution to knowledge in the candidate's field of specialization, (b) demonstrate an advanced command of research skills, and (c) demonstrate an advanced ability to communicate findings.

### Step 4: DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Your dissertation proposal forms a working plan that is used by you and the committee to guide the research, evaluate progress, and provide ongoing feedback. To move successfully through the dissertation process, you must meet all deadlines agreed upon with your committee and deadlines set by the School for defense of the dissertation and graduation.

#### Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee guides the candidate in development of the dissertation research proposal, makes final judgments about the adequacy of the proposal, is available for consultation during the research work, guides the candidate in preparation of the dissertation document, and decides when the dissertation is ready for defense.

Your primary advisor might serve as chair of the committee, or another faculty member may assume that position. The committee is formally constituted when all three members have signed a [Dissertation Committee Membership form](#) and submitted it to the Office of Student Life.

#### Dissertation Committee Chair

The role of the dissertation committee chair is to:

- Guide the candidate in the preparation of the dissertation proposal, including specification of the research problem, the literature review that helps point the way toward the research, the questions or hypotheses for investigation, and the methodology.

- Guide the candidate in selection of two additional committee members.
- Provide guidance on the research proposal structure and content and set clear expectations for timely completion of the proposal.
- Provide guidance on the dissertation structure and content and set clear expectations for high quality writing.
- Set clear expectations for timely completion and guide the candidate toward achieving a high level of quality (technical and ethical) in the dissertation research and document.
- In consultation with the candidate, select additional examiners (i.e., readers) for the oral defense of the dissertation.
- Prepare the candidate for the oral defense process.
- Encourage the candidate to publish their dissertation after successful completion.

The dissertation committee chair must have the following qualifications:

- Hold an earned academic doctorate.
- Hold a GSEHD regular faculty appointment, either full- or part-time. Selection of dissertation chairs who do not hold a regular faculty appointment or are outside the program area require approval by the Dean's Office. In this case, a member of the candidate's program faculty must participate as a member of either the research committee or the examining committee at the point of defense.
- Have expertise that well matches the candidate's topic area.
- Either (a) have experience serving as a member in no fewer than two dissertation committees, including the defense of the dissertation, or (b) in the absence of such experience, be mentored by an experienced GSEHD dissertation chair selected by the faculty member's department chair.
- Have an active research agenda as characterized by the departmental personnel guidelines.

Emeritus and departing faculty may continue to serve as the dissertation chair for a period of two years, if the student has an approved proposal at the time of their departure. After two years, the student must reconstitute the dissertation committee by selecting a new chair (see Appendix B for a summary of committee structure).

### **Dissertation Committee Members (Other than the Chair)**

The role of the two other dissertation committee members is to guide the candidate, in conjunction with the chair, through development of their independent research and the achievement of a high-quality product and oral defense.

These committee members must have the following qualifications:

- Hold an earned academic doctorate or an earned terminal degree for a period of one year prior to joining the committee.
- Have expertise that well matches the candidate's topic area.
- Among the chair and the two other committee members, at least one is to be knowledgeable about the methodology to be used in the dissertation research and designated as taking responsibility for guiding the research methodology.



- It is strongly recommended that one committee member come from outside the candidate's home program; he or she may also come from outside of GSEHD and even outside of GW.
- Committee members must not have a relationship with the candidate that poses a potential conflict of interest (for example, serving as the candidate's job supervisor, friend, or colleague).
- If not a current GW regular-status member, a copy of the committee member's curriculum vitae must be submitted to the Office of Student Life.

To make a change in committee membership after it has been formally constituted via [Dissertation Committee Membership form](#), the chair, the candidate, and the committee members being dropped and added should sign a memorandum indicating their concurrence with the requested change and send the memorandum to the Office of Student Life.

GSEHD sets certain requirements for the dissertation proposal and dissertation defense, which are indicated below. In addition, the dissertation chair establishes procedures regarding proposal development and dissertation draft review.

Please note that committee members generally require a reasonable amount of time to review drafts and provide feedback, particularly if they receive a draft during certain times of the year. With that in mind, please discuss deadlines and schedules with your committee in advance.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

The dissertation proposal should include those elements normally found in Chapters 1 to 3 and the References of the dissertation, as indicated by the dissertation guidelines in the [GSEHD Dissertation Content and Style Guide](#). Under certain circumstances, the Academic Dean may allow approval of a proposal with less information after a formal request.

The proposal should be prepared according to a recognized scholarly format, usually the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Seventh Edition) and the [University Formatting Requirements](#). The chair of your dissertation committee and the instructor of your Pre-Dissertation Seminar (8998) will also provide guidelines for the proposal.

### **Proposal Approval Process**

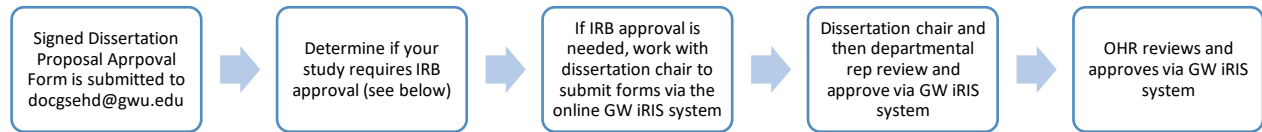
Before conducting dissertation research, your research proposal must be reviewed in an open forum (the proposal defense) and approved by:

1. Your dissertation committee
2. Your department or program chair
3. The GW Office of Human Research (IRB)

Please work with your dissertation chair to schedule your proposal defense, as each program has different policies regarding when and how proposal defenses take place.

You may not begin actual data collection until you have all the necessary written approvals, in compliance with GW Office of Human Research policies. Noncompliance may result in a prohibition against the use of the data in your dissertation and possibly misconduct charges.

### Obtaining Permission to Collect Data after the Proposal Defense



**Dissertation Committee Approval of Proposal:** The dissertation committee approves the proposal after a dissertation proposal defense. The committee has a responsibility to review the proposal and ensure that it will produce worthwhile and high-quality research. During the defense, you may be asked about your rationale for certain aspects of the proposal, asked for more details about the literature or the proposed methods, or challenged about the appropriateness of proposed procedures. Your competency with the research methods will be assessed. The “defense” is also a consultation in which the committee members suggest, and sometimes require, changes to improve the research. The proposal defense is an informal proceeding and the format is at the discretion of the dissertation chair. Please ask your chair for a briefing on the format. **Note: Students must be enrolled in the semester in which they defend their proposal.**

Usually some revisions are expected following the proposal defense. Those changes may be reviewed by the full committee or just by the chair. Formal approval is indicated by committee members’ signatures on the [Dissertation Proposal Approval form](#). This form, along with the CV of any Committee member who is not on the GSEHD faculty, must be submitted to the Office of Student Life ([docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu)) to become an official part of your academic record.

**Office of Human Research (OHR or IRB) Approval of Proposal:** The Office of Human Research assesses whether (a) the proposed research will expose human participants to risks, (b) practical precautions have been taken to minimize and inform the participants of those risks, and (c) the remaining risks are justified by the potential benefits of the research.

The Office of Human Research may communicate directly with you to ask for further clarifications or additional protections for human participants. If you do not receive approval, you should consult with your dissertation committee chair about how to proceed.

Students who have an IRB designation of “expedited” or “full review” must submit a Continuing Review form to the Office of Human Research every 12 months.

### IRB Submission Process

You will use the online [GW iRIS system](#) to submit all required documentation to get your study approved by IRB.

To determine if your study requires IRB review, submit a Human Research Determination form in the GW iRIS system. If you determine that you do not need to submit to IRB, please complete the Certification of Research Exclusion form and submit it to IRB. If your study requires IRB approval, please work with your dissertation chair to prepare and submit your electronic IRB approval forms via the GW iRIS system.

**You are not authorized to collect data for your dissertation until you have received approval from the IRB.** If you need to make changes to your study after it has been approved, you must file a request with the IRB to modify your study. No modifications can be made until you receive approval.

## Step 5: DISSERTATION RESEARCH

### Dissertation Research Registration: 8999 and 0940

After completing all coursework and passing the comprehensive exam, candidates will enroll in CNSL, CPED, EDUC, HOL, SEHD, or SPED 8999 while conducting dissertation research.

Candidates will take a minimum of 12 and maximum of 24 credits of 8999, at a rate of three or six credit hours each fall and spring semester, until they successfully defend their dissertation or reach a total of 24 credits. Summer registration is optional.

After completing 24 credit hours of 8999, candidates can register for one credit hour of Continuing Doctoral Research (CNSL, CPED, EDUC, HOL, SEHD, or SPED 0940) each fall and spring semester until they defend their dissertations. Registration in 0940 for dissertation research is not permitted until you have completed 24 credits of 8999.

Please Note: GSEHD can certify students as half- or full-time while they are enrolled in Dissertation Research using a [Half-Time/Full-Time Certification Form](#). For most forms of financial assistance, this will make you eligible to either receive aid or defer previous loans. Please work with the [Financial Aid Office](#) to confirm that this applies to your situation. GSEHD can also certify international students as full-time for visa purposes while they are enrolled in Dissertation Research; please reach out to the [International Services Office](#) for more information.

To defend your dissertation, you must be registered during the semester of defense, including the summer semester. Students will usually be registered in 8999 or 0940 during their defense. They may also occasionally be registered in Continuous Enrollment (CE), a zero-credit, zero-cost option; if a student is unable to defend in the semester in which they file dissertation materials, but before the posted CE deadline (posted on the [GSEHD Critical Dates website](#)), they may register for Continuous Enrollment for the following semester and defend then. This option is presented when materials are filed after the graduation deadlines for the current semester.

## Guidelines for the Dissertation

Dissertation guidelines are provided in the [GSEHD Dissertation Content and Style Guide](#). Please note, these are guidelines only and alternative formats are permitted, with permission. In addition, you are required to use a recognized scholarly format for the dissertation, typically the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Seventh Edition). Students should also consult the [GW ETD Formatting Guidelines](#). It is the student's responsibility to maintain regular contact with their dissertation chair and meet deadlines for drafts or deliverables.

## Step 6: DISSERTATION DEFENSE

During the dissertation defense (dissertation oral examination), your committee determines whether the dissertation is acceptable and whether you satisfactorily defended it. The dissertation oral examination is in an open meeting that is publicly announced. Guests may attend, and you may wish to attend another student's defense before your own to familiarize yourself with the format. Please notify the candidate if you plan to attend a defense.

### Dissertation Defense Eligibility

In order to defend, students must:

1. Have completed all program requirements, including at least 12 credits of dissertation research (8999), and successfully defended their proposal (IPGs in 0940, 8998, and 8999 are permitted).
2. Be registered and in good academic standing in the semester of defense.
3. Not have an active academic standing or time limit hold on their account. If students do have one of these holds, they must appeal to PMAC to either resolve the academic standing issue or receive a time extension before becoming eligible to defend.
4. Receive approval from their chair and committee that the dissertation document is ready to defend.
5. Submit all dissertation materials at least 30 days in advance of the defense and by the posted deadlines on the [GSEHD Critical Dates](#) page.

### Dissertation Oral Examination Committee

The dissertation oral examination committee includes five members:

- The dissertation committee chair (nonvoting, described previously)
- The two other committee members (described previously)
- Two additional examiners
- If desired, the student can ask an additional GSEHD faculty member to participate as a nonvoting, non-questioning presider. Students may choose to do so if there is a faculty member who they would like to be involved without taking on official committee duties.

At least one of the five is to be from outside the candidate's home program and at least one other is to be from outside GSEHD. (Both can be from outside GSEHD.) A committee member

other than the chair will also serve as the presider. The presider must be a GSEHD faculty member (tenure, tenure track, contract, or visiting).

### **Additional Examiners**

The dissertation chair contacts and secures the additional examiners. All committee members and examiners must agree on a date, time, and format (in-person or virtual) for the defense.

The additional examiners must also meet the following criteria:

- Must have held an earned doctorate for at least one year prior to the defense.
- Must have professional background and experience that is relevant to the candidate's topic and research.
- Must not have a relationship with the candidate that poses a potential conflict of interest (such as being the candidate's job supervisor, friend, or colleague).
- If not a current GW faculty member, a copy of the person's curriculum vitae must be submitted to the Office of Student Life.

**During an in-person defense, no more than one committee member may participate virtually, and the candidate and the chair must be present at the site of the examination.** (Please note: these rules apply in the case of an in-person defense during normal university operation. These do not apply if the university is currently operating virtually and/or the defense is being conducted virtually.)

### **Dissertation Defense Deadlines and Responsibilities**

Dissertation materials are always due **at least 30 calendar days in advance of your dissertation defense and in agreement with all deadlines specified by [GSEHD Critical Dates](#)**. Information about materials and due dates is available on the [GSEHD website](#). After the defense, all final, edited dissertations are due before [the university's ETD deadlines](#), so please plan accordingly.

#### **Chair Responsibilities:**

- Assist candidate in completing and submitting the following forms to the Office of Student Life at least 30 calendar days in advance of your dissertation defense and in agreement with all deadlines specified by [GSEHD Critical Dates](#).
  - [Request for Dissertation Oral Examination form](#) (online form)
  - [Dissertation Approval Form](#) (submitted through online form above). Before signing the Dissertation Approval Form, committee members should be satisfied that the document is ready to defend. Once the dissertation is submitted to the Office of Student Life, no changes can be made to the document before the oral examination.
- The chair, usually in collaboration with the candidate, is to arrange for additional examiners to join the committee and arrange a date and time for the oral examination. These steps are indicated on the Request for Dissertation Oral Examination form.

**Doctoral Candidate Responsibilities:**

- Submit all materials via the [Request for Dissertation Oral Examination form](#) online at least 30 calendar days in advance of your dissertation defense and in agreement with all deadlines specified by [GSEHD Critical Dates](#). While completing this form, which constitutes your formal submission of materials and request for defense, you will be asked to attach the following additional materials:
  - [Dissertation Approval Form](#)
  - Your completed dissertation in Word format
  - CVs of any committee members or readers who are not current GW faculty members, if not previously submitted
- Submit an online [Application to Graduate](#) for the appropriate semester.
- Distribute copies of the final dissertation to the members of the examining committee at least 30 days before the scheduled date of the oral examination.

**Office of Student Life Responsibilities:**

- Review the student's academic history and report any discrepancies to the student. Any remaining grades of "IPG" in 8998, 8999, or 0940 will be converted to grades of "credit" as part of the review process.
- Review the membership of the proposed dissertation oral examination committee for compliance with GSEHD regulations.
- Make logistical arrangements for the defense by reserving the physical room or creating the virtual meeting.

**Presider Responsibilities:**

One of the committee members, other than the chair, will also serve as the presider. The presider directs the defense using the instructions set forth in the Presider Memo, which will be emailed to them. If the presider is not a member of the examining committee, they are present solely to moderate, and do not have a voting or examining role. Otherwise, the presider will also be an active examiner.

**Dissertation Defense Outcomes**

At the conclusion of the examination phase of the defense, the candidate and all observers are asked to leave the room while the committee considers the acceptability of the dissertation defense and the dissertation document. The examining committee makes two decisions: the acceptability of the document and the acceptability of the oral defense.

If the dissertation defense is successful, the student must make any required edits and submit the final version of the document to ProQuest before the [ETD deadline](#). A student who is unable to make the required revisions before the deadline may enroll in Continuous Enrollment (CE) in the subsequent semester and finish and submit the revisions then, graduating in the subsequent semester. CE status, a zero credit option, is limited to two semesters. A student who does not have final committee approval for the dissertation within two semesters will be terminated from the doctoral program. Please note, international students are not eligible for CE, and should enroll in 0940 if they require an additional semester to make edits to their dissertation

document.

If the dissertation document is acceptable but the oral defense is unsuccessful, the student may request a second oral defense. On the second attempt, a student must pass the oral defense and have the dissertation voted acceptable by the committee. If the student fails both oral defenses, the student is automatically removed from the doctoral program, and must appeal to the Post-Master's Appeals Committee for reinstatement if interested in continuing.

## Step 7: GRADUATION

### Final Steps after Dissertation Defense

- 1. Determine your final due date:** In order to graduate, you must submit your final dissertation to ProQuest. Because of this, the final due date to graduate each semester is the [ETD Approval Deadline](#) set by the university. All of the steps below must be completed, and your final dissertation must be uploaded to ProQuest, before the posted date. **Please be sure to check the [ETD Approval Dates](#) to ensure you are aware of your due date and plan accordingly. If you do not submit your final dissertation before the ETD deadline, you will have to wait until the next semester to graduate.**
- 2. Decide whether you want to copyright your work:** GW generally discourages students from copyrighting their dissertation unless the research has some commercial value. Please see the [Best Practices Section](#) of the GW ETD website for more information regarding open access and copyright. ProQuest will assess a \$95 fee for open access publishing.
- 3. Work with chair to make edits:** Work with your chair to make final edits to the document based on your committee's feedback, and, if necessary, obtain approval from committee members, then complete the remaining steps.
- 4. Submit ETD Approval Form:** After your chair approves the final draft, both you and your chair must sign the [ETD Approval Form](#) and submit it to [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu). If you do not yet have an ETD submission number when you are filling out the form, you may leave that item blank.
- 5. Submit SED:** The University requires students to submit the Survey of Earned Doctorates before clearing them for graduation. Please complete the questionnaire online at [sed-ncses.org](http://sed-ncses.org) and send your certificate of completion to [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu).
- 6. Upload your final dissertation and receive formatting approval:** The GW ETD website ([library.gwu.edu/gw-etds](http://library.gwu.edu/gw-etds)) will guide you through the process of electronically submitting your dissertation to Gelman Library and ProQuest. Your dissertation must follow the [University Formatting Guidelines](#) and match the template provided on the [GSEHD Style Guide](#). Gelman Library will review your submission and may require you to make

formatting edits and re-submit your document before accepting it if your document does not follow these guidelines. They will notify you via email if your submission requires edits and when your submission has been accepted. **Your dissertation is not considered final until Gelman Library has accepted it.** If you have substantial formatting edits to make, this approval process can take several business days. Be sure to submit your dissertation in advance of the deadline to ensure you have left time for this formatting review.

7. **Finalize IRB logistics:** If required, visit [humanresearch.gwu.edu/closing-studies](http://humanresearch.gwu.edu/closing-studies), fill out the Study Closure Form to terminate your research, and submit it to the Principal Investigator (PI) for signature. Exempt studies do not require a closure form. You should submit this form through the iRIS system and reach out to the IRB office directly with any questions at 202-994-2715 or [ohrirb@gwu.edu](mailto:ohrirb@gwu.edu).
8. **Finalize GSEHD logistics:** Notify GSEHD's Office of Student Life ([docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu)) if the title of your dissertation has changed, or if you have any questions about the process. Otherwise, you will receive your graduation clearance from us after Gelman Library accepts your submission.

### Applying for and Attending Graduation

Please submit the online [Application for Graduation](#) for the semester in which you plan to graduate by the listed deadline.

The university confers doctoral degrees three times a year, in August, January, and May. The Commencement Ceremony and the GSEHD Hooding Ceremony are only held in the spring semester, and summer and fall graduates are welcome to participate in the spring ceremonies.

The Office of Student Life will contact you regarding all commencement matters if you indicated on the Application for Graduation that you planned to attend Commencement. Information pertaining to graduation can also be found on the [GW Commencement](#) and [GSEHD Commencement](#) websites. Please note that free tickets are required for some events, and information will be provided as to how to obtain them.

### Exiting the Doctoral Program and Graduating with an MA or EdS Degree

Students who determine that a doctoral degree no longer fits their goals or whose circumstances change such that they are unable to complete their doctoral research have the option to change their program to an Educational Specialist or Master's degree and graduate with that credential. These steps can be taken after the appeals process or independently of it.

Current students who wish to graduate with a different degree can pursue an EdS if they have already completed their comprehensive examination, or an MA if they have not. Please consult with your advisor or chair and then with the Office of Student Life at [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu) to begin this process.



Please note, if a student chooses to graduate with the EdS or MA, they will no longer be eligible to use their coursework toward an EdD program and will need to reapply and complete all program requirements should they wish to continue doctoral study at a later time.

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## APPENDIX A: DOCTORAL STUDENT CHECKLIST

### PHASE 1: Pre-Candidacy

- [Register in coursework](#) (or a leave of absence) each fall and spring semester. Summer enrollment is not required.
- Complete all course requirements on your Program Plan of Study (listed on [DegreeMAP](#)).
- Pass your [Comprehensive Exam](#) and, if applicable, complete the rest of your course requirements (i.e., 8998 and Level B Research Methods).

### PHASE 2: Candidacy

- [Register](#) for dissertation research (CNSL, CPED, EDUC, HOL, SEHD, or SPED 8999) at a rate of 3 or 6 credits each semester (summer is optional).
- If you have not already done so, establish a doctoral dissertation committee and file the [Dissertation Committee Membership form](#).
- Submit the CV for any committee members outside of GW to [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu).
- Successfully defend your proposal and submit the completed [Dissertation Proposal Approval form](#).
- Obtain [IRB approval](#) via the GW iRIS system.
- Work with your chair to establish a timeline for degree completion and to complete drafts of your dissertation.
- After you complete 24 credits of Dissertation Research, you will become eligible to register for 1 credit per semester of Continuing Research (CNSL, CPED, EDUC, HOL, SEHD, or SPED 0940). Register each fall and spring until you graduate (summer is optional).
- Submit an online [Application for Graduation](#) before the appropriate deadline.
- Work with your chair to complete your committee with the addition of two external readers. Agree upon a date and time for the dissertation defense with all committee

members, and distribute copies of your dissertation to all members for review at least 30 days in advance of that date.

- Submit the [Request for Dissertation Oral Examination form](#) and all accompanying materials at least 30 days before your scheduled defense.
- Successfully defend your dissertation in the oral examination.
- Make any revisions requested by your committee and submit your final dissertation to Gelman Library and ProQuest by the [ProQuest submission deadline](#) for the semester in which you defend. All dissertation deadlines can be found on the [Critical Dates](#) page.
- Submit the [ETD Approval form](#) signed by you and your dissertation chair to [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu), and complete your [Survey of Earned Doctorates](#) and send a copy to [docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu).
- Close the [IRB study](#) by submitting the Study Closure Form through the GW iRIS system. Exempt studies do not require a study closure form.
- Walk across the stage at graduation!

## APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The three-member dissertation committee includes a dissertation chair and two additional committee members. Prior to the dissertation defense, two additional examiners join the committee.

- Out of the five members, one must be outside the candidate's home program and one must be outside GSEHD.
- One of the committee members, other than the chair, will also serve as the **presider**. The committee member serving as presider shall also be an active examiner, participating in the questioning of the candidate and the votes. If the presider is not a member of the examining committee, they are present solely to moderate, and do not have a voting or examining role. **The presider must be a GSEHD faculty member (tenure track, contract, or visiting).**

### Three-Member Dissertation Committee

1. The Dissertation Chair (nonvoting at the time of defense) must:
  - Hold an earned doctorate.
  - Hold a full-time or part-time GSEHD faculty appointment (regular status, nonvisiting). Appointment outside the program area requires approval of candidate's primary advisor.
  - Have expertise in candidate's topic area.
  - Have an active research agenda as characterized by the departmental personnel guidelines.
  - Either (a) have experience serving as a member on no less than two dissertation committees, including the defense of the dissertation, or (b) in the absence of such experience, be mentored by an experienced GSEHD dissertation chair selected by the faculty member's department chair.
  - Emeritus and departing faculty may continue to serve as the dissertation chair for a period not to exceed two years, if the student has an approved proposal. After two years the student must reconstitute the dissertation committee by selecting a new chair.
2. Two additional committee members (voting) must:
  - Hold a doctorate, or a terminal degree and faculty appointment, for at least one year.
  - Have expertise that matches the candidate's topic area and research.
  - Among the chair and the two other committee members, at least one will be knowledgeable about the methodology to be used in the dissertation research and designated as taking responsibility for guiding the research methodology.
  - It is strongly recommended that one come from outside the candidate's home program.
  - Not have a relationship with the candidate that might pose a conflict of interest.
  - If not a current GW faculty member, a copy of their curriculum vitae must be submitted to the Office of Student Life.

### Two Additional Examiners for the Defense of Dissertation

Two additional examiners (voting) are selected on the basis of their expertise and interest in the candidate's topic area, and must:

- Hold a doctorate for at least one year prior to the defense.
- Have a professional background and experience that is relevant to the candidate's topic area.
- Not have a relationship with the candidate that might pose a conflict of interest.

- If not a current GW faculty member, a copy of their curriculum vitae must be submitted to the Office of Student Life.
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## APPENDIX C: SEQUENCE OF EVENTS DURING THE DISSERTATION ORAL DEFENSE

1. Set-up of the room
  - Candidate and chairperson at one end of table, presider at other end, examiners along sides, any observers along walls.
2. Examination Session
  - Open the examination by indicating name of the candidate and degree.
  - Statement of the purpose of the examination, which is to determine whether the dissertation is acceptable and whether the candidate satisfactorily defends it.
    - These decisions will be made at the conclusion of the examination by the four examiners. (The chair is present but does not participate in the examination or the decision.)
  - Permit the candidate to make a brief introductory statement
    - Keep the statement to about five minutes (optional). It is not necessary to summarize the content of the dissertation. Tell the examiners anything that may be helpful to them in understanding the research, your background, or the relationship between the two.
  - Each examiner will be given an opportunity to introduce questions. Once a question has been introduced, any other examiner who is interested in the same general area may feel free to enter the questioning at that point.
  - It is hoped that the initial questioning will proceed expeditiously enough that there will be an opportunity for a second round.
3. Decision Period
  - The candidate and all observers will leave the room, or enter a breakout room if the defense is being conducted virtually, while the committee considers the acceptability of the dissertation document.
  - Possible decisions:
    - Accept: All errors are corrected, and recommendations which had consensus in the course of the examination are incorporated. The examiners delegate to the chairperson the responsibility for seeing that this is done.
    - Accept conditionally: Any examiner who cares to do so may withhold his or her approval until the revised document has been submitted to him or her and is approved.

- Reject conditionally: The examiners establish conditions under which the dissertation may be reconsidered and accepted. This may or may not include another oral.
  - Reject: The dissertation is judged totally unacceptable. The candidate has no alternative except to produce a new study, if permitted to continue.
  - The committee gets a motion and a second, and votes on the motion. Two negative votes defeat a motion.
4. After decision is made – bring the candidate and guests back into the room and announce the results.