

DOCTORAL DEGREES

Graduate Studies

Doctoral Overview

Doctoral Programs Offered

UNL Graduate Studies oversees four doctoral degrees:

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Education (EdD)
- Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)
- Doctor of Audiology (AuD) – *As of October 1, 2016, the AuD is administered by Graduate Studies. Revisions to this catalog to include the AuD are not yet complete.*

See Programs Offered (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/programs/colleges>) for a current list of degrees and majors, Majors, Minors, and More (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/degrees/majors>) for related policy, and the Graduate School Glossary (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/glossary/#degrees>) for a better understanding of the different degrees.

UNL also offers additional professional doctoral programs – e.g., JD, DPH, DVM – which are not overseen by Graduate Studies or covered by Graduate Studies policy.

Core Doctoral Requirements

To qualify for a doctoral degree, it is the student's responsibility to meet the following requirements as part of the Doctoral Degree Milestones (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral>):

1. Establish a Supervisory Committee (p. 1) prior to completion of one half of the doctoral coursework.
2. Complete a Program of Studies (p. 2), approved by the Supervisory Committee and filed in Graduate Studies prior to completion of one half of the doctoral coursework.
3. Achieve academic residency (p. 2).
4. Pass a comprehensive examination (p. 3) – written and potentially also oral – in the major and minor fields of study.
5. Achieve candidacy (p. 3) and satisfy requirements for registration during candidacy.
6. Prepare a dissertation (for PhD or EdD) or doctoral document (for AuD or DMA), pass a final examination (p. 4) (defense), and submit the approved final version to the University.
7. Complete all work for the doctoral degree within eight years of filing the Program of Studies in Graduate Studies.

Research Responsibility

All research involving human or animal subjects must receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). The IRB New Protocol Submission form is completed online via NUGrant (<http://nugrant.unl.edu>); the Application to Use Animals is available from the Office of Research Responsibility (<http://research.unl.edu/researchresponsibility/forms>).

Approval must be secured prior to the initiation of the research; the IRB and IACUC will not review projects already in progress. Evidence of IRB/IACUC approval must be submitted at the time the final dissertation is filed.

Supervisory Committee Committee Requirements

A Supervisory Committee is established **before a doctoral student has accumulated 45 credit hours**, including any transfer hours but excluding research or language tools, to assure that students are under careful advisement and mentoring throughout their careers.

The Supervisory Committee is appointed by the Dean for Graduate Studies based on a recommendation of the departmental Graduate Committee in the student's major, prior to the approval of the program of study.

The Supervisory Committee consists of at least four resident Graduate Faculty (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/faculty>) members.

- All committee members must be either Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Associates approved to perform specified Graduate Faculty duties.
- The committee must include at least one Graduate Faculty member external to the academic department or program in which the degree is to be granted but within the University of Nebraska system. If the student is pursuing a minor, the Graduate Faculty member from the minor department may serve as the outside representative.

Member Roles

An **Appointment of Supervisory Committee form**, signed by the Graduate Committee Chair, should be filed with Graduate Studies as described in the Doctoral Milestones (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral>).

- **Chair or Co-chair:** The Chair or Co-chair of a doctoral student's committee serves as the advisor and mentor of the student. The Chair or Co-chair may not serve as the Outside Representative or a designated reader.
- **Member:** All members of the committee vote to allow the student into candidacy, request an extension and determine the outcome of the student's dissertation defense. Members may serve as the reader or outside representative.
- **Reader:** Two members of the committee are designated as readers. They and the Chair read the draft(s) of the dissertation to determine whether the student is ready to defend. They sign the *Application for Final Oral* if the student is approved to move forward with the defense. Special members may serve as readers.
- **Outside Representative:** One member must be external to the student's major program but within the University of Nebraska system. If the student is seeking a minor, the faculty member representing the student's minor may serve as the Outside Representative. He or she may serve as a reader on the student's committee.
- **Special Member:** A faculty member from another institution outside the University of Nebraska system may serve as a fifth committee member on the student's committee. Special members may serve as readers and have voting rights for the student's committee. Only one special member may serve per committee. A special member may not serve as outside representative.

Changes to the Committee

Changes may be made to a Supervisory Committee any time prior to the submission of the Application for Final Oral Exam using a change request

form as described in the Doctoral Milestones (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral>).

If the Supervisory Committee **chair** leaves the employ of the University, or retires or is otherwise unable to serve on the Committee, Graduate Studies must be notified immediately and a change in the Committee made as follows:

- If the student has achieved Candidacy, the former chair who has left may continue to serve as co-chair of the Supervisory Committee, with approval of the departmental Graduate Committee and the Dean for Graduate Studies. A second co-chair must be appointed who is a resident Graduate Faculty member.
- If the student has not achieved Candidacy, a new chair of the Supervisory Committee who is a resident Graduate Faculty member must be appointed immediately, with the agreement of the departmental/school Graduate Program Committee and the Dean for Graduate Studies.

If a **member other than the chair** leaves the employ of the University or retires, a replacement should be appointed who is a resident graduate faculty member. When continuing expertise is needed and the faculty member is willing to continue serving, he/she may continue as a member of the Supervisory Committee, with the approval of the Supervisory Committee Chair and the concurrence of the Dean for Graduate Studies.

Graduate faculty with **emeritus status** may co-chair the supervisory committees of doctoral students with a resident graduate faculty member and may continue to serve as members of committees, with approval of the graduate committee chair.

Program of Studies

Program Requirements

The Program of Studies must be filed in Graduate Studies prior to completion of half the coursework for the doctoral program.

- At least half of the graduate work, including the dissertation, will be completed in the student's major.
- It must contain sufficient credit hours:
 - PhD: At least 90 credit hours, including 12 to 55 hours of dissertation research.
 - EdD: At least 96 credit hours, including 6 hours of research tools and 12 to 55 hours of dissertation research.
 - DMA: At least 90 credit hours, including a minimum of 3 hours doctoral document research.
 - AuD: At least 87 credit hours.
- It must include any departmental language or research tool requirements.
- It must be filed within the same semester as the appointment of the Supervisory Committee.
- The time limit on granting the doctoral degree is eight years from the time of filing the student's Program of Studies in Graduate Studies.

Any subsequent change in the program is approved by the Supervisory Committee and the action reported to Graduate Studies in writing.

The Supervisory Committee will determine what course work taken prior to filing of a Program of Studies, including hours earned toward the master's degree(s), will be accepted as part of the program's 87-96 hours.

- The Supervisory Committee is not obligated to reduce the doctoral Program of Studies by applying course work completed prior to its appointment.
- Prior course work is assessed in relation to its contribution to framing a research foundation for the degree. Each course accepted must be current and relevant in relation to the desired degree.
- No graduate credit will be accepted from a previously awarded doctoral degree at any institution, including UNL.

Language and Tools

There is no uniform language or research tool requirement for UNL Graduate Studies. Students should contact their Graduate Chair for specific departmental requirements.

All required language or research tools requirements for the student's program should be listed on the Program of Studies by the Supervisory Committee and be satisfied prior to filing the Application for Admission to Candidacy, which is due at least seven months before the scheduled final oral examination.

Interdisciplinary Program

An Individualized Interdisciplinary Doctoral (IID) program of studies is designed for students who wish to tailor a program to meet their professional interests and research endeavors across programs. A student in an IID program may select a field of study that integrates material offered in two or more departments without meeting the specific major requirements of one program.

Although an IID program allows a high degree of flexibility, it requires the approval of Graduate Studies as well as the participating academic units. It is not an alternative for students who cannot gain admission to other programs. Also, it is not a mechanism for offering the PhD degree within units which do not have their own authorized PhD programs; an IID program may be developed only with programs which offer a doctoral degree.

For information on developing an IID Program of Studies, contact the Doctoral Specialist (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral>) in Graduate Studies.

Academic Residency

Academic residency requires the doctoral student to enroll in a specified number of hours related to the degree within a specific timeframe. This ensures that each doctoral program is reasonably compact, continuous, and cohesive, and that a substantial portion is done under close supervision by the University. No additional hours over and above those for the required program of studies will be needed to fulfill academic residency.

For a student beginning a doctoral program:

- With a **bachelor's degree**: The requirement is 27 hours of graduate work within a consecutive 18-month period, and 15 of these 27 hours must be taken after receiving a master's along the way or completing 30 hours.
- With a **master's degree**: The requirement is 27 hours of graduate work within a consecutive 18-month period.
- As **University staff or a person employed full-time in their major field**: The requirement is 24 credit hours of graduate work within a consecutive two-year period, and 12 of these 24 hours must be taken after receiving a master's along the way or completing 30 hours. For registration restrictions, refer to University Staff Exemption (<http://>

nebraska.edu/faculty-and-staff/benefits/employee-and-dependent-scholarships.html).

The academic residency requirement must be met **prior to the scheduling of the final oral exam**.

In exceptional circumstances, where it is clear that the purpose of residency will be fulfilled although the above formal conditions are not met, the student's Supervisory Committee may, with the approval of the Dean for Graduate Studies, designate an alternative procedure for satisfying the residency requirements.

Comprehensive Examination

When a student has substantially completed studies in the doctoral program, the student must pass a written comprehensive examination in the major and minor fields of study.

Requirement and Scheduling

The Supervisory Committee arranges for comprehensive examinations – written and potentially also oral – at least seven months prior to the final oral examination (defense).

- The **written** comprehensive examination is an investigation of the student's breadth of understanding of the field of knowledge of which his/her special subject is a part. It is not a repetition of course examinations.
- An **oral** comprehensive examination may be required at the discretion of the Supervisory Committee. The oral exam may include the minor or related fields in addition to the major field of study. If an oral exam is required, it is part of the comprehensive exam requirements to be met before candidacy.

Examination Results

Upon successful completion of comprehensive exams, an **Application for Candidacy** should be filed as described in Doctoral Milestones (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral/#candidacy>).

Otherwise, if the Supervisory Committee determines that the student has failed the comprehensive examination:

1. A letter is submitted by the chair of the Supervisory Committee to the Dean for Graduate Studies stating the conditions under which the student may attempt another examination.
2. Only one attempt may be made per academic term. Only two attempts overall are permitted, unless additional attempts are approved by the Supervisory Committee.

Candidacy

The Supervisory Committee files the **Application for Admission to Candidacy** as described in Doctoral Milestones (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral>) once the student has:

- Met any provisional admission requirements
- Satisfied language and research tool requirements
- Passed the comprehensive examination(s)

This form must be filed in Graduate Studies at least seven months prior to the final oral examination (defense).

Continuous Registration

Once candidacy is achieved, the student must register for **at least one credit hour each fall and spring** until they graduate, even after meeting the total dissertation hours on their Program.

- **Failure to register will result in termination of candidacy and program.**
- Academic Leave (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/registration/leave>) can, for eligible students, provide an exception to the continuous registration requirement.
- Candidates do not need to register for **summer** unless required by their department during an assistantship, for a student visa, to defer student loans, or for Health Center access.

Credit Hours

Doctoral candidates may need to register for additional hours due to the following factors.

- To be exempted from withholding for FICA (Social Security) and Medicare, candidates being paid as graduate assistants must either have full-time status or register for 4 cr each term.
- Campus Services/Facilities: Graduate students registered for at least 1 cr per term are able to access the University Health Center (<http://health.unl.edu>), University Libraries (<http://libraries.unl.edu>), and Campus Recreation Center (<http://crec.unl.edu>). Additional charges may be incurred based on use.
- Health Insurance (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/health>): All UNL students enrolled in at least 6 cr or full-time certified are eligible to purchase this plan. Graduate assistants and international students are automatically enrolled in health insurance.
- Eligibility for financial aid (<http://financialaid.unl.edu/eligibility.shtml>) typically requires enrollment of 4 cr per fall or spring. It also involves the fraction of attempted credit hours completed successfully (<http://financialaid.unl.edu/sap.shtml>) and whether the student has exceeded a maximum number of credit hours allowed for a degree objective.

Full-Time Status

Full-time status normally requires 9 cr each fall and spring. However, Candidates enrolling in at least 1 credit hour per term can be classified as full-time if they request and are approved for Certification of Full-Time Status (<http://research.unl.edu/gradstudies/fulltime>) before each term.

Doctoral students may use full-time certification for a maximum of two consecutive years. To maintain full-time status beyond that, a candidate must again register for at least 9 cr each fall/spring.

Tuition and Fees

Retaining Resident Rate: Candidates who were classified as Nebraska residents for tuition purposes and relocate out of the state while maintaining continuous enrollment remain eligible for resident tuition.

All But Dissertation (ABD): Students who have completed all courses on the Program and who are registering for dissertation (999) hours in excess of the requirements of the Program to maintain continuous registration are eligible for a waiver of the non-resident portion of tuition. To qualify for this benefit, students must (1) have grades for all courses on the Program of Studies except for dissertation (999) hours and (2) send email to the Doctoral Specialist (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral>) requesting this benefit. Once approved, this status remains in effect until the student graduates.

Dissertation and Final Oral Exam

Dissertation Requirements

The **dissertation** is of no fixed length. Students work with their advisor and/or Supervisory Committee to determine the subject of the dissertation.

The **dissertation abstract** may not exceed 350 words in length.

See Preparing a Dissertation (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/guidelines>) for formatting required by Graduate Studies. Style guidelines are determined by the student's specific discipline.

Reading Committee

Following approval by the major advisor, the dissertation and abstract should be presented to the Reading Committee for review at least four weeks prior to the oral examination. The Reading Committee consists of two members from the Supervisory Committee, excluding the Chair or Co-chair.

An Application for Final Oral Exam (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral/#examform>) is due in Graduate Studies at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense, indicating that the committee chair(s) and the readers have read the dissertation, find it suitable for a defense, and grant permission for the defense to be held. All committee members should be given sufficient time to read the dissertation prior to the defense.

If only one member of the Reading Committee dissents, the dissertation defense or oral exam may proceed upon written recommendation by the supervisory committee, accompanying the Application for Final Oral Exam.

Final Oral Examination

Preparation

Once the candidate's dissertation has been reviewed and approved by the Reading Committee and Supervisory Committee Chair(s), a final oral examination may be scheduled.

The final oral examination must be scheduled for a date when a majority of the Supervisory Committee, including the Chair(s), are available for the examination. Exceptions may be made only by permission of the Dean for Graduate Studies.

Examination

The final examination for the doctoral degree is oral and open to the University community and the public.

- The Supervisory Committee determines the defense's character and length. The examination may be devoted to the special field of the dissertation or to the Candidate's general knowledge, or it may be designed to test judgment and critical powers.
- All persons may be present during the dissertation presentation and general questioning. However, this is followed by a closed questioning portion of the examination for which all persons except the Candidate, Supervisory Committee, and invited faculty must be excused.
- The final oral examination over the dissertation may be waived only with the consent of the Dean for Graduate Studies.

Results

The Supervisory Committee reports the results of the final oral examination to Graduate Studies.

1. If the committee agrees unanimously that the student has passed: A Report of Completion (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral/#oralexam>) is signed by all committee members present for the defense.
2. If only one member dissents: The dissenting member files a letter of explanation in Graduate Studies, but the student is approved for the degree and a Report of Completion is signed accordingly.
3. If more than one member dissents: The student fails to pass the final oral exam. The committee files a report on the failure in Graduate Studies, indicating what the student must do before attempting another examination. A student may attempt a final oral exam only once per term.

Depositing

Following the successful completion of the oral examination, the student should complete the remaining Doctoral Milestones (<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/doctoral/#oralexam>).

Only abstracts and dissertations that meet all published requirements can be approved and stamped for depositing.

Depositing also involves payment of a processing fee and, if applicable, a fee to register a copyright.