PH.D. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

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The Doctoral Degree Program enables students to complete a research project of notable scope and originality that will make a significant contribution to the discipline of Geography and related fields. Advanced coursework provides an opportunity to gain familiarity with current knowledge in the student’s areas of specialization. Student expertise in their chosen subfields is ensured through the Preliminary Review and General Examination. Students may choose to write either a Dissertation or three papers of publishable quality. All such research efforts are expected to meet high standards of research design and data analysis.

REQUIRED COURSES*

1. Geography 500, Contemporary Geographic Thought.

2. Geography 511, Contemporary Research Design in Geography, or another approved social science research design course from another department—for more information, please consult the Graduate Program Coordinator.

3. One methods course, from among the following Geography 525 (Advanced Qualitative Methods in Geography), Geography 526 (Advanced Quantitative Methods in Geography), Geography 560 (GIS Analysis), Geography 561 (Urban GIS), Geography 562 (Coastal GIS), and Geography 564 (GIS Decision Support).

4. Satisfactory completion of at least three quarters of Geography 598.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS*

- The completion of at least two department research seminars numbered 500 or above, but not including Geography 502 or Geography 513.
- Submission of a scholarly article to a professionally-reviewed academic journal or application for research support from an external agency, such as the National Science Foundation. The publication may be jointly-authored with a faculty member or other graduate student.
- Evidence of reading competence in a foreign language or a sound level of competence in a cognate field of concentration as determined by the student’s Supervisory Committee.
- Completion of 90 credits, at least 60 at the University of Washington. (including 27 Geog 800 credits).
- With the approval of the degree-granting unit, an appropriate master's degree from an accredited institution may substitute for 30 credits of enrollment.
- Numerical grades must be received in at least 18 quarter credits of course work taken at the UW prior to scheduling the General Examination. The Graduate School accepts numerical grades in approved 400-level courses accepted as part of the major, and in all 500-level courses. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 is required for a graduate degree at the University.
- Successful completion of a Preliminary Review, usually undertaken during the first year.
- Creditable passage of the General Examination. Registration as a graduate student is required the quarter the exam is taken and candidacy is conferred.
- Preparation of and acceptance by the Dean of the Graduate School of a dissertation (or three high-quality research papers) that is a significant contribution to knowledge and clearly indicates training in research. Credit for the dissertation ordinarily should be at least one-third of the total credit. The Candidate must register for a minimum of 27 credits of dissertation over a period of at least three quarters. At least one quarter must come after the student passes the General Examination. With the exception of summer quarter, students are limited to a maximum of 10 credits per quarter of
dissertation (800).

- Creditable passage of a Final Examination, which is usually devoted to the defense of the dissertation and the field with which it is concerned. The General and Final Examinations cannot be scheduled during the same quarter. Registration as a graduate student, registered for at least two credits, is required the quarter the exam is taken and the degree is conferred.
- Completion of all work for the doctoral degree within ten years. This includes quarters spent On-Leave or out of status as well as applicable work from the master’s degree from the UW or a master’s degree from another institution, if applied toward one year of resident study.
- A student must satisfy the requirements that are in force at the time the degree is to be awarded.

A grade of at least 3.0 in all departmental courses, and a grade of 2.7 in all related courses used to satisfy degree requirements. An overall grade point average of 3.0 must be maintained to remain in the program.

* Students who earned an M.A. at the University of Washington will necessarily have already met several of these requirements.

**SUGGESTED PH.D. TIMETABLE**

**YEAR 1**

**FALL**
1. Determine appropriate class(es) to take in addition to Geog 500 and 598.
2. Consult with relevant faculty about possible research interests.

**WINTER**
1. Determine faculty advisor, and confirm this with Graduate Program Coordinator.
2. Begin discussions about areas of subdisciplinary interest, possible dissertation topics, and format of Preliminary Review with advisor and relevant other faculty.
3. Discuss future coursework with advisor, including appropriate methods courses.

**SPRING**
1. Continue coursework in consultation with advisor.
2. Schedule and complete Preliminary Review.
3. Research possible opportunities for acquiring funding for dissertation research.

**YEAR 2**

**FALL**
1. Continue coursework in consultation with advisor.
2. Formalize composition of Graduate Committee.
4. Consider applying for funding for dissertation research.

**WINTER AND SPRING**
1. Continue coursework, as necessary. Enroll in dissertation credits if advisable.
2. Schedule and complete General Examination.

**YEARS 3 AND 4**
1. Schedule and complete dissertation proposal defense. [This should occur as early in Year 3 as possible.]
2. Enroll in dissertation credits, as necessary.
3. As possible, submit paper(s) to academic journals for publication.

**FORMING A COMMITTEE**

Students should work to determine the faculty member most appropriate to serve as the Chair of the student's preliminary committee. Ideally, this decision will be made by the end of the first quarter, but
certainly no later than the middle of the second quarter. At least two additional members must serve on the student's committee. Both the Chair and one other committee member must be on the Geography graduate faculty.

The preliminary committee is responsible for helping the student identify necessary and beneficial courses, and helping to isolate a possible topic for dissertation research. The committee also oversees the preliminary review.

THE PRELIMINARY REVIEW

The Preliminary Review is intended for assessment and advising purposes. It gives both the student and faculty an opportunity to assess the student's academic preparation in advance of the General Examination. It includes a review of the student's familiarity with the literatures central to the fields in which she/he wishes to demonstrate competence on the General Examination. It also helps the preliminary committee to articulate the most effective curriculum to help the student prepare for the General Examination and to acquire the necessary methodological skills for successful dissertation research and writing.

Although the exact nature of the Preliminary Review is left to the committee's discretion, it will include a written and oral component.

The written component might consist of questions administered in a fashion analogous to the General Examination. It might consist of an extended outline of the student's educational goals, description of progress to date, and an overview of the areas of sub-disciplinary expertise that the student wishes to attain, complete with relevant bibliographies.

The oral component, which commonly lasts 1-2 hours, offers the preliminary committee an opportunity to assess the student's familiarity with relevant literatures and to discuss a course of action leading to the General Examination.

At the conclusion of a successful Preliminary Review, students will commonly be advised to formally constitute a Supervisory Committee and to set a tentative date for the General Examination. If the committee possesses concerns about the student's level of preparation, it may request a second Preliminary Review. If this occurs, the student will be provided a written explanation of the committee's concerns and a set of expected actions to undertake prior to a second Review.

THE DOCTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

The Doctoral Supervisory Committee is recognized by the Graduate School, and must be constituted prior to the General Examination. Rules regarding the makeup of this committee are specified in Graduate School Memorandum 13. The doctoral supervisory committee consists of a minimum of four members, at least three of whom, including the Chair and the Graduate School Representative (GSR), must be members of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to chair doctoral committees. A majority of the members must be members of the Graduate Faculty. The remaining members must be identified by the student's appointing department or program as productive scholars in the student's major field and/or subfields. The Chair(s) of a committee must be able and willing to assume primary responsibility for advising the student. In addition, the Chair(s) should have adequate time available for this work and should be accessible to the student. Emeritus faculty may serve as a Chair if the above conditions are met. Co-Chairs may be appointed when both serve with equal importance on a student's supervisory committee and equally share the responsibility for the student's progress.

The GSR must be a productive scholar in his or her own research area that may differ from that of the student's dissertation project. The GSR represents the broad concerns of The Graduate School with respect to high standards of scholarly performance, ensuring that the student's mastery of the subject matter is broad and comprehensive. The GSR is a voting member of the committee and must attest to the validity of examinations, indicate approval of the process by which examinations are conducted, ensure that the student is treated in an unbiased manner, and represent The Graduate School in ensuring university-wide standards of scholarly performance. The GSR must sign the warrant. As a full voting member of the dissertation supervisory committee, the GSR provides an important service function to The Graduate School and the University.

It is vital that the appearance of conflict of interest in the selection of the GSR be avoided. Budgetary
relationships, personal relationships, or research and/or publication relationships between the GSR and either the student or the committee chair are examples of possible conflicts of interest. The GSR is responsible for ensuring that no such conflicts of interest, or appearance of conflicts of interest, exist, and must attest to this upon request. For GSR eligibility, roles, and responsibilities, see:

http://www.grad.washington.edu/policies/doctoral/gsr-eligibility.shtml

When the Supervisory Committee members have been agreed upon, the student should provide the list of names to the Graduate Program Assistant, who will then submit the committee to the Graduation School.

GENERAL EXAMINATION – FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

The General Examination is intended to measure the breadth and depth of the student’s theoretical understanding of the main fields of geography and of a particular set of sub-fields. It ensures that students possess adequate familiarity with their areas of subdisciplinary focus prior to the dissertation research.

Prior to the oral portion of the General Examination, the student takes a written examination in fields designated by the Supervisory Committee. The length, specificity and type of written examination are generally left to the discretion of the Committee, though all Committees aim to write questions probing for both breadth and depth. Commonly, students will take a written exam consisting of three questions, each of which is focused on a particular subdisciplinary area. The answers to these questions are circulated to the Supervisory Committee prior to the oral portion of the exam.

The oral portion of the General Examination may require the student to amplify upon, clarify or defend answers given on the written part, and may also include more general questions about the student’s field of study.

If the student passes the General Examination, the signed warrant should be placed in the student’s permanent file, and the faculty adviser should report the exam outcome to the Geography Graduate Program Assistant (GPA), who must convey it to the Graduate School by the last day of Final Examinations for that quarter in order for the student to receive candidacy for that quarter. (Otherwise, candidacy is awarded the following quarter, requiring student registration.)

If the student does not pass the General Examination, the Supervisory Committee may allow the student to be re-examined after a further period of study. In this case, the Supervisory Committee determines the nature of the period of further study, and is responsible for scheduling another examination, using the procedures described below. If the Committee is unwilling to allow a re-examination, the student’s continuation in the program is contingent upon the constitution of a new committee. Given the difficulty of accomplishing this, the student will likely be advised to withdraw from the program.

GENERAL EXAMINATIONS – SCHEDULING

A General Examination may be scheduled if:

(a) the student has completed 60 credits (some of these credits may be taken the same quarter of the exam); At least 30 of those credits must be from the UW and must meet the following requirements:

- Minimum 18 credits of coursework at the 500 level
- Minimum 18 numerically graded UW credits of approved 400 and 500 level course work. Credits may be counted from the same quarter of the exam, even though they are not completed. (The 18 credits at the 500 level may overlap with the 18 numerically graded credits.)

With department approval, 30 credits from an appropriate master's degree from an accredited institution may be applied toward the 60 credits needed for the General Exam. If the master's degree is from the Geography department, more than 30 course work credits may be allowed. Credits from the master's degree count toward the total credit count and do not count toward the requirements listed above.

(b) the Preliminary Review has been completed;

(c) all members of the supervisory committee agree that the student's background of study and preparation is sufficient and have approved the student to schedule a General Examination; and

(d) the student is enrolled in at least 2 credits during the quarter the exam is scheduled.
The Graduate School Representative must be physically present at the oral examination. To schedule a General Examination, the student must first establish the Supervisory Committee. The student must then arrange day, time, and location of exam in consultation with members of the committee.

http://www.grad.washington.edu/mygrad/student.htm

The student's transcript will be evaluated by the Graduate School to ensure that requirements have been met. If there is a problem or question with an evaluation, the department will be notified. The General Examination Warrant will be printed by the Advising Office and given to your Committee Chair prior to the examination.

For a quorum to exist at the exam, the Supervisory Committee Chair, the GSR and two other committee members must be present. For more information, see Graduate School Memorandum #13:

http://www.grad.washington.edu/acad/gsmemos/gsmemo13.htm

The student becomes a doctoral candidate (Ph.C.) after successful completion of the General Examination.

**DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

Students who pass the General Examination must prepare a dissertation proposal for review by the Supervisory Committee. The proposal must: outline a clear research question; situate that question within relevant literature; outline a methodological strategy for collecting the necessary data; describe a process for analyzing that data; and include a timeline for completion of the work. The proposal is reviewed during a meeting, commonly termed the proposal defense, with the student and his/her Supervisory Committee. The GSR is not required to attend the proposal defense.

Failure of the student to obtain approval for the Ph.D. dissertation proposal within two years of advancement to candidacy will normally result in a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School that the student be terminated from the Ph.D. program in Geography.

**COMPLETING THE DEGREE**

**READING COMMITTEE**

As students near completion of their dissertations, and before scheduling the Final Examination, a Reading Committee is selected to read and report on the dissertation. After consultation, either the Chair or the student should inform the Graduate Program Assistant of the three to four members from the Supervisory Committee to serve as the Reading Committee. At least one of the members of the Reading Committee must hold an endorsement to chair doctoral committees. The Graduate Advising Office will transmit the information to the Graduate School. The Reading Committee is appointed to read and approve the dissertation. (Generally, the GSR is not a member of the Reading Committee.) The Reading Committee is appointed to read and approve the dissertation. It is the responsibility of a Reading Committee to (a) ensure that the dissertation is a significant contribution to knowledge and is an acceptable piece of scholarly writing; (b) determine the appropriateness of a candidate's dissertation as a basis for issuing a warrant for a Final Examination; (c) approve a candidate's dissertation and; (d) sign two original Signature Pages that are placed within a dissertation after all revisions are completed.

**FINAL EXAMINATION**

Ph.D. students are required to undertake a final examination at the conclusion of the graduate program. This examination includes a 30-minute public presentation of a summary of the dissertation, followed by a closed session with the student's committee that focuses intensively on the quality of the dissertation. There should be only minor changes in the dissertation at this time.

A Final Examination may be scheduled if: (a) a student passed a General Examination in a previous quarter; (b) a reading committee is officially established with the Graduate School and; (c) a reading committee has read an entire draft of a dissertation and voting members of a supervisory committee agree that a candidate is prepared to take a Final Examination, and (d) the student is registered for at least two credits of Geog 800 in the quarter of the Final Examination.

The student should consult with all committee members to find a mutually-agreed-upon time, date and location for the Final examination. Students should check for the availability of Smith 409 with the main
Geography Dept. Office, Smith 408. Once these details are agreed upon, students should submit the Online Request for Final Examination at: http://www.grad.washington.edu/mygrad/student.htm

The Geography GPA will then be asked to approve the scheduling of the Final Exam online, and official notice of the exam will be e-mailed to all committee members.

The Final Examination Warrant will be printed by the Advising Office and made available to the Committee Chair prior to the examination. After the Final Examination, the signed Warrant needs to be placed in the permanent student file and the Chair must notify the Geography GPA of the exam results by 4:00 the last day of the quarter (finals week). All committee members must also sign a Reading Committee Approval form, to be submitted to the Graduate School. This form may be printed out via the student's MyGrad-Student View page.

If an examination is unsatisfactory, a supervisory committee may recommend that the Dean of the Graduate School permit a second examination after a period of additional study. Click here for dissertation submission & publication guidelines.

In addition to the signed warrant (to be kept in the student's permanent departmental file), the student must also get signatures on the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Approval Form. This form must be signed after all committee members have seen the final version of the dissertation, and submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the quarter the student wishes to graduate. Information about the dissertation-filing process can be found at:

http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/etd/info.shtml

It may be possible to pay the $250 Graduate Registration Waiver Fee if you were not able to submit your dissertation by the end of the quarter. Consult the Graduate School website for eligibility requirements:

http://www.grad.washington.edu/area/regwaiver.htm

Source URL: https://geography.washington.edu/phd-degree-requirements