

# ***ELEVEN STEPS TO YOUR DOCTORATE***

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Upon admission to the doctoral program, you will be assigned a **temporary advisor**. This person will help you plan your early coursework and answer general questions about the program. If you have additional questions or problems, contact the chairperson of the specialization management committee (for interdepartmental specializations) or the appropriate department head (for departmental specializations).

As a doctoral student you will have a role in selecting the faculty members who make up your doctoral supervisory committee, including your chairperson. As part of an annual review process for the College, your progress toward the degree will be evaluated by the chairperson of your committee and appropriate administrators (Department Head and the CEHS Dean).

In working on your doctorate, make sure that all appropriate forms are filed with the Graduate School in a timely manner. It is a good idea to "check off" the paperwork requirements as you proceed on the checklist provided by the Graduate School ([www.usu.edu/gradsch/current/](http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/current/)). You may also call the Graduate School (797-1189) to find out whether appropriate forms have been approved by the Graduate Dean.

Use the following eleven steps as your general guide. As you follow these steps refer to various policies, guidelines, and forms elsewhere in this document. **Remember that the responsibility for knowing and following these steps rests with you.**

### **Getting Started**

#### 1. After Admission

Before registering for courses, meet with your temporary advisor to discuss a proposed course of study and timetable for the degree. For this

meeting, you will need a Schedule Bulletin, a "Planning Guide" (from your specialization coordinator), and a "Schedule of EDUC Courses" (<http://idp.usu.edu/>).

The latter document is especially helpful in planning your program. This meeting will probably involve some general discussion of your research interests. In planning your timetable, be aware that most students underestimate the time required to complete a doctorate. Do yourself a favor -- set realistic goals.

## **Doctoral Committees/Dissertation**

### **2. After 12 credits**

After completing your first set of courses, meet again with your temporary advisor. Review your progress in the program and discuss your research interests. With your advisor's advice, identify faculty who might act as your committee chairperson or serve on your doctoral supervisory committee. Make certain that identified faculty are approved to chair or serve on doctoral committees. A current list of eligible faculty is available at: <http://idp.usu.edu/idpfacultylist.pdf>.

It will be your responsibility to contact faculty, informing them of your area of specialization and research interests (if known) and inviting them to serve on your committee. Faculty members will make decisions based on the information you provide about your interests. Your initial supervisory committee will range from **three-to-five** persons and be recommended by your department head. The CEHS Dean must approve the committee and forward the recommendation to the Graduate Dean for consideration and final approval.

The "Supervisory Committee Approval Form" can be found at: (<http://idp.usu.edu/forms/committeeform.pdf>). For additional information on forming your doctoral committee see the guidelines under the Forms section of the IDP website at <http://idp.usu.edu/forms.php>.

### **3. After 24 Credits**

With your supervisory committee set up, work with your committee chairperson to schedule a meeting to approve your proposed coursework. For full-time students, this meeting will generally be held near the end of the second semester of study. For this meeting, you will need to prepare a "Program of Study for Doctoral Degree" Form, available from the Graduate School (<http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/forms/PHD%20POS.pdf>).

After all the appropriate signatures have been added this form should be duplicated and mailed to the School of Graduate Studies.

The Graduate School requires this form to be submitted prior to the end of the third semester. A hold will be placed on your registration for the next semester if the form has not been submitted.

## **Setting a Research Agenda**

### 4. During Research/Statistics Courses

As you take EDUC 6600, 6770, and 7610 continue to meet with your committee chairperson to discuss your proposed area of research. As your research topic becomes clear, work with your committee chair to set up a five-person doctoral supervisory committee if you have not already done so. Because you will write a literature review in EDUC 7670, it is helpful to have identified a research area or topic before enrolling in EDUC 7670.

If your research interests change, work with your chairperson to make adjustments in committee membership. Any such changes should be made on the Graduate School "Supervisory Committee Approval" form. This form is available at <http://idp.usu.edu/forms/committeeform.pdf>

### 5. Preparing for Specialization Comprehensive Exam

Students pursuing a doctoral degree in the CEHS Interdepartmental Doctorate Program must successfully pass an 8-hour, written comprehensive examination (including Foundations, Area of Emphasis, and Research Methods). A doctoral student in the Curriculum and Instruction Speciality Area, with consent of his or her doctoral supervisory committee, may request a 72-hour, open-book, written comprehensive examination instead of a proctored 8-hour exam.

The comprehensive examination will provide students with the opportunity to synthesize coursework, relate their program of studies to professional interests and experience, and to demonstrate competencies necessary to conduct independent dissertation research.

The exam questions are written collaboratively by the student's graduate committee. Instructors of appropriate courses may be consulted as needed. Working with the graduate committee, a student may help formulate the questions for the exam. The entire exam will be evaluated by the student's graduate committee. A student must receive a pass judgment on **each** answer by a majority (three or more) in order to pass

the examination. Each specialization has separate guidelines for the comprehensive exam. These guidelines are available from your advisor.

Students must take the examination during the scheduled times, after all coursework relevant to the exam has been completed, and **not before the last semester of coursework**; excluding credit for dissertation, internship, and fieldwork in the specialty area. Schedule this exam through your chair and the CEHS Dean's Office, no sooner than the last semester of coursework. The research/statistics courses must be completed before taking this exam. For more information see:  
<http://idp.usu.edu/docs/examinationsched06.php>

Although you may work on your dissertation proposal during the sequence of research courses, your doctoral supervisory committee cannot consider the proposal for approval until after you have passed the comprehensive examination. You must be enrolled during the semester you take the comprehensive exam. (Comprehensive Examination Sign-Up Sheet, <http://idp.usu.edu/docs/compsignupform.pdf>).

## 6. After Passing Comprehensive Exam

With your coursework essentially completed and your exam passed, work with your committee chairperson and committee members to prepare (or finalize) your dissertation proposal. For format, consult the most recent edition of the Publication Guide for Graduate Students at Utah State University (<http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/thesis-diss-info/publicationguide.pdf>), and the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 5th Edition (available from the USU Bookstore). Also, be certain to consult the "Guidelines for MS Plan A Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation Research Proposals" (<http://www.cehs.usu.edu/ors/proposal%20review.htm>) and see "USU Policy and Procedures on Research Fraud by Graduate Students." (<http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/thesis-diss-info/>)

Doctoral candidates must have made a professional presentation (see [http://www.cehs.usu.edu/idp/forms/pro\\_competency.pdf](http://www.cehs.usu.edu/idp/forms/pro_competency.pdf)) and submit for publication (or have prepared for submission at the time they schedule their dissertation defense), an approved manuscript or other scholarly work. Submissions must be to refereed journals for PhD students and to refereed or professional journals for EdD students, or reputable publishers as approved by the supervisory committee; such submissions may occur before the dissertation is finished. The student must be the first (or senior) author or producer, but the manuscript must be related to the dissertation or to the field of specialization. **Verification of the presentation and publication are required before the final oral examination is given.**

7. Proposal Review - <http://www.cehs.usu.edu/ors/proposal%20review.htm>

There is no hard and fast rule regarding the length of the proposal. However, faculty generally agree that it takes a proposal of 30 pages to include sufficient detail for committee members to ascertain the level of the student's understanding and the merit of the proposed research. Each student should discuss proposal length and content with his or her major advisor. While IRB approval cannot be sought until after the defense, most chairs want the proposal appendix to include any essential information that the IRB will request.

Once your proposal has the tentative approval of your chairperson, copies should be sent to all committee members for review and a proposal defense date set. To allow adequate review time, the proposal defense meeting date should be set no sooner than two weeks from the date the proposal is received by all committee members.

## Conducting Independent Research

8. After Proposal Review

If your committee approves your proposal, committee members will sign the "Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree" form. <http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/forms/AppforCandidacy.pdf> . Hold on to this signed form as you still need to get an IRB approval number before it is complete.

Your final copy of your proposal (including any requested revisions) with a signed cover sheet and appropriate forms ([http://www.usu.edu/research/irb/forms.cfm.](http://www.usu.edu/research/irb/forms.cfm)) must now be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB process can take 4 to 6 weeks to complete so be sure to figure this into your dissertation timeline.

Once you receive an authorization number from the IRB, submit your now completed "**Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree**" form to the Dean of CEHS. The Dean's Office will forward the **Application for Candidacy** and to the Graduate School. This form indicates that any changes in your coursework have been approved, that you have passed your comprehensive exams, that your dissertation proposal has been approved, and that you may now proceed with a dissertation study.

## 9. After Proposal Approval

Your proposal is an agreement between you and your doctoral supervisory committee. Procedures outlined in your proposal constitute the minimum acceptable for your dissertation; you may, of course, add areas of inquiry as your research develops. Please note that all changes should be discussed with your chairperson and that all major changes must be approved by your committee members.

Before writing your dissertation, familiarize yourself with the format guidelines in the most recent edition of the Publication Guide for Graduate Students at Utah State University, and the Copyright Policy.  
<http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/thesis-diss-info/Publicationguide.pdf>

In writing your paper, follow accepted reporting guidelines (usually APA style). To save unnecessary work, make sure you attend a workshop on dissertation format conducted by the Thesis Coordinator at the Graduate School. Phone 797-1189 for information about workshops to be conducted. (<http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/thesis-diss-info/>)

Work closely with your committee chairperson as you prepare various drafts of your dissertation. Please note that before you defend your dissertation, it must meet APA style (or another style designated by your committee).

When your chairperson agrees that the dissertation is in final form and ready for defense, distribute your dissertation to all committee members. Your dissertation, **in final form**, must be given to all committee members **no less than four weeks** before the final oral defense. After allowing time for committee members to read the dissertation, obtain your committee's signatures on the "Appointment for Examination" form (<http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/forms/examthesisdiss.cfm>). Turn in this form to the Graduate School no less than ten working days before the defense.

In planning your defense date, be aware that the Graduate School publishes doctoral deadlines each year for winter and spring commencement exercises. These dates are posted under completion and commencement deadlines at: <http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/current/>.

## 10. Dissertation Defense

You must have been in continuous enrollment and enrolled for at least 3 credits the semester that you schedule your dissertation defense. Your dissertation, **in final form**, must be given to all committee members **no less than four weeks** before the final oral defense. All committee member **MUST** be present at the defense. If committee member cannot attend the defense but can participate via telecommunications, a memo from the Department Head needs to be sent to the Dean of the Graduate for pre-approval prior to the defense. Visitors are invited to the defense of dissertation via posted announcements. (See Notice of Doctoral Oral Examination and Attendance of Visitors at Dissertation Defense Policy <http://www.cehs.usu.edu/idp/forms.php>).

You should be prepared to defend the dissertation as written and submitted to your committee. Your committee may suggest editorial changes; however, if the oral examination indicates weaknesses that require major revisions, your defense must be rescheduled.

A range of options is available to committees: clear pass, pass with editorial changes, rewrite for chair or committee approval, re-examination, or failure. For your defense to be considered satisfactory, all five committee members must concur. A report of the results of the exam is filed with other materials at the conclusion of the defense.

At the defense, you must submit verification of the professional presentation and article for publication if this has not been previously done. A copy of the presentation verification form is available at [http://www.cehs.usu.edu/idp/forms/pro\\_competency.pdf](http://www.cehs.usu.edu/idp/forms/pro_competency.pdf) . A copy of the submitted publication with the letter of submission (or a copy of a published article) is the appropriate verification for the publication requirement.

## 11. After the Defense

Work with your committee chairperson and/or designated committee members to make any minor changes or corrections in your approved dissertation.

After any requested changes have been made, your dissertation must also be checked for format by the Department Format Advisor. This person has been assigned to check the format of dissertations prior to their submission to the graduate school. There is a fee for this format check and it is based on how much time your formatting takes. The cleaner your format, the less it costs. The format form that must accompany your final

dissertation is available at <http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/forms/THesis-Diss-styleform.pdf>

Take your dissertation and signed "Thesis/Dissertation Format and Style Form" to the Thesis Coordinator of the Graduate School. Once you have the final signatures of your committee and approval by the Thesis Coordinator and the Graduate Dean, you will need to pick up your dissertation, make copies, and deliver it to the Merrill-Cazier Library for microfilming and binding.

Make sure to follow the various steps for printing, binding, and microfilming outlined by the Graduate School; otherwise, your graduation could be delayed. (See <http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/current/DoC-Checklist11-05.pdf> and <http://www.usu.edu/gradsch/thesis-diss-info/>).