

PhD Student Handbook

Department of Speech, Language,
& Hearing Sciences
Auburn University

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 4

 Purpose 4

 The Department..... 4

 History..... 4

 Departmental Organization 4

 Program Goals and Objectives 4

 Expectations 5

 Departmental Responsibilities 5

 Student Responsibilities 5

ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING 6

 Admissions Process 6

 Funding..... 6

 Assistantships 6

ADVISING AND GUIDANCE 7

 Academic Advisement 7

 Major Professor 7

 PhD Advisory Committee Requirements..... 7

 Annual Reviews 8

PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS..... 8

 Coursework..... 8

 Credit Hours and Course Load 8

 Coursework 9

 Registration Process 9

 PhD in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Course Outline 10

 Proposed SLHS PhD Curriculum Map 10

 PhD in SLHS Course Checklist 12

 Qualifying Examination Process 13

 Dissertation Prospectus 14

 Dissertation Defense..... 14

MILESTONES AND TIMELINE 16

Typical Timeline of Major Milestones (assuming a 4-year program)	16
APPENDIX.....	17

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This handbook provides students with information about the policies and procedures governing the PhD program of the Department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences. It should be used as a supplement to the Auburn University Graduate Student Resource Guide available at this [link](#).

Although the goal is to cover departmental policies and procedures as completely as possible, these are subject to change as professional, university, and departmental policies evolve. Every attempt will be made to keep students informed of changes as they arise and to keep this handbook up to date. The application of policies may also vary with exceptional circumstances related to an individual student. Thus, students should seek clarification and additional information as needed from their Academic Advisor, the Director of PhD Studies (DPS), and the Department Chair.

The Department

History

The Department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences (SLHS) at Auburn University is one of the U.S.'s oldest communication sciences and disorders programs, receiving its initial accreditation in 1965. The SLHS department has long-established and well-respected undergraduate, clinical master's speech language pathology, and Doctor of Audiology (AuD) degrees. The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree program was established in Fall term 2026.

Throughout its history, the department has maintained a commitment to the scientific exploration of normal and disordered speech, language, and hearing processes, which is critical to future progress in the assessment and treatment of speech, language, and hearing problems. Over the years, the SLHS department at Auburn University has become one of the most respected training programs in the Southeast U.S. We are proud of our history, and we are excited to have you join us as we continue forward.

Departmental Organization

The department is led by a Department Chair. The Graduate Program Officer (GPO) oversees the three graduate programs in the SLHS department (PhD, AuD, MS-SLP). The Director of PhD Studies leads the PhD program specifically, and sometimes the GPO also fills this position. Other key people for PhD students to know are the Lead Administrative Assistant (Admin) and the Administrative Support Associate (ASA). The GPO assists with all components of the student system of record such as tracking progress, grades, and completion of program milestones. The following people currently fill these positions:

Departmental Chair	Allison Plumb	amp0016@auburn.edu
Graduate Program Officer (GPO)	Mary Sandage	sandamj@auburn.edu
Director of PhD Studies (DPS)	Mary Sandage	sandamj@auburn.edu
Lead Administrative Assistant (Admin)	Haley McAbee	hem0002@auburn.edu
Administrative Support Associate	Brian Turney	bmt0045@auburn.edu

Program Goals and Objectives

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is the highest scholarly degree awarded by the University. The primary goal of Auburn's SLHS PhD program is to prepare students for academic careers, specifically as high-impact professors in research-intensive universities. Graduates of the SLHS program may

also find career opportunities in other academic and industry environments. To achieve this goal, we focus on the following three main objectives:

- (1) Provide strong foundational knowledge and skills in basic and/or clinical research including:
 - a. Understanding of the principles of scientific inquiry, ethics, and scholarly values.
 - b. Proficiency in research design, data collection, and analysis. This includes formulating questions and hypotheses to address important research questions.
 - c. Communicating the results of research, including presentations at professional meetings and publication in peer-reviewed journals.
 - d. Understanding of methods for seeking / applying for research support and funding and experience writing grant applications.
- (2) Provide a rigorous foundation of knowledge. This is accomplished primarily through coursework, which will help build expertise in an area of specialization.
- (3) Provide experience in mentoring and teaching.

A variety of opportunities are available within the department and through interdepartmental collaborations that allow students to specialize in areas of particular interest and relevance to their career goals.

Expectations

Departmental Responsibilities

To ensure that the program goals and objectives are met, the department has certain obligations to graduate students. The department will strive to foster an environment that is supportive of excellence, mutual trust, respect for others, and integrity. Specifically, the department will provide students with:

- An environment that supports scholarly attainment and meritorious scientific research.
- Sensitivity and responsiveness to academic needs and desires, as well as cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Encouragement for creative original study and research.
- An annual evaluation of the students' program and progress.
- Flexibility to make changes when needed, such that the program meets individual goals.
- Support and resources for a positive and productive graduate education experience.
- Access to department policies, including an avenue for input and representation.
- Reasonable accommodations for disabilities, both as students and graduate assistants.

Student Responsibilities

To ensure that the program goals and objectives are met, students have certain obligations to the department and to themselves. Students are expected to meet the following goals and responsibilities during their programs:

- Demonstrate aptitude for, and sustained interest in the program by making consistent progress, as documented in the annual review. Requirements for the degree can typically be completed in 3.5 to 5 years (including summers).
- Produce research that is worthy of publication and presentation, recognizing that publication is an expectation and fulfillment of the responsibility to share information with the scientific community.
- Participate in departmental seminars. This includes both regular attendance and periodic presentation.
- Participate in departmental teaching.

ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING

Admissions Process

The Auburn University Department of SLHS PhD program is mentor-driven, requiring applicants to first identify a faculty member who would serve as their primary mentor and advisor. The application process begins with the prospective mentor reviewing the applicant's materials to evaluate alignment with their research interests and expertise. Applicants who receive mentor support move on to a faculty-wide evaluation, where tenure-track faculty rate candidates based on academic merit, research potential, and fit with the mentor/program. The highest-rated applicants are then considered for acceptance based on available funding, with offers extended to top candidates and others placed on a waitlist if necessary. A student who completes the MA or AuD degree, but who then decides to continue in a PhD program, is considered a “new” applicant and will be evaluated with other new applicants. For typical application information, please see link on the SLHS PhD Admissions website at this [link](#).

Funding

PhD students typically receive funding support for four years (including Summer support), usually in the form of half-time assistantships (50%, 20-hours/week commitment). These are either teaching assistantships, research assistantships, or a split appointment between teaching and research. Funding may also be received from other sources. Note that admission into the program does NOT guarantee funding. Funding is considered based on an assessment of the adequacy of the student's progress, as well as available funds. Funding support beyond the fourth year of PhD studies is not guaranteed; however, it may be possible if the research mentor has laboratory funding available or if the PhD candidate secures a pre-doctoral fellowship or other outside funding.

Assistantships

Assignment: Students funded by assistantships are given work assignments on a semester-by-semester basis. These are in the form of a teaching assistantship (TA) and/or research assistantship (RA). These assignments are based on the needs of the department, graduate student skills and abilities, along with input from the faculty and students.

Eligibility: To be eligible for an assistantship, the student must be admitted to a graduate degree-seeking/certificate program, be registered for at least one course during each academic term of the assistantship and satisfy the minimum course load requirements for the individual program with satisfactory progress toward the degree. Note that international students may have additional requirements. Continued funding is also dependent on satisfactory performance of teaching, research, and/or other assigned activities.

Expectations: PhD assistantships are typically half-time (50%) and offered on a 12-month appointment with a work expectation of 20 hours/week. This commitment is in addition to other commitments such as registered research credits and courses. There is a general expectation that graduate assistants will not hold outside employment – interest in doing so must be approved by the student's mentor. Doctoral students are expected to engage in research that results in publications, including publications from their dissertation. *Dissertation data that has not been published within one calendar year from the date of graduation can be submitted (by the Chair of the dissertation committee) for publication without permission from the doctoral student, since the data is owned by Auburn University.*

ADVISING AND GUIDANCE

Academic Advisement

Major Professor

Purpose: The role of the Major Professor is to guide and oversee a student's doctoral program on behalf of the department, including determination of coursework. In addition to helping the student plan their program of study, the Major Professor is also available to counsel the student regarding any problems related to the student's program of study, professional goals, etc. If the student has questions or concerns, the Major Professor may suggest that the student talk to the DPS, GPO, or Department Chair; however, the student should initially consult the Major Professor.

Selection: The selection of the Major Professor is based on faculty members' expertise in research of interest to the student. Selection of the Major Professor usually arises from early communications between the prospective student and faculty members during the application and admission processes.

Timing: The student will typically have identified a permanent Major Professor prior to admission to the program, but the decision must be made no later than the end of the first semester in the program. The SLHS GPO and DPS must approve the appointment of the Major Professor. If needed, the Major Professor can be changed later in the program (e.g., if the faculty member leaves the University before the student has completed the program or if the student desires to shift their research focus to an area that better aligns with a different faculty member).

PhD Advisory Committee Requirements

Purpose: The advisory committee helps the student draft a doctoral plan of study including (e.g., graduate transfer credits, coursework, research, professional development), modifies the plan based on ongoing progress reviews, participates in the qualifying exam, approves the dissertation proposal, and provides approval of the dissertation written document and oral defense.

Timing: Within the first year of study, the student must form an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will hold an initial planning meeting within the first two semesters of doctoral study. Thereafter, the committee is required by the Graduate School to meet at least once every academic year until the student passes the qualifying exam.

Composition: After the student has enrolled in the PhD program, an advisory committee should be selected by the student and major professor (sometimes called the Chair) with consultation by the GPS and Department Chair as needed. The Advisory Committee is responsible for developing the student's Plan of Study and conducting the doctoral qualifying exam, the dissertation proposal approval process, and final examinations. The committee should consist of:

- At least four members, including the Chair/Major Professor, all of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty of Auburn University
- Additional voting members may be appointed to the committee, including no more than one non-Auburn University faculty member, who must hold a PhD
- At least 2 committee members, including the Major Professor, must be members of the Department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences
- At least 3 committee members, including the Major Professor, must be a "Level 2" Graduate Faculty, meaning they are authorized to direct doctoral students.

The Major Professor must also be a graduate faculty member in the department/program granting the degree. The formal appointment of the Advisory Committee occurs when the CTEC Form is submitted to the Graduate School. (<https://gradforms.auburn.edu/forms/committee-rules.html>)

Note: When submitting the dissertation draft to the Graduate School for pre-defense review, the student, in consultation with the Major Professor, designates a University Reader (“Outside Reader”). The University Reader serves as an additional member to the 4-member Advisory Committee in the review and defense of the dissertation process. The University Reader must be a member of the Auburn University Graduate Faculty from outside of the Dept. of SLHS and must be able to vet the quality of the work included in the dissertation.

Annual Reviews

A student’s progress toward their degree objective will be continuously monitored. Formal review by the Academic/Dissertation Advisor, in consultation with the appropriate committee and the entire didactic departmental faculty, will occur annually. The review will include student performance in (1) coursework, (2) teaching or research assistantships, and (3) research projects. Advisors will provide the students with a written summary of their annual review. The Annual Progress Report form will be used to document this review.

PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The PhD program provides comprehensive training for prospective scholars in speech, hearing, and language processes and their disorders. Although the program may include more intensive specialization in particular clinical problems, it is not designed as an advanced clinical degree. The primary requirements are a minimum of 60 semester hours of coursework, a preliminary project as determined by the Advisory Committee (this may be waived for students with substantial research experience prior to admission), the qualifying examination, the dissertation prospectus, and the dissertation defense. These are detailed in the following sections.

Coursework

Credit Hours and Course Load

Overall: The PhD degree at Auburn University requires a minimum of 60 semester hours of graduate coursework including dissertation course credit after earning doctoral candidate status with the following stipulations:

- At least 30 must be earned after admission while registered in the AU Graduate School.
- Up to 30 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred from previous graduate degree programs at Auburn University or elsewhere with approval from the student’s Advisory Committee.
- The proposed course schedule will be specific for each student as advised by the student’s Major Professor and Advisory Committee; however, students who have received a graduate assistantship should expect to take a minimum of 9 credits per Fall and Spring semester and a minimum of 1 credit during Summer term until reaching Doctoral Candidate status, after which 1 credit of Research and Dissertation will suffice for full-time student status.
- After completion of the qualifying examination process, registration for dissertation credits will be required for each semester until graduation. The proposed PhD curriculum is 4 full years with expected graduation in Summer term of the 4th year.

Pre-Qualifying Exam: Prior to successfully passing their qualifying exam to achieve Doctoral Candidate status, PhD students must maintain full-time registration (a minimum of 9 semester hours) each Fall and Spring semester and register for courses in Summer term. Registration should accurately reflect the amount and type of work undertaken, the use of university facilities, and the amount of consultation with faculty. Note that courses numbered 5000 or lower do not count towards degree requirements.

Post-Qualifying Exam: After successfully passing the comprehensive/qualifying exam, doctoral students may maintain full-time status by registering for 1 or more credits of SLHS 8990 Dissertation. Auburn University requires a minimum of 10 credits of SLHS 8990 to meet graduation requirements.

Coursework

The PhD program in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences is individualized for each student based on their interests and goals. Course selection is determined through close advising from the student's mentor and committee.

Coursework must fall within the following framework to demonstrate knowledge beyond the master's level:

- 15 credits of Research Methods/Design/Statistics
- Professional Development for Research Careers in Health Sciences (SLHS 8000) - Students must enroll in a total of 5 credits (1 credit in first fall, 2 credits in first and second spring). In-depth survey of professional aspects relevant to research careers in health sciences fields (e.g., ethical research practices, professional communication of scholarly work, employment readiness).
- Grant Preparation in Health Sciences (SLHS 8850) - Overview of the grant proposal preparation process, from identifying an appropriate funding mechanism to developing the materials for a grant proposal (e.g., specific aims, research plan, budget).
- 26-38 credits in Major Content Area
- 12 credits in Minor Content Area
- 10 credits of Research and Dissertation

Additional classes offered to PhD students within the Dept. include:

SLHS 7930 Directed Studies: Conferences, readings, research or reports in a specialized area of communication disorders. Course may be repeated for a maximum of 3 credit hours.

SLHS 7970 Special Topics Seminar: Advanced treatment of contemporary topics and trends, as well as current research aspects of audiology and speech-language pathology. Course may be repeated for a maximum of 4 credit hours.

Registration Process

For the first semester, individual advising takes place during orientation week. Thereafter, during the latter part of each semester, students are assigned times for early registration for the upcoming semester. The Academic Advisor is responsible for authorizing the student's registration. Students may proceed to register online at any time after meeting with their advisors and receiving approval of their plan of study for the next session.

PhD in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Course Outline

Required courses for students with:		
Master's degree in AuD, SLHS, or related area	Master's degree in unrelated area	Bachelor's degree in SLHS or related area
Research methods, design, and/or statistics (15 credits)	Research methods, design, and/or statistics (15 credits)	Research methods, design, and/or statistics (15 credits)
Major content area (18 credits)	Major content area (24 credits)	Major content area (24-30 credits)
Minor content area (12 credits)	Minor content area (12 credits)	Minor content area (12 credits)
Research and dissertation (10 credits)	Research and dissertation (10 credits)	Research and dissertation (10 credits)
Total number of credit hours:		
63	69	69-75

Proposed SLHS PhD Curriculum Map

Below is an example curriculum map for a doctoral student plan of study. This example would be for a student with a master's degree in SLHS or an AuD. The timing and content of specific coursework may differ based on course offerings and each student's individualized plan of study.

Year 1 - Fall 1		Year 1 - Spring 1		Year 1 - Summer 1	
Major Content Area course	3	Major Content Area course	3	Major Content Area course	3
Major Content Area course	3	Minor Content Area course	3	Statistics	3
Research Methods/Design	3	Statistics	3		
SLHS 8000 Professional Development	1	SLHS 8000 Professional Development	2		
Credits	10	Credits	11	Credits	6

Year 2 - Fall 2		Year 2 - Spring 2		Year 2 - Summer 2	
SLHS 8850 Grant Proposal Preparation in Health Sciences	3	Major Content Area course	3	Major Content Area course	3
Statistics	3	Minor Content Area course	3	Minor Content Area course	3
Research Methods/Design	3	SLHS 8000 Professional Development	2	<i>Defend Qualifying Examination, become a PhD Candidate</i>	
Major Content Area course	3				
Credits	12	Credits	8	Credits	6

Year 3 - Fall 3		Year 3 - Spring 3		Year 3 - Summer 3	
SLHS 8990 Research & Dissertation	2	SLHS 8990 Research & Dissertation	2	SLHS 8990 Research & Dissertation	2
GRAD 8AA0 ⁺	N/A	GRAD 8AA0	N/A	GRAD 8AA0	N/A
Credits	2	Credits	2	Credits	2

Year 4 - Fall 4		Year 4 - Spring 4		Year 4 - Summer 4	
SLHS 8990 Research & Dissertation	2	SLHS 8990 Research & Dissertation	2	SLHS 8990 Research & Dissertation	1
GRAD 8AA0	N/A	GRAD 8AA0	N/A	GRAD 8AA0	N/A
				<i>Defend Dissertation</i>	
Credits	2	Credits	2	Credits	1

**Required for every semester enrolled in SLHS 8990 Research and Dissertation with <9 total credits in order to be considered full time*

PhD in SLHS Course Checklist

☐ _____ credits transferred from previous graduate degree (up to 30). Courses:

☐ _____ credits in major content area (18-30). List courses below:

☐ 1 credit in SLHS 8000 Professional Development (typically in Fall 1)

☐ 2 credits in SLHS 8000 Professional Development (typically in Spring 1)

☐ 2 credits in SLHS 8000 Professional Development (typically in Spring 2)

☐ 3 credits in SLHS 8850 Grant Proposal Preparation in Health Sciences

☐ 15 credits in research methods, design, and/or statistics. Courses:

☐ 12 credits in minor content area

Courses:

Didactic coursework must be completed before registering for SLHS 8990 Research and Dissertation.

☐ 10 credits in SLHS 8990 Research and Dissertation

☐ Qualifying exams

☐ Dissertation proposal

☐ Publication submission

☐ Course instructor for _____

☐ Dissertation defense

Preliminary Project

Purpose: Students will complete a preliminary project under the guidance of their Major Professor within their first year of study. The project will be approved by the Advisory Committee but is completed under the guidance of the Major Professor. The Preliminary Project may be waived for students with substantial research experience prior to admission, determined by the Advisory Committee and Major Professor.

Qualifying Examination Process

Purpose: Each student pursuing a doctoral degree will complete a qualifying examination process (also sometimes called a comprehensive or preliminary examination) administered by their Advisory Committee. The primary purpose of the General Oral Examination is to assess the student's understanding of the broad body of knowledge in a field of study. The examination also affords the advisory committee an opportunity to review the student's proposed research and understanding of research methods and literature in the chosen field. If the general examination reveals deficiencies in any of these areas, the advisory committee may recommend remedial work, re-examination, or discontinuation of doctoral study.

The focus of the qualifying examination process will be developed by the Major Professor and Advisory Committee, and may include any of the following (e.g.): traditional examination questions written over the course of a few days; development of grant proposal elements, i.e., specific aims and research strategy; systematic review, etc. Qualifying examinations for all students will include two components: (1) a written examination and (2) an oral examination.

Timing: **Students must have completed 30 graded credit hours of coursework in order to proceed with the General Oral Examination portion of the qualifying examination.** The qualifying exam should be taken at or near the end of the formal preparation/coursework, typically toward the end of the 2nd year of study. The qualifying examination must be passed within 6 years of the student's first enrollment in the program. The written component of the qualifying examination (i.e., written responses to committee questions, grant proposal, research paper) must be submitted at least ten days prior to the oral examination.

Requirements:

- (1) A student must be registered in the Graduate College at the time of the qualifying examination. To take the exam in the summer requires the student to register for course credit.
- (2) The written portion of the qualifying exam must be submitted to the student's advisory committee a minimum of ten days before the date of the oral examination, or earlier if the Advisory Committee requests this.
- (3) The written portion of the examination does not require approval in advance by the Graduate School. The oral portion of the examination does require such approval. The General Oral Examination portion of the qualifying examination process is scheduled by submitting the **Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination**. The Advisory Committee, as identified on the **Committee, Transfers, Exceptions, and Candidacy (CTEC) Form**, must be approved by the Graduate School prior to scheduling the General Oral Exam. Graduate School forms are available at this [link](#).
- (4) The oral portion of the exam must be held at a time that is agreed upon by all committee members.
- (5) With rare exceptions, the qualifying exam should be conducted at or near the end of coursework. Except for mentored research credits, courses taken after the comprehensive exam must have prior approval from the program coordinator.

Results: Successful completion of the General Oral Examination requires unanimous approval from the student's Advisory Committee.

Official Paperwork: Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination form requires completion to schedule the oral examination. Completion of this form will also trigger a SmartSheet approval queue, typically emailed to the committee members after the scheduled oral examination, for the student's Advisory Committee to sign off on their approval, the results of which will then go to the Graduate School.

Unsatisfactory Performance on the Exam: If the General Oral Examination is failed, a re-examination may be given on recommendation of the committee and approval of the Graduate School Dean. Further examinations require exceptional circumstances and approval by the Graduate Council.

Dissertation Prospectus

Purpose: The prospectus is a comprehensive document describing the intended dissertation research. The prospectus acts as a detailed map leading to the completed dissertation. Completing the prospectus helps ensure the dissertation project is of the appropriate size, scope, and quality.

Timing: The prospectus can be approved only after the qualifying exam has been successfully passed; however, some Advisory Committees may approve presentation of the prospectus at the same time as the Oral Examination stage of the qualifying examination process – this will be student dependent and may flow logically out of the qualifying exam format. ***The prospectus must be approved prior to the dissertation defense and should not be conducted within the same semester as the dissertation defense per the Graduate School guidelines.***

Requirements: The prospectus document includes material which eventually will constitute the Introduction and Methods sections of the dissertation. The document may conform to the Thesis and Dissertation formatting templates available at this [link](#). Alternative formats may be approved by the Advisory Committee, e.g., Specific Aims and Research Plan documents from the qualifying examination process.

Description: The dissertation research proposed in the prospectus meeting may involve experimental, quasi-experimental, qualitative, descriptive, or other designs. The expectation is that the proposed dissertation research meets the scholarly research standards and practices of the discipline. The proposed dissertation body of work involves original research that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the field. Although the student will receive input and guidance from their advisor and dissertation committee, the student should demonstrate reasonable independence in study design, data collection, data analysis, and writing the results for the work proposed during the prospectus.

Official Paperwork: There is no official Graduate School documentation required for this stage of the process.

Dissertation Defense

Purpose: The program for the PhD culminates with a written dissertation and a public oral examination in defense of the dissertation. After the dissertation has been completed (except for minor revisions) and has been approved by the student's advisory committee, it is submitted to the Graduate School. A University Reader (a member of the graduate faculty [Level 2] who serves to represent the university's graduate faculty and the Graduate School) will be appointed (often selected by the Major Professor and student) to review the dissertation. However, the student's advisor may request appointment of the University Reader at any time rather than waiting until after the dissertation is drafted. When the Graduate School has received an approved evaluation from the University Reader, the student may apply for the final examination on a form sent by the Graduate

School. The examination is administered by the student's Advisory Committee. The University Reader also attends and participates. The examination, which generally is oral but may be both oral and written, includes the major and minor fields and a defense of the dissertation. Successful completion requires unanimous support of all members of the committee, including the University Reader. Any member of the Graduate Faculty may attend. After successfully writing and defending the dissertation and completing the dissertation submission deadlines set by the Graduate School, the degree is awarded.

Timing: The oral defense of the dissertation must be completed within 4 calendar years of achieving doctoral candidacy following the qualifying examination process.

Official Paperwork:

- 1) Submit the graduation application through AU Access at least one semester before graduation.
- 2) Register for at least one course the semester of graduation.
- 3) Prepare dissertation and submit a committee-approved first draft to the Graduate School for review and approval by the University Reader via the **Dissertation First Submission Approval Form** available at this [link](#).
- 4) When the Graduate School has received an approved evaluation from the University Reader, the student may apply for the final examination on a form sent by the Graduate School.
- 5) A Smartsheet form will be circulated to the Advisory Committee and University Reader after the scheduled oral dissertation defense for final approval of the dissertation defense.

Requirements:

Process: The committee will consider factors such as the clarity of the writing, the presentation of rationale, methods, data, results, and interpretation. The student's responses to questions about the dissertation may also be considered.

The oral examination should be scheduled for 2.5 hours, though the student should plan for additional time for discussion with the committee after the defense has been completed. The initial portion of the exam is open, that is, faculty, members of the academic community, and members of the public may attend the student's presentation. Only the Major Professor, Advisory Committee, and the University Reader may be present during the closed portion and voting period. A typical oral dissertation examination format is:

- (1) 20–35-minute presentation (open presentation)
- (2) 10–25-minute period for questions from the public (open meeting)
- (3) 60-75 minutes of in-depth questioning from the committee (Closed portion).
- (4) 15 minutes of final deliberations during which the student will be asked to leave the room.

Defense Outcomes: Successful completion requires unanimous approval from all members of the committee, including the University Reader.

Graduation Procedures: PhD degrees will be awarded upon favorable recommendation of the final examination committee and completion of all requirements specified for the degree by the Graduate College. These requirements include.

- (1) The filing of an application for the degree
- (2) Completion (or modification) of the filed plan of study
- (3) The final deposit of the dissertation with Advisory Committee approval with the Graduate School.

Note that students may participate in the spring graduation commencement while still planning to defend their dissertation later in the summer term; however, the degree will not be conferred until the term in which it is successfully defended.

MILESTONES AND TIMELINE

The following list shows the milestones that all students are expected to reach. The timeline is only an example as the exact timing may vary from student to student.

Typical Timeline of Major Milestones (assuming a 4-year program)

Milestone		Description
Year 1	Identify Research Topics	Collaborate with your Academic Advisor to refine your research interests and identify a first-year project.
	Form Dissertation Advisory Committee	Select committee members who will provide guidance on coursework and evaluate your progress by the end of Fall term. Meet them in Spring term.
	Preliminary Project*	Complete Preliminary Project (if applicable) by the end of Summer term.
Year 2	Complete Coursework	Formal coursework should wrap up by end of Summer term.
	Qualifying Exam	Qualifying examination process should be completed by end of Summer term.
Year 3	Prospectus Meeting	Early in Year 3, submit written dissertation proposal and meet with dissertation committee to propose dissertation project.
	Initiate Dissertation Research	Obtain research compliance permissions for dissertation project and initiate dissertation research.
Year 4	Dissertation Defense	Complete proposed dissertation research project. Submit written dissertation and meet with dissertation committee to defend dissertation.

APPENDIX

Graduate School Resources:

Graduate School: <https://graduate.auburn.edu/>

Doctoral Degrees: <https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/doctoraldegrees/>

Thesis and Dissertation:

<https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/etd.php>

University Ombuds Office: <https://ba.auburn.edu/ombuds/>

Research Related Resources:

Library: <https://www.lib.auburn.edu/>

Institutional Review Boards:

<https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/index.php>

Funding Opportunities:

<https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/psfs/find-funding.php>

Life and General Support:

Student Health: <https://bulletin.auburn.edu/generalinformation/studentservices/studenthealthservices/>

Graduate Student Health Insurance:

<https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/health-and-wellness/health-insurance.php>

Mental Health: <https://scps.auburn.edu/>

Basic Needs: <https://studentaffairs.auburn.edu/acsc/>

Campus Food Pantry:

<https://studentaffairs.auburn.edu/acsc/programs-resources/campus-food-pantry/index.php>

Safe Harbor: <https://studentaffairs.auburn.edu/safe-harbor/>

Campus Career Closet: <https://career.auburn.edu/resources/campus-career-closet/>

Office of Accessibility: <https://accessibility.auburn.edu/>