

University PhD Policies & Requirements

Academic PhD Programs

The following policies and practices apply to all PhD students regardless of school affiliation. They are specific to PhD program administration and experience. Schools may set stricter standards but must not relax these. This list does not include those policies and practices that apply to the student community as a whole (e.g., the University Student Conduct Code).

Academic and Professional Integrity for PhD Students

The Academic and Professional Integrity Policy for PhD Students (PDF) ([http://bulletin.wustl.edu/pdf/Academic and Professional Integrity Policy for PhD Students_2022.pdf](http://bulletin.wustl.edu/pdf/Academic%20and%20Professional%20Integrity%20Policy%20for%20PhD%20Students_2022.pdf)) continues to apply to all PhD students on the Danforth and Medical campuses, including dual-degree students when one of the degree programs is a PhD program.

Involuntary Leave of Absence

The Involuntary Leave of Absence Policy (<https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/governance/involuntary-leave-policy-undergraduate-students/>) that applies to undergraduates was adopted to apply to all PhD students in 2014.

Financial Policies & Practices

Academic Load Status for Financial Aid, Immigration and Enrollment Verification

Graduate (Fall, Spring):

Status	Enrolled Units of Credit
Full time	9+ units
Half time	4.5-8.99 units
Less than half time	Fewer than 4.5 units

Graduate (Summer):

Status	Enrolled Units of Credit
Full time	6+ units
Half time	3-5.99 units
Less than half time	Fewer than 3 units

Certain courses may, due to appropriate curriculum and monitoring circumstances, be encoded to carry a load value higher than the actual academic credit awarded. Examples include certain engineering co-op experiences, doctoral research study and select clinical or practicum courses.

Child Daycare Subsidy

Sponsored by Washington University in St. Louis, the purpose of the Child Daycare Subsidy is to help PhD student families meet the costs of child daycare while they pursue their studies.

The amount of Child Daycare Subsidy awarded to eligible applicants is based on their financial need, the number of children they have enrolled in child daycare facilities, their child daycare expenses, and available funding. Eligible students can expect the following:

- For one child, the maximum award is \$3,550 per semester.
- For two children, the maximum award is \$4,550 per semester.
- For three or more children, the maximum award is \$5,550 per semester.

The subsidy amount cannot exceed the cost of the daycare facility.

The application is available on the Office of the Provost website (<https://provost.wustl.edu/vpge/phd-education-and-governance/>).

Interdisciplinary Courses

PhD students can speak with their advisors with regard to enrolling in individual courses available outside of their school that may advance their research or professional goals. A university tuition agreement signed by all of the deans of the university's graduate and professional schools fosters interdisciplinary study across the schools and allows enrollment in classes outside of the student's home school. Many undergraduate and graduate courses are available for graduate student enrollment, subject to the following eligibility guidelines:

- The student must be enrolled full-time in a graduate degree program and have the approval of their faculty advisor or administrative officer to take a course outside of their home school.
- Courses will be open to students outside of the discipline only if those students have met the required prerequisites and have the approval of both their department/advisor and the course instructor.
- Finally, courses in the evening divisions, including the School of Continuing & Professional Studies, are not part of this agreement. Courses that require individualized instruction and/or additional fees (e.g., independent studies, individual music lessons) are also excluded.

Minimum Stipend Award

The amounts and vehicles of financial support for graduate students are usually decided by the individual schools. Washington University is committed to funding most PhD students for five to six years, depending on the time needed to complete a particular program. Funding typically consists of full tuition remission and a stipend to defray living expenses. Monetary support may come from the university or from outside sources, and it is usually administered by an administrative staff member of the program or the school acting in accordance with instructions received from the program/school administration or from a faculty member.

New Child Leave

Full-time PhD students may request a New Child Leave to assume care for a new child. They should maintain their full-time student status. Students on New Child Leave are not expected to participate in mentored teaching or research experience for up to 60 calendar days while they receive their current stipend support. Additional time off without receiving a stipend for up to a full semester will ordinarily be granted by the student's home school if approved by the student's department.

New Child Leave does not affect the student's full-time status and will not appear on the student's official transcript. New child leave must be taken within the first year after the child's birth or adoption. Students should contact their department to request a New Child Leave.

Students who receive support from external agencies should consult the policies and guidelines of the sponsor.

PhD General Requirements

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department/program; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and mentored experience requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and file an Intent to Graduate form via WebSTAC (<https://acadinfo.wustl.edu>).

Residence Requirement

Each PhD student must spend at least one academic year enrolled full-time at Washington University. Any exceptions must be approved by the dean of the student's respective school and the Vice Provost for Graduate Education.

Program Length Limit

The maximum number of semesters of continuous enrollment is 18 (9 years). Students in PhD programs who have not completed their terminal degrees and who have not withdrawn will be dismissed at the end of 18 semesters. An exception may be granted by the dean of the student's respective school on request by the designated faculty graduate program director (in most departments, this position is called the *Director of Graduate Studies*) if the student is expected to complete their degree during a tenth year of enrollment. Enrollment for an eleventh continuous year will not be allowed. Semesters during which the student is on an approved leave of absence are not included on the enrollment clock.

Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called preliminary, qualifying, general, comprehensive or major field exams. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers.

The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the school registrar or the appropriate record custodian of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Mentored Experience Requirement

PhD students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree milestone that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of semesters that a student must engage in a Mentored Teaching Experience or a Mentored Professional Experience is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include the Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing one or more semesters of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in Mentored Teaching Experiences or Mentored Professional Experiences to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for their degree.

Dissertation

As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation. Each PhD candidate will form a Research Advisory Committee (RAC) approved by their department or program and by their school's graduate program oversight body. The RAC will approve the subject and approach of the dissertation, which will be evidenced by the student's completion of the Title, Scope and Procedure requirement.

The RAC should consist of at least three full-time Washington University faculty members who are authorized to supervise PhD students and who have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study. One of these faculty members must be the student's primary research advisor/mentor. Additional members, including external members with active research programs at outside institutions, may serve on the RAC subject to approval by the school's graduate program oversight body.

- For cross-school/interdisciplinary PhD programs, the approvals referenced above should be obtained from the graduate program oversight body of the school of the primary research advisor/mentor.
- For a PhD program offered in partnership with an external academic institution, one full-time faculty member of the partner institution who is authorized to supervise PhD students and who has appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study may serve on the RAC as part of the three-member minimum requirement.

A Title, Scope and Procedure form for the dissertation must be signed by the RAC members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the school registrar or the appropriate record custodian at least six months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before the beginning the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide and a template that provides instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available through the website of the Office of the Provost (<https://provost.wustl.edu/vpge/phd-education-and-governance/>); both of these should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

Each student is required to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least one week before the dissertation defense. Most degree programs require two or more weeks for the review period; students should check their program's policies.

Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is strongly recommended before the student can orally defend the dissertation. The doctoral dissertation committee that examines the student during the defense consists of at least five members. Normally, the members of the RAC also serve on the doctoral dissertation committee. The dissertation committee is then additionally augmented to ensure that the following criteria are met:

1. Three of the five members (or a similar proportion of a larger committee) must be full-time Washington University faculty members or, for programs offered by Washington University-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University-affiliated partner institution who are authorized to supervise PhD students and who have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study. One of these three members must be the PhD student's primary thesis advisor, and one may be a member of the emeritus faculty.
2. All other committee members must be active in research/scholarship and have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study whether at Washington University, at another university, in government or in industry.
3. At least one of the five members must bring expertise outside of the student's field of study to the committee, as judged by the relevant school's graduate program oversight body.

The approval processes outlined under RAC in the Doctoral Council bylaws formation also apply to the doctoral dissertation committee, including approval of each dissertation committee by the host school's graduate program oversight body/bodies.

The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense according to program rules. Faculty outside of the committee and graduate students who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee chair. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student's field of expertise.

(Policy amended by the Doctoral Council on Aug. 25, 2022)

Dissertation Submission

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the university. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest ETD Administrator (<https://www.etdadmin.com/main/home/>), but the university permits students to make whichever choices they prefer. Students are asked to submit the Survey of Earned Doctorates (<https://sed-ncses.org/login.aspx>) separately. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the school registrar or the appropriate record custodian. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their dissertation submission has been accepted by their school of record.