

# REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR DOCTORAL DEGREES

## University Graduation Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

Candidates receive the PhD degree after successfully completing:

- A minimum of 90 graduate semester credit hours of study at the 500-level and above (including thesis credit hours).
- A minimum of one-third of the required credit hours must be completed at Rice.
- Doctoral students must complete at least four full fall and/or spring semesters in full-time study at Rice University.
- An original investigation that is formalized in an approved thesis.
- As final evidence of preparation for a degree, a public oral examination prior to submitting the approved thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

## Candidacy, Oral Examinations, and Thesis

### Time Boundaries for Candidacy and Defense

#### Time To Candidacy

PhD and DMA students must be approved for candidacy before the beginning of the 9th semester of their enrollment at Rice.

#### Time to Defense

PhD and DMA students must defend their theses before the end of the 16th semester of their enrollment at Rice. Additionally, students must be projected to complete their minimum required credit hours and all other non-thesis degree requirements before the end of the semester in which they defend.

#### Time to Thesis Submission

Candidates who successfully pass the oral examination in defense of the thesis must submit the thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies no later than six months from the date of the examination. See [Candidacy, Oral Examinations and Thesis](#) (p. 2). Candidates must also adhere to all deadlines associated with the [Academic Calendar](#) (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/>) for a given commencement.

### Time to Degree

PhD and DMA students are required to complete their program, including thesis defense, within 10 years of initial enrollment in the degree program. This time boundary includes any period in which the student was not enrolled or enrolled part-time, for whatever reason. Failure to meet any university time to degree deadline may result in the student not being able to continue in their degree program.

### Approval of Candidacy

Candidacy marks a midpoint in the course of graduate education. Achieving candidacy for the PhD/DMA signals that a graduate student has:

1. completed required coursework,
2. passed required exams to demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the subject area,
3. demonstrated the ability for clear oral and written communication, and
4. shown the ability to carry on scholarly work in the subject area.

Requirements for achieving candidacy for the doctoral degree are determined at the [departmental](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/>) level. The department is also authorized to grant waivers or substitutions of specific course requirements, but not to make exceptions to university requirements.

Students enrolled in research degree programs submit their petitions for candidacy for a doctoral degree through the department chair to the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies. In the petition sent to the dean, the department chair identifies the student's thesis director, recommends a thesis committee, certifies that the applicant has fulfilled the departmental requirements, and provides a course transcript as evidence that work completed within the department is of high quality.

PhD/DMA students must be approved for candidacy before the beginning of the ninth semester of their enrollment at Rice. However, in order to qualify for a given commencement, they must meet the submission deadline for that commencement per the [Academic Calendar](#) (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/>). This date falls at the end of October for December degree conferral and the end of February for May degree conferral.

Students who are unable to meet the university time boundary for candidacy may petition the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies or the designee for an extension of time to candidacy. Students who exceed their time boundaries without an approved extension request will be placed on academic probation and are subject to immediate dismissal by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

### Thesis Committee

The thesis committee administers the oral examination for the student's thesis defense and has final approval/disapproval authority and responsibility for the written thesis. The thesis committee is subject to the approval of the department chair or the director of graduate studies and the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

A thesis committee is composed of at least three members. Two, including the committee chair, must be members of the student's department faculty; in doctoral thesis committees one member must have a primary appointment in another department within the university. At least three members of the committee must meet one of the following requirements:

- Tenured or tenure-track members of the Rice faculty
- Rice research faculty holding the rank of assistant research professor, associate research professor, or research professor

Qualified individuals who have been identified by the department chair may serve as additional committee members, but may not substitute for the three tenure or tenure-track faculty members.

The composition of the thesis committee must always meet the guidelines mentioned above, with the following exceptions:

- **Interdisciplinary programs (Applied Physics; and Systems, Synthetic, and Physical Biology)** - The chair of the thesis committee is either the

advisor or in the host department of the student, is affiliated with the program, and is a tenured or tenure-track member of the Rice faculty. The second member of the committee is affiliated with the program and is a tenured or tenure-track member of the Rice faculty. The third committee member must not be affiliated with the department where their advisor has their primary appointment and must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the Rice faculty. The formal structure of the thesis committee for the programs can be found in the program-specific sections of the General Announcements and are regularly reviewed by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

The thesis director must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the Rice University faculty or a research faculty holding the rank of assistant research professor, associate research professor, or research professor. University professors may, at their discretion, serve as an internal or external member of a thesis committee. Faculty whose primary appointment is at another institution may serve as thesis director if approved by the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies. Emeritus professors may not accept new graduate students or be included on newly formed thesis committees without the approval of the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies and an appointment letter from the school dean.

The committee chair need not be the thesis director. The chair, however, must be either a tenured or tenure-track member of the student's home department or a research faculty member of the student's home department. In addition to the three required members, additional members of the committee may be selected with the approval of the department chair or director of graduate studies.

In the event that a member of a students' thesis committee leaves their position at Rice University or takes emeritus status, they may continue to serve on the thesis committee if they continue to have the support of the department chair (or in the case of interdisciplinary programs, the graduate program director) to serve in this capacity.

Candidates are responsible for keeping the members of their committee informed about the nature and progress of their research. They also must establish a schedule for thesis completion and review. The members of the committee, in turn, should review the thesis in a timely manner, approving a preliminary form of the thesis before scheduling the oral examination.

Changes to the thesis committee must be approved in writing by the department chair or the director of graduate studies and approved by the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies prior to the thesis defense. Students have the right to know prior to the defense who will examine them. Changes requested after the thesis defense are generally not granted, so a re-defense may be required, but a petition can be made to the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies.

## Announcement of Thesis Defense

Oral examinations for the doctoral degree must be registered and publicly publicized at least 14 calendar days in advance. Oral examination announcements must be registered with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by entering the information into the Graduate Students Thesis Defense Announcement form at <https://events.rice.edu/rgs> (<https://events.rice.edu/rgs/>). Defenses that proceed without timely registration are unofficial and will not meet university degree requirements.

## Oral Examination in Defense of Thesis

The public oral defense of a thesis is intended to be an examination of a completed body of work and should be scheduled only when the thesis is complete. Students may take the final oral examination in defense of their thesis only after the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies approves their candidacy.

In addition to announcing the planned defense as described above, at least one copy of the thesis must be available in the departmental office no less than two calendar weeks prior to the date of the oral defense. Graduate programs may allow or require the thesis to be submitted and stored in an electronic format.

The length of the oral examination and the subject matter on which the candidate is questioned are left to the judgment of the thesis committee. The defense should be scheduled by the student after consultation with the thesis advisor, who agrees that the thesis is completed and ready to be defended.

All oral thesis defenses are expected to take place on the Rice University campus with the candidate in physical attendance and all thesis committee members in attendance throughout the entire defense. While the physical attendance of the committee is highly encouraged, it is recognized that this may add unnecessary scheduling conflicts delaying the student's defense. The student may, at their own discretion, provide an online option for guests to attend the defense.

Should a candidate fail, the committee chair may schedule a second examination. Students who fail a second time will be dismissed from the university.

Following their defense, students must submit a copy of their approval of candidacy form, signed by the thesis committee signifying successful defense of the thesis, and a copy of their defended thesis, to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies within one week after the oral examination. Instructions to submit this form are located online at <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/candidacy-defense-thesis-submission> (<https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/candidacy-defense-thesis-submission/>). The original approval of candidacy form must be turned in when the thesis is submitted.

PhD and DMA students must defend their theses before the end of the 16th semester of their enrollment at Rice. Students who are unable to meet the university time boundary for thesis defense may petition the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies or the dean's designee for an extension of time to defense. Students who exceed their time boundaries without an approved extension request will be placed on academic probation and are subject to dismissal by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

A candidate must be enrolled in the semester in which the oral examination is held. Students who defend during the summer must enroll in the summer session of classes. For the purpose of the oral defense only, enrollment in a semester is considered valid through the Friday of the first week of class of the following semester. Students passing the oral examination on or before the end of the first week of classes of any semester do not have to register for that or any subsequent semester even though they may be continuing to make minor revisions to the final copy of their thesis.

## Thesis Submission Regulations and Procedures

The thesis is the principal record of a student's work for an advanced degree. Instructions for online thesis submission and guidelines for

thesis formatting are available at: <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/candidacy-defense-thesis-submission> (<https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/candidacy-defense-thesis-submission/>).

Candidates who successfully pass the oral examination in defense of the thesis must submit the thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies no later than six months from the date of the examination. If the thesis is not submitted by the end of the six-month period, the “pass” will be revoked and an additional oral defense will need to be scheduled. Applications for an extension without reexamination must be made by the candidate with the unanimous support of the thesis committee, endorsed by the department chair (or in the case of interdisciplinary programs, the graduate program director), and approved by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Extensions of this six-month period for completion without reexamination will be granted only in rare circumstances.

Students must have the an electronically certified signature of each member of their thesis committee submitted through AdobeSign. Students submitting a thesis for the PhD or DMA must fill out a Survey of Earned Doctorates form and a ProQuest/University Microfilms International (UMI) publishing contract as part of their thesis submission.

All theses are permanently preserved in Rice’s Institutional Repository and are available via <https://scholarship.rice.edu> shortly after the final submission of the thesis. At the time of thesis submission, a student may request an embargo of six months, one year, or two years; embargoes beyond this period are subject to the approval of the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies.

Students have six months from the date of their defense to submit their thesis. However, in order to qualify for a given degree conferral and the associated commencement ceremony, they must meet the submission deadline for that degree conferral per the *Academic Calendar* (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/>). This date falls on the last day of classes in the fall and spring semesters.

## Departmental Duties

In most research degree programs, students must undertake a limited amount of teaching or perform other services as part of their training. Assigned duties should not entail more than 10 hours per week, averaged over the semester, or extend over more than eight semesters. Students must be paid as a teaching assistant, instructor of record, or on an hourly basis for this work, regardless of degree requirements.

## Other Requirements

There are other additional requirements, regulations and procedures for all graduate programs. They are found under Graduate Students > Academic Policies and Procedures > All Graduate Students, or can be accessed directly [here](https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/) (<https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/>).