Doctor of Philosophy in Agronomy

Work leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is designed to give the candidate a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of his or her professional field and training in methods of research. The final basis for granting the degree shall be the candidate’s grasp of the subject matter of a broad field of study and a demonstrated ability to do independent research. In addition, the candidate must have acquired the ability to express thoughts clearly and forcefully in both oral and written languages. The degree is not granted solely for the completion of coursework, residence and technical requirements, although these must be met.

For a student who has completed a master’s degree, a DDS/DMD, DVM or MD at a U.S. institution, a minimum of 64 hours is required on the degree plan for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. For a student who has completed a baccalaureate degree but not a master’s degree or a U.S. DDS/DMD, DVM or MD, a minimum of 96 hours is required on the degree plan for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Steps to Fulfill Doctoral Degree Requirements

1. Meet with departmental/intercollegiate graduate advisor to plan course of study for first semester. **When:** Before first semester registration. **Approved by:** Graduate advisor.

2. Establish advisory committee. Submit a degree plan. **When:** Prior to the deadline imposed by the student's college or intercollegiate programs, and no later than 90 days prior to preliminary examination. **Approved by:** Advisory committee, department head or intercollegiate faculty chair, and Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS).

3. Complete English Language Proficiency requirements (if applicable), and coursework detailed on degree plan. **When:** Before preliminary examination.

4. Complete the preliminary examination. **When:** See steps for completing the preliminary examination. The preliminary examination results must have been submitted to OGAPS 14 weeks prior to the date of the defense. **Approved by:** Advisory committee, department head or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, and OGAPS.

5. Submit proposal for dissertation or record of study to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. **When:** No later than 20 working days prior to the submission of the Request for the Final Examination. **Approved by:** Advisory committee, department head or intercollegiate faculty chair, and OGAPS.

6. Complete residence requirement. **When:** Before submitting request to schedule final oral examination. **Approved by:** OGAPS.

7. Apply for degree; pay graduate fee. **When:** During the first week of the final semester; see OGAPS calendar for deadlines.

8. Submit request for permission to hold and announce final oral examination. **When:** Must be received by OGAPS at least 10 working days before requested exam date. See OGAPS calendar for deadlines. **Approved by:** Advisory committee, department head or intercollegiate faculty chair, and OGAPS.

9. Successfully complete final examination. **When:** The Report of the Final Examination Form should be submitted to OGAPS within 10 days following the exam. **Approved by:** Advisory committee and OGAPS.
Upload one approved final copy of the dissertation or record of study as a single pdf file (http://ogaps.tamu.edu) and submit a signed approval form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies when: See OGAPS calendar for deadlines. Approved by: Advisory committee, department head or intercollegiate faculty chair, and Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Note: Once formal coursework is complete, you must be continuously registered until all degree requirements have been met. See Continuous Registration Requirements.

Program Requirements

- Student’s Advisory Committee
  - Degree Plan
  - Transfer of Credit
  - Research Proposal
  - Examinations
    - Preliminary Examination
    - Final Examination/Dissertation Defense
  - Dissertation

Student’s Advisory Committee

After receiving admission to graduate studies and enrolling, the student will consult with the head of his or her major or administrative department (or chair of the intercollegiate faculty) concerning appointment of the chair of the advisory committee. The student’s advisory committee will consist of no fewer than four members of the graduate faculty representative of the student’s several fields of study and research, where the chair or co-chair must be from the student’s department (or intercollegiate faculty, if applicable), and at least one or more of the members must have an appointment to a department other than the student’s major department. The outside member for a student in an interdisciplinary degree program must be from a department different from the chair of the student’s committee.

The chair, in consultation with the student, will select the remainder of the advisory committee. Only graduate faculty members located on Texas A&M University campuses may serve as chair of a student’s advisory committee. Other Texas A&M University graduate faculty members located off-campus may serve as a member or co-chair (but not chair), with a member as the chair.

If the chair of a student’s advisory committee voluntarily leaves the University and the student is near completion of the degree and wants the chair to continue to serve in this role, the student is responsible for securing a current member of the University Graduate Faculty, from the student’s academic program and located near the Texas A&M University campus site, to serve as the co-chair of the committee. The Department Head or Chair of Intercollegiate faculty may request in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies that a faculty member who is on an approved leave of absence or has voluntarily separated from the university, be allowed to continue to serve in the role of chair of a student’s advisory committee without a co-chair for us to one year. The students should be near completion of the degree. Extensions beyond the one year period can be granted with additional approval of the Dean.

The committee members’ signatures on the degree plan indicate their willingness to accept the responsibility for guiding and directing the entire academic program of the student and for initiating all academic actions concerning the student. Although individual committee members may be replaced by petition for valid reasons, a committee cannot resign en masse. The chair of the committee, who usually has immediate supervision of the student’s research and dissertation or record of study, has the responsibility for calling all meetings of the committee. The duties of the committee include responsibility for the proposed degree plan, the research proposal, the preliminary examination, the dissertation or record of study and the final examination. In addition, the committee, as a group and as individual members, is responsible for counseling the student on academic matters, and, in the case of academic deficiency, initiating recommendations to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Degree Plan

The student’s advisory committee will evaluate the student’s previous education and degree objectives. The committee, in consultation with the student, will develop a proposed degree plan and outline a research problem which, when completed, as indicated by the dissertation (or its equivalent for the degree of Doctor of Education or the degree of Doctor of Engineering), will constitute the basic requirements for the degree. The degree plan must be filed with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies prior to the deadline imposed by the student’s college and no later than 90 days prior to the preliminary examination.

This proposed degree plan should be submitted through the online Document Processing Submission System located on the website http://ogsdpss.tamu.edu. A minimum of 64 hours is required on the degree plan for the Doctor of Philosophy for a student who has completed a master’s degree. A student who has completed a DDS/DMD, DVM or a MD at a U.S. institution is also required to complete a minimum of 64 hours. A student who has completed a baccalaureate degree but not a master’s degree will be required to complete a 96-hour degree plan. Completion of a DDS/DMD, DVM or MD degree at a foreign institution requires completion of a minimum of 96 hours for the Doctor of Philosophy. A field of study may be primarily in one department or in a combination of departments. A degree plan must carry a reasonable amount of 691 or 5V98/5V99 (research).

Additional coursework may be added by petition to the approved degree plan by the student’s advisory committee if it is deemed necessary to correct deficiencies in the student’s academic preparation. No changes can be made to the degree plan once the student’s Request for Final Examination is approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Approval to enroll in any professional course (900-level) should be obtained from the head of the department (or Chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if applicable) in which the course will be offered before including such a course on a degree plan.

No credit may be obtained by correspondence study, by extension or for any course of fewer than three weeks duration.
Transfer of Credit

Courses for which transfer credits are sought must have been completed with a grade of B or greater and must be approved by the student’s advisory committee and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. These courses must not have been used previously for another degree. Except for officially approved cooperative doctoral programs, credit for thesis or dissertation research or the equivalent is not transferable. Credit for “internship” coursework in any form is not transferable. Courses taken in residence at an accredited U.S. institution or approved international institution with a final grade of B or greater will be considered for transfer credit if, at the time the courses were completed, the courses would be accepted for credit toward a similar degree for a student in degree-seeking status at the host institution. Credit for coursework taken by extension is not transferable. Coursework in which no formal grades are given or in which grades other than letter grades (A or B) are earned (for example, CR, P, S, U, H, etc.) is not accepted for transfer credit. Credit for coursework submitted for transfer from any college or university must be shown in semester credit hours, or equated to semester credit hours.

Courses used toward a degree at another institution may not be applied for graduate credit. If the course to be transferred was taken prior to the conferral of a degree at the transfer institution, a letter from the registrar at that institution stating that the course was not applied for credit toward the degree must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Grades for courses completed at other institutions are not included in computing the GPR. An official transcript from the university at which transfer courses are taken must be sent directly to the Office of Admissions.

Research Proposal

The general field of research to be used for the dissertation should be agreed on by the student and the advisory committee at their first meeting, as a basis for selecting the proper courses to support the proposed research.

As soon thereafter as the research project can be outlined in reasonable detail, the dissertation research proposal should be completed. The research proposal should be approved at a meeting of the student’s advisory committee, at which time the feasibility of the proposed research and the adequacy of available facilities should be reviewed. The approved proposal, signed by all members of the student’s advisory committee, the head of the student’s major department (or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if applicable), must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 20 working days prior to the submission of the Request for the Final Examination.

Compliance issues must be addressed if a graduate student is performing research involving human subjects, animals, infectious biohazards and recombinant DNA. A student involved in these types of research should check with the Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety at (979) 458-1467 to address questions about all research compliance responsibilities. Additional information can also be obtained on the website http://rcb.tamu.edu.

Examinations

Preliminary Examination

The student’s major department (or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if applicable) and his or her advisory committee may require qualifying, cumulative or other types of examinations at any time deemed desirable. These examinations are entirely at the discretion of the department and the student’s advisory committee.

The preliminary examination is required. The preliminary examination for a doctoral student shall be given no earlier than a date at which the student is within 6 credit hours of completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan (i.e., all coursework on the degree plan except 681, 684, 690, 691, 5V98, 5V99 and 692 courses). The student is strongly encouraged to complete the Preliminary Examination no later than the end of the semester following the completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies must receive the results of the preliminary examination at least 14 weeks prior to the final examination date. The examination shall be oral and written unless otherwise recommended by the student’s advisory committee and approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The written part of the examination will cover all fields of study included in the student’s degree plan. Each member of the advisory committee is responsible for administering a written examination in his or her particular field. unless he or she chooses to waive participation in this part of the examination. Two or more members of the advisory committee may give a joint written examination. One or more members may require a student to take a departmental or intercollegiate faculty examination to supplement or replace a written examination. Each written examination must be completed and reported as satisfactory to the chair of the advisory committee before the oral portion of the examination may be held. In case any written examination is reported unsatisfactory, the entire advisory committee must agree (1) to proceed with the oral portion of the preliminary examination, or (2) to adopt another course of action regarding the unsatisfactory written examination.

Prior to scheduling the preliminary examination with the other committee members, the committee chair will review the eligibility criteria with the student, using the Preliminary Examination Checklist to ensure the student is ready for the examination. The following list of eligibility requirements applies.

- Student is registered at Texas A&M University for the semester or summer term during which any portion of the preliminary examination may fall. If the entire examination falls between semesters, then the student must be registered for the term immediately preceding the examination.
- An approved degree plan was on file with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 90 days prior to the first written examination.
- Student’s cumulative GPR is at least 3.000.
- Student’s degree plan GPR is at least 3.000.
- All English language proficiency requirements have been satisfied.
- All committee members have scheduled or waived the written portion and agreed to attend the oral portion of the examination or have found a substitute. Only one substitution is allowed and it cannot be for the committee chair.
- At the end of the semester in which the examination is given, there are no more than 6 hours of coursework remaining on the degree plan (except 681, 684, 690, 691, 5V98, 5V99 and 692). The head of the student’s department (or Chair of the Intercollegiate Faculty, if applicable) has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion.
- The time span from the first written examination to the oral is no more than three weeks. (In cases of department-wide written examinations, this criterion is not applicable.) The head of the student’s department
(or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if applicable) has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion.

Once all requirements are met, departments or intercollegiate faculty may announce the schedule of the written and oral parts of the examination.

Credit for the preliminary examination is not transferable. If a departmental or intercollegiate faculty examination is used as part of the written portion of the preliminary examination, it must be the last examination offered prior to the date scheduled for the preliminary examination. In the schedule of the written portion, all members of the student’s advisory committee are to be included.

Through the preliminary examination, the student’s advisory committee should satisfy itself that the student has demonstrated the following qualifications:

1. a mastery of the subject matter of all fields in the program;
2. an adequate knowledge of the literature in these fields and an ability to carry out bibliographical research.

In case a student is required to take, as a part of the written portion of a preliminary examination, an examination administered by a department or intercollegiate faculty, the department or intercollegiate faculty must:

1. offer the examination at least once every six months. The departmental or interdisciplinary degree program examination should be announced at least 30 days prior to the scheduled examination date.
2. assume the responsibility for marking the examination satisfactory or unsatisfactory, or otherwise graded, and in the case of unsatisfactory, stating specifically the reasons for such a mark.
3. forward the marked examination to the chair of the student’s advisory committee within one week after the examination.

The chair of the student’s advisory committee is responsible for making all written examinations available to the members of the advisory committee at or before the oral portion of the preliminary examination. A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee with at most one dissent is required to pass a student on his or her preliminary exam. A department or intercollegiate faculty can have a stricter requirement provided there is consistency within all degree programs within a department or an interdisciplinary degree program.

The chair of the advisory committee will promptly report the results of the Preliminary Examination to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, using the Report of Doctoral Preliminary Examination form and the Preliminary Examination checklist. Both forms must have the appropriate signatures. These forms should be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies within 10 working days of the scheduled preliminary examination.

The Report of the Preliminary Examination form must be submitted with original signatures of the approved committee members. If an approved committee member substitution (1 only) has been made, his/her signature must also be included on the form submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The original signature of the department head is also required on the form.

After passing the required oral and written preliminary examinations for the doctoral degree, the student must complete the final examination for the degree within four calendar years. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the preliminary examination. Upon approval of the student’s advisory committee, with no more than one member dissenting, and approval of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, a student who has failed the preliminary examination may be given one re-examination. Adequate time must be given to permit the student to address the inadequacies emerging from the first examination (normally six months). The student and the advisory committee should jointly negotiate a mutually acceptable date for this purpose.

A student must be registered at Texas A&M University for a minimum of one semester credit hour in the semester or summer term in which they will take any portion of the Preliminary Examination.

### Steps for Completing the Preliminary Examination

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>When</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish advisory committee. Submit a degree plan.</td>
<td>Prior to the deadline set by the student’s college, and no later than 90 days prior to preliminary examination. <strong>Approved by:</strong> Advisory committee, department or intercollegiate faculty chair, and Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS).</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Complete English language proficiency requirements (if applicable), and coursework detailed on degree plan.</td>
<td>Before preliminary examination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student and chair review eligibility requirements for the preliminary exam using the “Preliminary Examination Checklist”.</td>
<td>Several weeks before the proposed date of the preliminary examination. Checklist must be signed by chair and department head, or intercollegiate faculty chair.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student checks the availability of committee members.</td>
<td>Several weeks before the proposed date of the preliminary examination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students prepares and submits any petitions found necessary by the review of the eligibility requirements.</td>
<td>At least three weeks before the proposed date of the preliminary examinations. <strong>Approved by:</strong> Advisory committee, department head or intercollegiate faculty chair, and OGAPS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When exam date is determined, the department may announce the schedule.</td>
<td>Committee chair, department head or intercollegiate faculty chair.</td>
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Final Examination/Dissertation Defense

The candidate for the doctoral degree must pass a final examination by deadline dates announced in the “Office of Graduate and Professional Studies Calendar” each semester or summer term. The doctoral student is allowed only one opportunity to take the final examination. No student may be given a final examination unless his or her current official cumulative and degree plan GPAs are 3.000 or better and he or she has been admitted to candidacy. No unabsolved grades of D, F, or U for any course can be listed on the degree plan. To absolve a deficient grade, a student must repeat the course and achieve a grade of C or better. A student must have completed all coursework on his or her degree plan with the exception of 691, 5V98, or 5V99 (Research) or 692 (Professional Study) hours. The student must be registered for all remaining hours; no hours remain to be taken on the degree plan. The preliminary examination results must have been submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies 14 weeks prior to the date of the defense. The research proposal must have been submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies 25 working days prior to the date of the final examination/defense. Any changes to the degree plan must be approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies prior to the approval of the final examination. The request to hold and announce the final examination must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies a minimum of 10 working days in advance of the scheduled date. Examination/Defense results must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies within 10 working days of the scheduled examination/defense date. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies must be notified in writing of any cancellations.

The student’s advisory committee will conduct this examination. The final examination is not to be administered until the dissertation or record of study is available in substantially final form to the student’s advisory committee, and all concerned have had adequate time to review the document. Additionally, all English Language Proficiency requirements must be satisfied prior to scheduling the examination. Whereas the final examination may cover the broad field of the candidate’s training, it is presumed that the major portion of the time will be devoted to the dissertation and closely allied topics. Persons other than members of the graduate faculty may, with mutual consent of the candidate and the chair of the advisory committee, be invited to attend a final examination for an advanced degree. A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee with at most one dissension is required to pass a student on his or her exam. A department can have a stricter requirement provided there is consistency within all degree programs within a department. Upon completion of the questioning of the candidate, all visitors must excuse themselves from the proceedings.

The advisory committee will submit its recommendations on the appropriate Report of the Final Examination for Doctoral Candidates form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies regarding acceptability of the candidate for the doctoral degree. A student must be registered in the University in the semester or summer term in which the final examination is taken.

The Report of the Final Examination Form must be submitted with original signatures of the committee members approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. If an approved committee member substitution (1 only) has been made, his/her signature must be included on the form submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Dissertation

The ability to perform independent research must be demonstrated by the dissertation, which must be the original work of the candidate. Whereas acceptance of the dissertation is based primarily on its scholarly merit, it must also exhibit creditable literary workmanship. The format of the dissertation must be acceptable to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Guidelines for the preparation of the thesis are available in the Thesis Manual, which is available online at http://ogaps.tamu.edu.

After successful defense and approval by the student’s advisory committee and the head of the student’s major department (or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if applicable), a student must submit his/her dissertation in electronic format as a single PDF file. The PDF file must be uploaded to the website, http://ogaps.tamu.edu. Additionally, a signed approval form must be brought or mailed to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Both the PDF file and the signed approval form are required by the deadline.

Deadline dates for submitting are announced each semester or summer term in the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies Calendar (see Time Limit statement). These dates also can be accessed via the website http://ogaps.tamu.edu.

Before a student can be “cleared” by Thesis and Dissertation Services, a processing fee must be paid through Student Business Services. This processing fee is for the thesis/dissertation services provided. After commencement, dissertations are digitally stored and made available through the Texas A&M Libraries.

A dissertation that is deemed unacceptable by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies because of excessive corrections will be returned to the student’s department head or chair of the intercollegiate faculty. The manuscript must be resubmitted as a new document, and the entire review process must begin anew. All original submittal deadlines must be met during the resubmittal process in order to graduate.

Additional Requirements

Additional Requirements

- Residence
- Time Limit
- Continuous Registration
- Admission to Candidacy
- Languages
- 99-Hour Cap on Doctoral Degree
To be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must have:

1. completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690 and 691, or 5V98 and 5V99,
2. a 3.0 Graduate GPA and a Degree Plan GPA of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan,
3. passed the preliminary examination (written and oral portions),
4. submitted an approved dissertation proposal,
5. met the residence requirements. The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

Languages

A student is required to possess a competent command of English. For English language proficiency requirements, see the Admissions section of this catalog. The doctoral (PhD) foreign language requirement at Texas A&M University is a departmental option, to be administered and monitored by the individual departments of academic instruction.

99-Hour Cap on Doctoral Degrees

In Texas, public colleges and universities are funded by the state according to the number of students enrolled. In accordance with legislation passed by the Texas Legislature, the number of hours for which state universities may receive subvention funding at the doctoral rate for any individual is limited to 99 hours. Texas A&M University and other universities will not receive subvention for hours in excess of the limit.

Institutions of higher education are allowed to charge the equivalent of nonresident tuition to a resident doctoral student who has enrolled in 100 or more semester credit hours of doctoral coursework.

A doctoral student at Texas A&M has seven years to complete his/her degree before being charged out-of-state tuition. A doctoral student who, after seven years of study, has accumulated 100 or more doctoral hours will be charged tuition at a rate equivalent to out-of-state tuition. Please note that the tuition increases will apply to Texas residents as well as students from other states and countries who currently are charged tuition at the resident rate. This includes those doctoral students who hold GAT, GANT, and GAR appointments of 20 or more hours and recipients of competitive fellowships who receive more than $1,000 per semester.

Doctoral students who, after seven years of study, have not accumulated 100 hours are eligible to pay in-state tuition if otherwise eligible.

For count purposes, a year is counted as three semesters, normally fall, spring and summer. Using this system, a student is allowed 21 semesters as a G8 student to complete the doctoral degree before being penalized with the higher tuition rate. Any semester in which a G8 student is enrolled for a doctoral level course is counted.

The following majors are exempt from the 99-Hour Cap on Doctoral Degrees:

- Biomedical Sciences
- Biochemistry
- Microbiology
- Genetics
- Toxicology
- Nutrition Sciences
- Community Clinical Psychology
- Counseling Psychology
- School Psychology
• Veterinary Pathology
• Clinical Psychology
• Counseling Psychology
• Medical Sciences
• Health Services Research
• Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences
• Epidemiology and Environmental Health

The hour limit for these majors is 130 doctoral hours.

**Application for Degree**

For information on applying for your degree, please visit the Graduation section.