

DOCTORAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Admission to a Specific Doctoral Program

Admission decisions and additional requirements are determined at the discretion of the major program. Each doctoral program establishes its own admission standards, which may exceed the minimum requirements set by the College of Graduate Studies.

Applicants are responsible for reviewing the specific admission requirements of their intended doctoral program prior to applying. Acceptance by the graduate program coordinator/director is required before official admission to the program can be granted.

Minimum Requirements for Admission to Doctoral Degree Programs

Applicants seeking admission to doctoral degree programs at Texas A&M University-San Antonio must submit the following:

- Applicants must be awarded a baccalaureate degree or a master's degree earned from an institution holding accreditation recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or the U.S. Department of Education. Degrees received must be posted on the transcript of the awarding institution. Only transcripts printed within the preceding 12 months will be accepted.
- Applicants must have an overall undergraduate grade point average of 2.6 on a 4.0 scale or an average of 3.0 on the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework, or a minimum graduate cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
- Submit \$49 application fee (\$69 application fee for international students)
- Submit Resume/CV

Application Materials

- A complete application for admission must be submitted to Graduate Application Portal.
- Official transcripts are required for all undergraduate and graduate coursework.

Program-Specific Requirements

Individual programs may establish additional admission criteria beyond these minimum standards. Applicants must satisfy all additional requirements as determined by the major program.

Admission Review and Status

Each doctoral program reviews applications and recommends admission status. Applicants may be granted unconditional or conditional admission.

Reapplication Policy

- A doctoral student who has not enrolled for two consecutive long semesters must reapply under current admission standards.
- A student who withdraws or is dismissed must also reapply and meet current admission standards.

Minimum Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

Degree Plan

Upon admission to a doctoral program, the student must meet with an assigned adviser to develop an initial degree plan in DegreeWorks. The official degree plan will be maintained by the program coordinator/director.

Course Requirements

All coursework applied toward a doctoral degree must be approved by the appropriate program administrator and the Graduate Dean. No more than 12 graduate credit hours taken prior to admission to the doctoral program may be applied toward the degree.

Program-Defined Requirements

Electives, specialization areas, and additional course requirements are determined by the major program.

Residency

After admission to a doctoral degree program, each student is required to engage in activities that fulfill departmental residency requirements. Doctoral residency refers to the required period of sustained enrollment and academic engagement through which students participate in advanced coursework, research training, faculty mentoring, and scholarly activities within the program.

The departmental residency plan specifies requirements in the following areas:

1. involvement in events that broaden intellectual growth,
2. use of academic support resources,
3. faculty-student interactions that promote scholarship, mentoring and opportunities for evaluation,
4. involvement with cognate disciplines and research scholars in those disciplines and
5. engagement in meaningful peer interactions.

Please check with the major program/department for specific requirements. Successful completion of residency is determined by approval of the major program/department.

Graduate Dual Degrees

Students may not pursue two different doctoral degrees concurrently.

Doctoral Time-to-Degree Requirement

Doctoral students must complete all requirements for the doctoral degree within a maximum of 10 consecutive calendar years from the first semester of enrollment in the doctoral program. This 10-year limit includes completion of all required coursework, examinations, admission to candidacy, dissertation or capstone requirements, final defense or final examination, and submission of the approved final dissertation or doctoral project.

Coursework applied toward the doctoral degree must be current at the time the degree is conferred. Graduate coursework that is more than 10 years old at the time of degree conferral may not be applied toward the doctoral degree unless an exception, revalidation, or substitution is approved in writing by the program coordinator/director or dissertation chair, the academic college dean, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. Programs may establish shorter timelines or additional progression requirements, including timelines for admission to candidacy, proposal defense, dissertation completion, or other program milestones.

An approved leave of absence does not automatically extend the 10-year time-to-degree limit unless an extension is specifically approved in writing by the program coordinator/director or dissertation chair, the academic college dean, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. Students who do not complete the degree within the approved time limit may be dismissed from the doctoral program and may be required to reapply under the catalog and degree requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Doctoral Funding Limit and Excess Doctoral Hours

In accordance with Texas Education Code § 61.059 (<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/?tab=1&code=ED&chapter=ED.61&artSec=61.059>), state formula funding for doctoral students is generally limited to 99 funded doctoral semester credit hours. Doctoral students who reach or exceed the state-funded doctoral-hour limit may be subject to additional tuition charges, including nonresident tuition rates, as authorized by Texas Education Code § 54.012 (<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/?tab=1&code=ED&chapter=ED.54&artSec=>) and applicable University and Texas A&M University System policies.

Students are responsible for monitoring their progress toward degree completion and the accumulation of doctoral semester credit hours, including dissertation, doctoral research, continuation, repeated, withdrawn, and other doctoral-level hours as applicable. Students who anticipate exceeding 99 doctoral semester credit hours must meet with their advisor, dissertation chair, or program coordinator/director to develop a degree-completion plan. Continued enrollment beyond the 99-hour threshold requires approval by the program coordinator/director and dissertation committee chair, the academic college dean, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

Approved program or individual exceptions may allow state formula funding for up to 130 doctoral semester credit hours, consistent with Texas Education Code §61.059 and THECB requirements. Approval to continue enrollment beyond 99 doctoral hours does not guarantee continued resident tuition eligibility, assistantship eligibility, financial aid eligibility, or state formula funding.

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

A. Purpose

The comprehensive examination is intended to assess the student's mastery of the program's core subject knowledge and readiness to advance to doctoral candidacy. It is a critical milestone that demonstrates the student's readiness to engage in original scholarly inquiry. It helps ensure that doctoral students have the academic foundation necessary to proceed to the dissertation phase.

B. Comprehensive Examination Committee

The comprehensive examination committee must minimally consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty, including the student's doctoral advisor or committee chair. Committee members must:

- Hold graduate faculty status at A&M-San Antonio.
- Be knowledgeable in the areas to be covered in the examination.
- Be approved by the academic program and the College of Graduate Studies.

Any changes to the committee after initial approval must be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies using the Committee Change Request Form and obtain approval prior to administration of the examination.

C. Eligibility Criteria

Students must have no outstanding grades of 'Incomplete' and must be enrolled in the term during which the exam is administered.

To be eligible to take the comprehensive examination, the student must:

- Be in good academic standing with a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- Have completed all program required coursework (excluding dissertation credits). Specific course requirements are established by the academic program. Students are recommended to take the exam within the first semester after finishing coursework.
- Submit the Request to Schedule Comprehensive Examination Form to College of Graduate Studies at least four weeks before the exam.

D. Format

Academic programs will submit a description of the exam format for approval by the College of Graduate Studies. The format, scope, and evaluation method is specified by each individual academic program. Written exams address theoretical, methodological, and applied content, while oral exams allow for clarification, defense, and synthesis of written content.

The doctoral comprehensive examination may consist of a written examination, an oral examination, a combination of written and oral examinations, or another program-approved format. Each academic program determines the exam's format, structure, and timeline; the following guidelines apply:

- **Written Exam:** Academic programs may adopt a format that aligns with disciplinary norms, provided it meets the standards of rigor and comprehensiveness expected of doctoral-level assessment. Students should take the written exam during their last semester of required coursework or in the semester immediately following completion of all program-required coursework.
- **Oral Exam:** The oral exam provides an opportunity for the student to defend their interpretations, demonstrate critical thinking, and articulate their research interests. Additionally, the oral exam may be used to assess the student's ability to integrate knowledge across core areas of the program, respond to feedback in real time, and demonstrate the communication skills essential for scholarly work. The scope and structure of the oral exam are determined by the academic program and the committee, in alignment with disciplinary standards.

E. Evaluation and Results

Evaluation forms will be completed and submitted to the College of Graduate Studies no later than 5 business days following the examination. Evaluators must use a rubric and provide narrative feedback. Results will be communicated clearly to the student with an explanation of any conditions for retaking or revising.

The examination will result in one of three potential outcomes to be determined by the committee. The committee chair will submit the Comprehensive Examination Result form.

- **Pass – Advances to candidacy.**
- **Conditional Pass – Requires minor revisions, an additional examination, or retaking/auditing a course.**

- Fail – One re-examination permitted after remediation. A second failure results in dismissal from the program.

Graduate College Representative

Graduate College Representative (GCR) at A&M–San Antonio serves an essential quality assurance role in the doctoral process. Appointed by the College of Graduate Studies (COGS), these faculty members act as neutral observers during key doctoral milestones, the comprehensive examination, dissertation proposal defense, and final dissertation defense. While they are not official members of a student's dissertation committee, their presence helps ensure that all proceedings are conducted with academic integrity, procedural accuracy, and fairness.

A. Role and Purpose

The primary purpose of GCR is to uphold institutional standards and observe milestone assessments to ensure they are conducted ethically and in compliance with university policy and accreditation requirements. These faculty members do not provide academic guidance or evaluation of the dissertation content but instead focus on the integrity and conduct of the process itself. They also serve as signatories on the following forms to verify procedural compliance. Their signature affirms that the assessment was conducted in accordance with university guidelines.

- Comprehensive Examination Result Form
- Dissertation Proposal Defense Result Form
- Dissertation Defense Result Form

B. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to serve in this role, faculty must:

- Hold current graduate faculty status at A&M–San Antonio
- Tenured faculty from outside the department
- Possess a terminal degree in a relevant academic discipline
- Meet all obligations as defined by their program/department, and maintain current graduate faculty status as approved by the College of Graduate Studies

C. Training for GCRs

To prepare GCRs for their quality-assurance role, COGS will provide a concise onboarding that covers: (1) the GCR's mandate as a neutral observer, separate from the dissertation committee, and the scope limits (no advising, no evaluation of scholarly merit); (2) procedures and timelines for each milestone (comprehensive exam, proposal defense, final defense), including how to verify academic integrity, procedural accuracy, and fairness; (3) completion of official forms, along with documentation standards; (4) ethical expectations, confidentiality, conflict-of-interest screening, and accreditation/alignment requirements; and (5) reporting and escalation protocols.

D. Appointment Process

Graduate College Representative is assigned by COGS. Faculty serving in this capacity are distinct from the student's dissertation committee members and are not involved in evaluating or advising on the research itself.

E. Responsibilities

An individual serving as a GCR must exercise careful judgment in fulfilling the following general functions:

1. Observation of Comprehensive Examination Attend and observe the administration of the student's comprehensive exam to ensure the

exam is conducted in accordance with established guidelines and procedures.

2. Observation of Dissertation Proposal Defense Attend the proposal defense to verify that the evaluation process is transparent, fair, and academically sound.
3. Observation of Final Dissertation Defense Attend the final defense to ensure that the procedures are properly followed and that the evaluation is conducted independently and equitably by the dissertation committee.
4. Verification and Signature Sign official milestone result forms to confirm that the process was carried out in alignment with institutional and academic policies.
5. Reporting If applicable, provide a brief report to COGS noting any irregularities or concerns observed during the examination or defense process. If a student has any concerns regarding the fairness of the process, they should first report the matter to the GCR. If concerns remain after meeting with the GCR, the student may escalate the matter to the Dean of the Graduate College.

Responsibilities of the GCR to the Doctoral Student

- To participate in the student's comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal and the dissertation defense.
- To review documents such as the proposal and the dissertation in a timely manner. The student must provide the paper ten working days before the presentation.
- If unable to participate in student's comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal and the dissertation defense, the GCR shall notify the Graduate Dean. The Dean shall appoint a substitute.

Responsibilities of the Doctoral Student to the GCR

- To keep the GCR informed of progress toward the degree, the student will provide the GCR with copies of the proposal and the dissertation ten working days before the presentation.
- To coordinate with the GCR with possible dates and times for comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal and the dissertation defense
- To provide a copy of the dissertation to the GCR before the final defense (at least ten working days before the presentation).

F. Separation from Dissertation Committee

Graduate College Representatives are not involved in dissertation development, research supervision, or decision-making on the scholarly merit of the student's work. Their role is purely procedural and intended to safeguard the quality, consistency, and fairness of doctoral assessments across the institution.

Advancement to Candidacy

Students may not register for dissertation hours until they have been formally advanced to candidacy and approved by the College of Graduate Studies.

To advance to doctoral candidacy, students must:

- Complete all program-required coursework (excluding dissertation credits; specific course requirements are set by the academic program), with a GPA of 3.0 or higher and no grade below a 'B' in any graduate course applied toward the doctoral degree.
- Pass the comprehensive examination
- Submit a Doctoral Candidacy Form to College of Graduate Studies

- Programs may require additional documentation such as a research statement or academic portfolio

Doctoral Dissertation

All doctoral students will complete a dissertation that makes an original contribution to their field. Students are required to maintain continuous enrollment during dissertation work and adhere to all deadlines published by the College of Graduate Studies.

A. Dissertation Process and Timeline

The dissertation represents original scholarship and demonstrates mastery of subject matter, research methods, and academic writing. It is strongly recommended that students complete their dissertation proposal defense within one semester of advancing to candidacy. The dissertation process includes:

- Forming the dissertation committee
- Preparing and successfully defending the dissertation proposal
- Conducting the approved research (Compliant to IRB, IACUC, IBC)
- Writing the dissertation
- Defending the final dissertation
- Submitting the final approved document to the College of Graduate Studies
- Doctoral candidates are not permitted to participate in commencement or “walk” until the final dissertation has been submitted, approved by the College of Graduate Studies, and all degree requirements have been met.

B. Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee chair and all committee members must hold graduate faculty status to ensure they meet the necessary qualifications and are authorized to oversee and evaluate doctoral research. The dissertation committee chair plays a critical role in guiding the doctoral candidate through the dissertation process. Once the candidate submits a chapter/section, the chair is responsible for reviewing and providing feedback within two weeks to ensure steady progress. After the chair has reviewed and approved all chapters, the complete dissertation should be shared with the full committee, which is expected to provide feedback within one month. This structured timeline helps maintain momentum and supports timely completion. If a committee member fails to meet the deadlines and does not respond after a reminder and brief grace period, the committee chair may proceed with available reviews, adjust timelines, or recommend committee reconstitution, with documentation of the action and a report to the GCR. Silent non-response does not constitute approval.

All committee members are expected to offer timely and constructive feedback throughout the dissertation process. Committee responsibilities include mentoring, providing timely feedback, and ensuring ethical and academic standards. External members must hold a terminal degree in a related field. Before beginning their dissertation, each student forms a dissertation committee consisting of:

- A chair
- At least two additional members from the department
- At least one member from outside the department, college, or institution, who brings an external perspective to the research

Approval Process

Submit the Dissertation Committee Appointment Form to College of Graduate Studies

for approval. If any member is from outside A&M-San Antonio, members curriculum vitae is required for review. Any changes to the committee after initial approval requires submission of the Committee Change Request Form to the College of Graduate Studies and gain approval prior to the start of dissertation work.

C. Committee Member or Chair Departure or Extended Unavailability

If the dissertation committee member or chair departs the University, loses graduate faculty status, or becomes unavailable for an extended period (e.g., sabbatical, medical leave), the following procedures apply to safeguard student progress and continuity of oversight:

1. Immediate Notification and Review
 - The student and graduate program coordinator (GPC)/Point of Contact (POC) will notify COGS in writing within 10 business days of learning of the change.
2. Continuity Options
 - The student may identify one or two faculty members they would like to consider as a replacement for the departing committee member or committee chair. The department chair will work with the student and the nominated faculty to determine the appropriate replacement.
3. Documentation
 - Submit the Committee Change Request Form to COGS for approval of any chair changes.
 - If any new member is external to A&M–San Antonio, include a current CV for review.
 - Upon approval, file an updated Committee Appointment Form reflecting the revised composition.
4. Role Clarity and Conflicts
 - The Graduate College Representative (GCR) remains a neutral observer and does not assume chair duties.
 - Any potential conflict of interest arising from the new arrangement must be disclosed to COGS and addressed prior to approval.
5. Appeals and Support

- Students who believe their progress is adversely affected by the transition may consult the GCR and/or submit a written concern to COGS for resolution in accordance with graduate policies.

D. Proposal and Approval

The dissertation proposal typically includes Chapters 1 through 3, or as otherwise defined by the academic program. The Dissertation Proposal process includes:

- A written dissertation proposal prepared in consultation with the committee.
- A Proposal Defense must be held.
- Submit the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form signed by all committee members to College of Graduate Studies for formal approval.

E. Dissertation Writing and Formatting Guidelines

The approved citation style (e.g., APA, AMA, IEEE) will be consistent throughout the document, as determined by the academic program.

- Students are required to be continuously enrolled in dissertation hours (minimum 3 per semester).
- The committee is expected to provide timely feedback.
- IRB approval is required before data collection involving human subjects. IACUC approval is required before data collection involving animals. IBC approval is required before data collection involving biohazards. Contact the Office of Research Compliance (<https://resources.tamusa.edu/employees/research-and-innovation/research-compliance/>) for IRB, IACUC, or IBC-related questions, training, protocols, submissions, and compliance requirements.

General Formatting

- Font: Times New Roman, 12 pt
- Line Spacing: Double-spaced
- Margins: 1 inch on all sides
- Pagination: Bottom center or bottom right, beginning with the first page of Chapter 1

Required Sections (in order):

- Title Page
- Approval Page
- Copyright
- Dedication (optional)
- Acknowledgements
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables (if applicable)
- List of Figures (if applicable)
- List of Illustrations (optional)
- List of Abbreviations (optional)
- Chapters
- References
- Appendices (if any)
- Curriculum Vitae (optional)

F. Final Defense and Submission

Students submit the final draft to their committee at least three weeks before the scheduled defense and submit the defense scheduling form to the College of Graduate Studies at least two weeks in advance.

- Students submit a final draft to the committee at least three weeks before the defense date.
- The defense must be scheduled with College of Graduate Studies via the Request to Schedule Dissertation Defense Form.
- Public announcement of the defense is required.
- Results are submitted using the Dissertation Defense Results Form to the College of Graduate Studies.

G. Final Submission Requirements

After a successful defense:

- Submit the final version of the dissertation through the institutional repository.
- Complete the Final Dissertation Submission Checklist.
- College of Graduate Studies will confirm completion of all requirements and notify the Office of the Registrar for graduation processing.

H. Dissertation Template and Example Pages

Dissertation will follow the A&M-SAN ANTONIO Dissertation Template; example pages are provided in the template for reference.

I. Forms and Approvals

All official forms are submitted by the doctoral program coordinator/director or designated faculty member; student-submitted forms will not be accepted.

All forms must be submitted electronically to the College of Graduate Studies for approval:

1. Request to Schedule Comprehensive Examination Form
2. Committee Appointment Form
3. Committee Change Request Form
4. Comprehensive Examination Results Form
5. Doctoral Candidacy Form
6. Dissertation Proposal Approval Form
7. Request to Schedule Dissertation Defense Form
8. Dissertation Defense Results Form
9. Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) (<https://sed-ncses.org/>), and Doctoral Exit Survey
10. Final Dissertation Submission Checklist

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, generative AI platforms) in graduate-level work, including dissertations, theses, and comprehensive examinations, is permitted at the discretion of the dissertation, thesis, and/or comprehensive exam committee.

Students are required to consult with their committee chair regarding the appropriate use of AI tools. Committees may prohibit or restrict AI use based on disciplinary standards, methodological expectations, or assessment integrity. Noncompliance with these requirements may constitute a violation of the University's academic integrity policy.