

EHS Doctoral Timeline and Checklist**

Giant Steps to Completing a Doctoral Degree

First Year

1. **Selection of a Faculty Mentor/Advisor** Should occur either during the application process or before completion of 18 credit hours of coursework. The major advisor must be able and willing to mentor the student and is someone who will counsel the student on their Plan of Study, development of a dissertation project, and pursuit of career goals.
2. **Selection of Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC)**. The student, in consultation with the major advisor, should form an advisory committee before completion of 18 credit hours of coursework. Once the DAC has been formed, the student should schedule a meeting with the committee be **as soon as possible**. This meeting should involve discussion of the dissertation research plan, the Plan of Study, and career goals; and will serve as the annual committee meeting for the first year (see #5 below).
3. **Plan of Study (POS)**. The first draft of the **Plan of Study**, along with the **Recommendation for DAC Appointment and Plan of Study Form**, should be filed with the Graduate School before the completion of 18 credit hours of coursework. These documents must be approved by the DAC and the Director of Graduate Studies or Head of the Biology Department. The POS form can be found in the Biology Graduate Handbook. Note that extension credits (BIO 802 and 802) cannot be included in the POS and do not count toward completion of the degree requirements.
4. **Dissertation Topic Approval Form** should be filed with the Graduate School before the student has completed 18 credit hours of coursework. This form must be approved by the DAC and the Director of Graduate Studies or Head of the Biology Department.
5. **Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting**. PhD students are required to have at least one meeting with their dissertation committee each year. Two weeks prior to the meeting, the student should provide a written progress report to the committee. The report should summarize the work conducted since the last meeting (including figures and tables of data), problems that are impeding progress, a plan for work to be conducted in the next year, and a timetable for completion of degree requirements. Within one month of the meeting, a written summary of the meeting is prepared by the student and submitted to the Graduate

Studies Committee for review. The **Annual DAC Meeting Summary Form** can be found in the Biology Graduate Handbook.

6. **Evidence of In-State Residency.** After 12 months of continuous residence in NC, out-of-state students are expected to apply for NC residency in order to qualify for in-state tuition and to be considered for continued support by the Department. Preparation for your application should include (but is not limited to) leasing or purchasing real estate in NC, registering to vote in NC, obtaining an NC driver's license, and registering your car in NC.
7. **Submit Annual Report:** Each year students will submit a report detailing their research and academic progress during the preceding year and proposing a plan of action for the current year. The **Annual Report Form** can be found in the Biology Graduate Handbook and is due each year by noon on the first Friday of September.

Second Year

8. **Apply for In-State Residency:** After 12 months of continuous residence in NC, out-of-state students are expected to apply for NC residency in order to qualify for in-state tuition and to be considered for continued support by the Department. Applications are processed via the [NC Residency Determination Service website](#).
9. If necessary, changes to the DAC and/or the Plan of Study can be made by submitting a **Revised Plan of Study Form** and/or a **Revised DAC Form** to the Graduate School.
10. **Complete all EHS core course requirements** (BIO 600, 707, 731, 732, 734, 749, and STA 661) no later than the third semester.
11. **Schedule Doctoral Preliminary Exam.** May be held upon satisfactory completion of all of the required core coursework and 75% of the total coursework in the POS (i.e. core course and electives) and should be held **no later than the third year**. The written and oral preliminary examinations together constitute a comprehensive examination of the student's command of the field. The student must pass both the written and oral portions before they can be officially admitted to candidacy for the degree. Regardless of the outcome of the exam, a **Results of Doctoral Preliminary Exams Form** must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. The proposal title and date must be advertised to the Biology Department (via email and flyer) no later than one week before the defense. Summer proposals are discouraged.
12. **Advance to Candidacy:** Upon the satisfactory completion of **both** the formal coursework in the POS (core courses and electives) and the Preliminary Exam (oral and written components) the student may submit an **Application for Admission to Candidacy Form**

to the Graduate School.

13. **Submit Annual Report**: See **item 7 in Year One** for more information.
14. **Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting**. See **item 5 in Year One** for more information.

Third Year

15. **If Not Completed in Year 2, Schedule Your Doctoral Preliminary Exam**. See **item 11 in Year Two** for more information. Summer proposals are strongly discouraged.
16. **Advance to Candidacy**: Upon the satisfactory completion of both formal coursework (core courses and electives) and the Preliminary Exam (both oral and written components) the student may submit an **Application for Admission to Candidacy [Form](#)** to the Graduate School.
17. If necessary, changes to the DAC and/or the Plan of Study can be made by submitting a **Revised Plan of Study [Form](#)** and/or a **Revised DAC [Form](#)** to the Graduate School.
18. **Annual Report**: See **item 7 in Year One** for more information. Submit DAC Meeting Summary Form to the GSC.
19. **Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting**. See **item 5 in Year One** for more information.
20. It is not too early to start writing the dissertation document. Visit the Graduate School's **Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) [Site](#)** and become familiar with the **Guide to Theses and Dissertations [\(PDF\)](#)**.

Fourth/Fifth Year

21. **Annual Report**: See **item 7 in Year One** for more information.
22. **Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting**. See **item 5 in Year One** for more information.
23. If necessary, changes to the DAC and/or the Plan of Study can be made by submitting a **Revised Plan of Study [Form](#)** and/or a **Revised DAC [Form](#)** to the Graduate School.
24. **Application for Graduation**. This application is always due by the end of the first week of classes of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. Students should visit the

Graduate School [Website](#) to view all pertinent information regarding graduation and the process of applying to graduate.

25. **Dissertation Document.** Students must submit a complete draft of the dissertation document to the Doctoral Advisory Committee chair for review and it is the advisor's role to determine when the written dissertation is acceptable and defensible. Students should expect multiple revisions before the document is sent out for Doctoral Advisory Committee review. The Defense Draft must be sent to the rest of the DAC ***no fewer than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense***. Students who fail to meet this deadline will not be allowed to defend the doctoral document in that semester.
26. **Schedule the Dissertation Defense.** In consultation with the DAC, the student will schedule the final oral exam. It is required that all final oral examinations include a public presentation. Therefore, AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR to the final oral exam date, you MUST submit the **Final Oral Examination Schedule Form** and **Dissertation Abstract** to the Graduate School for inclusion on the defense calendar. **This will be strictly enforced!** Please check the Graduate School Calendar for the FINAL day for Final Oral Exam completion. For guidance preparing the Abstract, please consult the [Guide for the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations](#). The defense title and date must be advertised to the Biology Department (via email and flyer) no later than two weeks before the defense. Summer defenses are discouraged.
27. **Regardless of the outcome**, the student must fill out and submit the **Results of the Oral Examination in Defense of Thesis/Dissertation Form** to the committee chair, who will sign it and submit it to the Graduate School following the exam.
28. **File one approval copy of dissertation.** The process for submitting the approval copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School has two components: submitting the **signed** approval and title pages, and electronically submitting the document - see **Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) site** and the Graduation [site](#) for deadlines and other valuable information.
29. **File FINAL copy of the dissertation with the Graduate School.** After completing the formatting revisions requested by the Graduate School, submit the FINAL electronic copy of the dissertation. Failure to meet the submission [deadline](#) will delay graduation until the following semester.
30. **Return your keys** or you will not be able to get your transcripts or diploma.
31. **Attend the doctoral hooding ceremony.** There, you may thank and celebrate with your

dissertation advisor, committee members, family, and friends.

**** This document provides guidelines for making progress on the degree. However, it is the absolute responsibility of the student to be aware of and follow the policies and procedures detailed in both the [Biology Graduate Handbook](#) and the [University Catalog](#). Moreover, it is the responsibility of the student to be aware of and to meet all deadlines associated with the degree requirements (see [Graduate School Calendar](#)). Finally, continued Departmental support is contingent on the student meeting, in a timely fashion, benchmarks that are listed here and detailed in the Biology Graduate Handbook.**