

**Texas State University**

**Department of Geography**

**Ph.D. Policies and Procedures  
Handbook**

**September 25, 2020**

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# 1. Purpose, Objectives, and Administration of the Ph.D. Programs

## *1.1 Purpose of This Handbook*

The Department of Geography at Texas State University offers the Ph.D. degree in Geography, the Ph.D. degree in Geographic Education, and the Ph.D. degree in Geographic Information Science. The purpose of this handbook is to provide an inventory of policies and procedures of the Graduate College and the Department of Geography concerning the Ph.D. programs. Some of the material in this handbook is taken directly from the Graduate Catalog and reflects policies of the Graduate College and the University. **Portions of section 9 and all of sections 10 through 12 are excerpted from the University's Handbook for Ph.D. Dissertations ([http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/docs/Thesis\\_Diss\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/docs/Thesis_Diss_Guide.pdf)).**

The remaining material represents Departmental policies and procedures concerning the Ph.D. programs. In the event of any conflict between departmental and University policies, University policies will take precedence. Ph.D. students must also uphold the policies, procedures, and regulations of Texas State University, the Texas State University System, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board ([theccb.state.tx.us](http://theccb.state.tx.us)) as well as state and federal laws. Unless stipulated otherwise, all the policies and procedures described in this handbook apply to all programs.

## *1.2 Objectives of the Graduate College for the Doctoral Program*

The purpose of doctoral education in the Graduate College is to provide the means for continued intellectual growth through advanced and specialized education that emphasizes original research. The aim of doctoral study is to develop leaders in basic and applied research in their fields of specialization. More explicitly, the Graduate College has adopted the following objectives for doctoral study that will add both breadth and depth to the academic and professional preparation received at the undergraduate and master's degree levels – to

- impart a thorough understanding of research methods and techniques in specialized fields;
- afford students the opportunity to undertake original research in their areas of specializations, both independently and in collaboration with the faculty;
- provide students with the ability and resources to integrate their research into the community of scholars and professionals in a particular academic discipline;
- challenge students intellectually to develop their powers of independent thought, and to direct them toward positions of intellectual leadership in their personal and professional lives.

## *1.3 Characteristics of Doctoral Study*

Doctoral study affords students of exceptional academic ability ample opportunity to continue their intellectual growth and development, and to integrate themselves into the professional community of scholars in a manner emphasizing the completion, presentation, and publication of original, creative research. Doctoral study presupposes the previous acquisition of a master's degree and a command of skills and techniques needed to conduct intensive independent research and investigation.

Doctoral instruction differs from instruction at the undergraduate and master's levels in at least the following respects:

- Doctoral students are expected to assume responsibility for the planning, completion, and presentation of original scholarly research;

- With the assistance of the faculty, doctoral students are expected to undertake research projects that will lead to professional presentation and publication;
- More extensive reading, emphasizing primary source material in a specialized field, is expected;
- Students are expected to become thoroughly familiar with the current literature in their fields, with emphasis on recently published developments in research methods and results;
- Doctoral courses are seminars that stress active roles for students in intellectual exchange with both faculty and peers and in the critique of published research;
- Doctoral course work underscores integrating student research into the norms of an academic discipline.

#### ***1.4 Administration of the Ph.D. Programs***

The Ph.D. programs in Geography, Geographic Education, and Geographic Information Science are administered by members of the Ph.D. Core and Associate Doctoral Faculty of the Department of Geography. Ph.D. Core faculty members are authorized to direct doctoral dissertations, serve on doctoral committees, and teach Ph.D. courses. Ph.D. Associate faculty members may serve on doctoral committees and teach Ph.D. courses, but may not direct doctoral dissertations. A list of Ph.D. Core and Associate faculty members and their research specialties is available on the Department's web site (<https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/faculty-staff/faculty.html>).

While the Ph.D. Core and Associate Faculty of the Department share in the administration of the program, the Graduate Program Coordinator, the Department Chair, and the Graduate Committee of the Department have special roles in program administration. The Coordinator is responsible for day-to-day program administration and supervision. The Coordinator serves as the Department's formal liaison to the Graduate College through membership on the Graduate Council, which is responsible for the administration of graduate programs across the University.

The Coordinator also serves as chair of the Graduate Committee, which consists of several members of the Graduate Faculty appointed by the chair along with the Department Chair *ex officio*. The Department Chair is the chief administrative officer and account manager of the Department. The Department Chair is authorized to undertake any of the Coordinator's responsibilities as described in this Handbook in the Coordinator's absence. The Graduate Committee advises and assists the Coordinator in day-to-day administration of the Ph.D. programs, and is charged with reviewing the program's structure and requirements and with initiating proposed changes that are then voted upon by the full faculty of the Department.

## **2. Admission Policies**

### ***2.1 General Admission Policies***

The requirements set forth on the following pages are the minimum for admission to the Graduate College at the doctoral level (<http://www.geo.txstate.edu/degrees-programs/PhD/admission-documents.html>). Meeting these requirements does not necessarily ensure acceptance into a doctoral program. Applicants must receive departmental recommendation for admission after the application files are completed in the office of the Graduate College. Final admission approval is granted by the Dean of the Graduate College. The university reserves the right to deny admission to any prospective or former students who have

criminal records, including any conviction for a felony, offenses involving moral turpitude, or other offenses of a serious nature.

## ***2.2 Application Deadline***

Students who hold acceptable master's degrees from accredited colleges or universities in geography or in related fields must submit applications to the Graduate College if they wish to pursue a Ph.D. degree at Texas State University. To ensure full consideration, all application materials must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than **January 15th** for entry the following fall semester. Students are admitted to the Ph.D. programs only in the fall semester.

## ***2.3 Minimum Requirements for Admission***

The minimum requirements for admission to the Ph.D. programs in Geography at Texas State University include a completed master's degree in geography or a related field, a grade-point average (GPA) of 3.5 or better in master's-level course work, a competitive Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score, 3 letters of recommendation, and a statement of purpose. Students for whom English is a second language must also complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Each international student must have a TOEFL score of at least 78 (iBT).

## ***2.4 The Application Process for United States Citizens***

United States citizens must complete an official application for admission. Applications may be obtained through the Graduate College web site. Applicants must also submit a nonrefundable application fee of \$55.00, one official transcript from each college and university attended, and an official score report of the GRE. Each applicant must also submit a Statement of Purpose describing his or her scholarly background, professional interests at the doctoral level, and career objectives. The applicant must also arrange for three letters of recommendation on his or her behalf to be submitted to the Graduate College. All of these documents must be submitted directly to the Graduate College.

## ***2.5 The Application Process for Non-United States Citizens***

An International applicant is defined as an applicant who is not a citizen of the United States. All non-U.S. citizens fall under regulations of the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U.S. Department of Justice. University rules applying to non-U.S. citizens must comply with federal law; hence, admission requirements for international students, including permanent residents, differ from those for United States citizens.

In addition to the admission requirements for U.S. citizens summarized in section 2.4 above and detailed in the Graduate Catalog, non-U.S. citizens must submit an additional nonrefundable international application fee of \$90.00 (check or money order in U.S. currency). They must submit an official diploma or degree certificate, along with an English translation if the diploma or degree certification is in a language other than English, showing the type of degree earned and the date the degree was conferred. Transcripts from foreign institutions must be accompanied by English translations, if appropriate, and must carry any additional legends that will assist in their evaluation. Applicants for whom English is a second language must submit an official score report of TOEFL. International students who plan to attend Texas State University on an F-1 student visa must furnish proof of sufficient financial resources for their educational and personal expenses. Proof of additional funds is required for persons attending summer sessions. After all academic and financial requirements have been met, Texas State University will issue a

form I-20 to qualified international applicants. A permanent resident alien is not required to furnish proof of financial support and is not issued a form I-20.

### **3. Course Work Requirements for the Degree**

The fundamental learning outcomes upon graduation for all graduate students of the Department of Geography are to have a working knowledge of the core concepts of geography as well as an insightful understanding of the essential concepts of their specializations that would be expected at the doctoral level of study.

#### ***3.1 Summary of Degree Requirements***

All Ph.D. students must complete a minimum of 31 hours of doctoral-level course work. These hours include nine hours of core courses, a four-hour skill course, 12 hours of specialization courses, and six hours of elective courses in geography or a related field. Some of these courses have prerequisites, and students who lack the appropriate prerequisites must complete them before enrolling in those courses. Students who hold master's degrees in fields other than Geography may be required to take leveling course work at the undergraduate or master's level. Prerequisite and leveling courses do not count for doctoral credit and are not included in the 31-hour course work minimum. After completing the required course work, the student must also complete a minimum of 15 hours of doctoral dissertation credit. The student must also pass a comprehensive examination, complete a research proposal, and complete and defend a Ph.D. dissertation.

#### ***3.2 Degree Outlines***

Each Ph.D. student is issued a degree outline on Degree Works by the Graduate College. The degree outline lists all the courses required for completion of Ph.D. course work, including leveling and prerequisite courses if appropriate. Degree outlines are specific to the needs of each individual student. The degree outline is a working document. With the approval of the student and the research advisor, the Coordinator may initiate changes in the degree outline by requesting such changes to the Dean of the Graduate College

#### ***3.3 Core Courses***

All Ph.D. students in Geography, Geographic Education, and Geographic Information Science must complete GEO 7300 (Advanced Research Design), GEO 7301 (Advanced Quantitative Methods in Geography), and GEO 7302 (Nature and Philosophy of Geography). Full-time students must complete these courses in their first year of residence. Part-time students must complete them within the first two years of their Ph.D. course work.

#### ***3.4 Skill Course***

All Ph.D. students in Geography and Geographic Education must complete a four-hour skill course. The courses that satisfy this requirement include:

- GEO 7415 Geographic Applications of Remote Sensing
- GEO 7417 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- GEO 7430 Field Methods
- GEO 7447 Spatial Graphics in Geographic Education

All Ph.D. students in Geographic Information Science must complete the four-hour skill course GEO 7418 Technical Foundations and Methods in Geographic Information Science.

Some of these courses have prerequisites. Students who have not completed prerequisites for their skill courses will be required to complete the prerequisites before enrolling for their skill courses. These prerequisites do not count toward fulfilling the 31-hour Ph.D. course work requirement.

### **3.5 Specialization Courses**

3.5.1 Ph.D. students in Geography must complete 18 hours from among the Geography specialization courses.

3.5.2 Ph.D. students in Geographic Education must complete 12 hours from among the following Geographic Education specialization courses:

- GEO 7342 Theories and Methods in Geographic Education
- GEO 7344 Seminar in Geographic Curriculum
- GEO 7346 Standards and Assessment in Geography
- GEO 7371 Advanced Seminar in Geographic Education
- GEO 7390 Independent Study

3.5.3 Ph.D. students in Geographic Information Science must complete 12 hours from among the following Geographic Information Science specialization courses:

- GEO 7316 Remote Sensing and the Environment
- GEO 7318 GIS in Environmental Geography
- GEO 7447 Spatial Graphics in Geographic Education
- GEO 7361 Advanced Geographic Information Systems
- GEO 7362 Geographic Visualization
- GEO 7364 Geocomputation
- GEO 7365 Theoretical Cartography
- GEO 7366 Advanced Topics in Remote Sensing
- GEO 7372 Seminar in Geographic Information Science

## **4. Registration, Course Credit, Residency, and Advisement**

### **4.1 Course Load**

Full-time graduate students, including those who are supported as graduate assistants by the Department, are required to enroll in nine hours of course work per long semester. These nine hours must appear on the degree outline as counting toward the degree requirements.

### **4.2 Repeating Courses**

A student may repeat a course but cannot receive credit for the course more than once unless the course description in the catalog specifically provides that the course may be repeated for credit. When a course is repeated once, the last grade earned ("W" and "I" grades excluded) is the only grade included in computing the student's cumulative record of hours attempted and grade points earned. When a course is repeated more than once, the second grade and all subsequent grades are included in computing the student's cumulative record of hours attempted and grade-

points earned. If the last grade in a repeated course is lower than an earlier grade, the last grade is used to determine whether the course fulfills university requirements.

#### ***4.3 Transfer Credit***

With the approval of the Department of Geography and the Dean of the Graduate College, Ph.D. students can transfer up to six semester hours of coursework that are directly applicable to the Ph.D. program at Texas State University, provided that the credit was completed in residence at an accredited institution; the course work was at the doctoral level; and the Graduate College is provided with written verification of the student's status at that university. The Coordinator must provide a written request to the Dean of the Graduate College asking for acceptance of the transfer credit as part of the course work requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Students who are working toward a doctoral degree at Texas State University and wish to take a course at another accredited university to apply toward the degree at Texas State University must receive permission from the Coordinator and ask the Coordinator to submit a written request to the Dean of the Graduate College so that the Dean can issue an official letter of good standing. The request should identify the course(s) by name and number and should state what semester(s) and where the student will be taking the course. If the Dean of the Graduate College approves this request, the Dean will send a letter of good standing to the university in which the student plans to enroll. After the course work is completed, an official transcript of the work completed must be forwarded to the Graduate College.

Transfer work will be accepted only if it bears a letter grade of "B" or higher, or a numerical equivalent. A grade of Credit, Pass, Satisfactory, etc., is unacceptable. Transfer work will not be accepted for graduate degree credit from another institution if such courses are designated as non-degree, background, preparatory, etcetera. No credit will be awarded until an official transcript showing the course work to be transferred is on file in the Graduate College. Students on probation or suspension will not receive credit for transfer work.

#### ***4.4 Withdrawal from the University***

Withdrawing from the university is an official action. For more information, on withdrawing or dropping a class, please go to:

<https://www.registrar.txstate.edu/registration/dropping-or-withdrawing.html>

#### ***4.5 Dropping a Class***

Dropping a class is an official action whereby a student drops a course(s) yet remains enrolled in at least one other course. The deadline for dropping classes or withdrawing from the University can be found at <http://www.registrar.txstate.edu/persistent-links/academic-calendar.html>.

For more information on dropping a class, please go to:  
<https://www.registrar.txstate.edu/registration/dropping-or-withdrawing.html>

#### ***4.6 Probation and Suspension***

Doctoral students are required to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA in doctoral-level courses listed on the degree outline as required for the Ph.D. degree. Cumulative GPAs are computed at the end of the fall semester, spring semester, and the second summer session (both summer sessions combined are treated as equivalent to one semester in determining satisfactory academic progress). A student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 during any semester of enrollment at

Texas State University is placed on academic probation. The student has one semester to raise his or her cumulative GPA above the 3.0 standard. A student who fails to do so is suspended from the Graduate College for a period of not less than six months.

A student on suspension who wishes to be reinstated after six months or more may ask that the Coordinator request to the Dean of the Graduate College that he or she be reinstated. In requesting reinstatement, the student on suspension must give compelling reasons why his or her academic performance is likely to improve if reinstated. The Coordinator will not initiate reinstatement requests without the explicit approval of the student's research advisor.

#### ***4.7 Residency Requirement***

Full-time doctoral students must satisfy a one-year residence requirement defined as 18 doctoral credit hours (as part of the 31 required hours of course work) taken during consecutive fall, spring, or summer semesters. Part-time students may satisfy the residency requirement by enrolling in at least 18 consecutive doctoral credit hours at Texas State University.

### **5. Research Advisor and Committee Selection**

#### ***5.1 Selecting a Research Advisor***

Each Ph.D. student must identify a research advisor. Incoming Ph.D. students must declare their research advisors no later than the end of the first semester in residence. Once the student has identified a research advisor, the student formally requests the faculty member to serve as the research advisor. If the faculty member agrees to serve as the research advisor, the student then obtains the Advisor Selection Form from the Graduate Staff Advisor's office. This form must be signed by the student, the research advisor, the Coordinator, and the Department Chair and submitted to the Graduate College.

#### ***5.2 Changing the Research Advisor***

Occasionally, students may need to change research advisors. A change in the research advisor may be the result of one of the following circumstances:

1. Death, retirement, incapacity, or resignation from the University of the research advisor;
2. Loss of status as Ph.D. Core Faculty member on the part of the research advisor;
3. A student's decision that his or her academic and professional interests would be better served with a different research advisor.

If a change of research advisor is necessitated the student obtains a Change of Advisement Form from the Graduate Staff Advisor.

#### ***5.3 Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Committees***

Over the course of the doctoral program, the Ph.D. student will work with two committees. The Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee works with the student through the successful completion of the comprehensive examination. The Dissertation Committee works with the student following successful completion of the comprehensive examination until completion of the degree requirements.

The Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee consists of at least four members and is chaired by the research advisor. At least three of the members of the Ph.D. Comprehensive

Examination Committee must be members of the Ph.D. Core or Associate Faculty in the Department of Geography. Members of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee who are not members of the Department of Geography must meet the standards for membership detailed in section 5.4 below.

The Dissertation Committee consists of at least four members and is chaired by the research advisor. At least three of the members of the Ph.D. Dissertation Committee must be members of the Ph.D. Core or Associate Faculty in the Department of Geography. At least one member must be chosen from outside the Department of Geography. Members of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee who are not members of the Department of Geography must meet the standards for membership detailed in section 5.4 below. It is a professional courtesy to ask members of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee who wish to do so to serve on the Dissertation Committee.

#### ***5.4 Approval of Outside Committee Members***

The appointment of any person who is not a member of the faculty in the Department to a Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee or a Ph.D. Dissertation Committee requires the formal approval of the Coordinator, the Department Chair, and the Dean of the Graduate College. A proposed committee member who is a member of the faculty in a department other than Geography at Texas State University must hold the Ph.D. degree, must be a member of the Graduate Faculty at Texas State University, and must hold, as a minimum, professional credentials equivalent to those expected of members of the Ph.D. Associate Faculty in the Department of Geography. A proposed committee member who is not a member of the faculty at Texas State University must hold the Ph.D. degree and must hold, as a minimum, professional credentials equivalent to those expected of members of the Ph.D. Associate Faculty in the Department of Geography.

The student should obtain a copy of the prospective member's curriculum vitae in order to ensure that the prospective member holds professional credentials equivalent to those expected of members of the Ph.D. Associate Faculty in the Department of Geography. The student submits a Proposed Committee Member form along with the proposed member's curriculum vitae to the Graduate Staff Advisor. The Department cannot assume responsibility for expenses incurred by the outside committee member associated with service on the committee.

## **6. Advancement to Candidacy**

### ***Definition of Advancement to Candidacy***

A student is advanced to Ph.D. candidacy upon completion of the following sequential steps:

1. Completion of 31 hours of Ph.D. course work, along with leveling and prerequisite courses as appropriate;
2. Passing the comprehensive examination (see Section 7 below);
3. Completing and presenting the dissertation proposal to the student's committee.

### ***6.3 Advancement to Candidacy Time Limit***

Ph.D. students must be advanced to candidacy **within four years** after initial enrollment in the Ph.D. program. No credit will be applied toward the doctoral degree for course work completed more than four years before the date of advancement to candidacy. This time limit

applies toward credit earned at Texas State University as well as credit transferred to Texas State University from other accredited institutions.

## **7. The Comprehensive Examination**

### ***7.1 Comprehensive Examination Requirement***

All applicants for advancement to candidacy for the doctoral degree must pass a comprehensive examination. Both prevailing expectations in the field and the actual courses taken by the candidate will determine the subject matter of the examinations. This exam may not be taken until all required course work has been completed.

### ***7.2 Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination***

7.2.1. The primary objective of the comprehensive examination is to assess the student's knowledge of the major field of study (geography, geographic education, or geographic information science) and to determine the student's ability to undertake and complete original research.

7.2.2. The student's comprehensive examination committee consists of at least four members. Details about the committee composition are given in sections 5.3 and 5.4. The committee is chaired by the student's research advisor.

7.2.3. The examination consists of a written component and an oral component. The student must pass the written component before proceeding to the oral component.

7.2.4. Before formal arrangements for the written examination are made, the student arranges examination dates and format with the research advisor and the committee. At the discretion of the research advisor and members of the committee, the format of the examination may be closed book, open book, or a combination of closed book and open book. The examination must be administered during the fall or spring semester by the advisor and committee members.

7.2.5. In consultation with each committee member, the student will prepare a comprehensive exam reading list comprised of publications identified during coursework and independent research as relevant to their research and specialization. The reading list must be approved by the research advisor and circulated to committee members at least six weeks prior to the written exam. Reading lists may vary in length and are organized into categories or bodies of literature. At least two weeks prior to the beginning of the written component, the research advisor invites each member of the committee to submit a written question or questions for inclusion on the examination.

7.2.6. Questions are to be received by the research advisor at least one week before the scheduled beginning of the examination. The research advisor may edit the questions for clarity and/or duplication. The research advisor provides all committee members with the complete list of questions for committee comment and approval before administering the examination to the student.

7.2.7. The entire written examination lasts four consecutive days. Only one examination period shall be scheduled on each examination day. Each examination period shall be either closed book or open book. A closed book examination period shall be four hours in length. An open book examination shall be no more than eight hours in length. . All answers must be word processed.

For closed book examinations, the department will provide a computer connected to a printer, word processing software, a USB drive, and a quiet and comfortable place free of distractions to the student. For open book examinations, the research advisor shall clearly state the number of hours allocated to each examination period and mark those hours on the question sheet given to the student at the beginning of each examination period. The student may use any room of her or his choice when taking the open book examination. For both closed book and open book examinations, a student shall submit the answers to the research advisor or a committee member at the end of each examination period. For closed book examinations, the student saves the answers to a USB drive and submits the USB drive as well as a hardcopy of the answers to the advisor or a committee member. For open book examinations, the student may submit their answers electronically.

- 7.2.8. After the student completes the written examination, the research advisor provides copies of all the questions and a complete set of the student's answers to all committee members.
- 7.2.9. Committee members including the research advisor are expected to read and evaluate the answers as soon as possible after the student completes the examination. After reading the answers, each committee member offers judgment about whether the student has passed the written examination. He or she then communicates his or her judgment of the written examination via email to the research advisor.
- 7.2.10. If a majority of the committee judges the written examination to be passing, the student passes the written examination. Otherwise, the student fails the written examination. The committee's judgment concerning the outcome of the written examination must be communicated to the student orally and in writing within one week after the student completes the written examination. The written communication concerning the outcome of the written examination may be in the form of an email or a letter at the discretion of the advisor.
- 7.2.11. A student who has failed the written examination is eligible to retake the written examination once. Unless under extenuating circumstances and with the approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator, the second examination must take place no less than three months and no more than one year after the end of the first written examination. A student who fails the written examination twice is denied admission to Ph.D. candidacy.
- 7.2.12. At the committee's discretion, the candidate can be required to complete up to six hours of additional course work before retaking the examination.
- 7.2.13. Once the student has passed the written component, the oral component of the examination is scheduled by the research advisor in consultation with the committee and the student. The oral examination takes place within three weeks after the end of the written examination.
- 7.2.14. The oral examination is to last no more than two hours.
- 7.2.15. After the oral examination is finished, the student is excused while the committee deliberates the result of the examination. Each committee member offers his or her opinion as to whether the student has passed the oral examination. If a majority judges the examination as passing, the student passes the examination. The committee must notify the student of its decision within thirty minutes of the end of the oral examination.
- 7.2.16. A student who has failed the oral examination is eligible to retake the oral examination once. Unless under extenuating circumstances and with the approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator, the second oral examination must be taken no less than three months and no more

than one year after the date of the original oral examination. A student who fails the oral examination twice is denied admission to Ph.D. candidacy.

7.2.17. Students should not be made aware of any examination questions before an examination begins.

7.2.18. This is an examination. Therefore, students shall answer the questions independently without help from others for both closed book and open book examinations. Students shall not access the internet using any device during a closed book examination.

## **8. The Dissertation Proposal**

### ***8.1 Purpose of the Dissertation Proposal***

The dissertation proposal is a statement of the proposed research. It must be approved by the Dissertation Committee and defended in a committee examination. Once the student has completed these tasks, the Department recommends to the Dean of the Graduate College that the student be advanced to Ph.D. candidacy.

### ***8.2 Defense of the Dissertation Proposal***

Once the proposal has been written and read by the Dissertation Committee, the student must defend the proposal in a **public presentation**. Following the examination, the committee decides by majority vote whether the student has passed the examination. If a majority votes that the student has not passed the examination, then the committee prepares a report in writing detailing what changes are needed in order to make the proposal acceptable. Once the student has made these changes, the examination is repeated. **A student who fails the defense of the dissertation proposal twice is denied advancement to candidacy.**

### ***8.3 Submission of the Dissertation Proposal***

Once the Dissertation Committee is satisfied that the proposal is complete and has been defended successfully, the research advisor works with the Coordinator to submit the proposal to the Graduate College. The proposal must be signed by the Department Chair. One copy of the proposal must be submitted along with the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal Form to the Dean of the Graduate College. Once the proposal has been approved by the Dean of the Graduate College, the student is officially advanced to candidacy.

## **9. The Doctoral Dissertation**

### ***9.1 The Dissertation Requirement***

All doctoral students are required to complete a dissertation. The dissertation must be an original contribution to scholarship and the result of independent investigation in a significant area. Preparation of the dissertation must follow the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* using the PR and RL formats, or the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*.

## ***9.2 Dissertation Enrollment Requirements***

The minimum number of dissertation hours a student must take is fifteen. After being admitted to candidacy, students must be continuously enrolled each long semester for at least one dissertation hour. The student must be enrolled for dissertation hours during the semester in which the degree is to be conferred.

Students who are enrolled for dissertation credit but who have not completed the dissertation receive grades of “PR.”

## ***9.3. Dissertation Time Limit***

Students are expected to complete the dissertation within three years of advancement to candidacy.

## ***9.4 Final Oral Comprehensive Examination***

After the dissertation has been completed, the student must pass a final oral examination (defense) that covers the dissertation and the general field of the dissertation. The dissertation defense is open to the public. A completed Dissertation Defense for the Doctoral Program Form must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate College.

## ***9.5 Approval and Submission of the Dissertation and Abstract***

The approval of the dissertation and abstract requires positive votes from the Ph.D. advisor and from a majority of the members of the Ph.D. Advisory Committee. Once the committee has approved the dissertation, an electronic copy of the approved dissertation must be uploaded to Vireo on the Graduate College website. In addition, the student will need to submit the Dissertation Submission Approval Form (<https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/forms.html>).

## ***9.6 Applying for Graduation***

The student intending to graduate must apply for graduation in the Graduate College the semester the doctoral degree is to be awarded. The deadline dates are published each semester and can be obtained in the Graduate College.

## ***9.7 Dissertation Deadlines***

Dissertation deadlines can be found at <https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/students/deadlines.html>

## ***9.8 Final Examination Procedure***

All candidates for doctoral degrees must pass a final examination over the dissertation. The final oral defense examination is not perfunctory; it is a formal occasion that provides an opportunity for discussion, dialogue, and defense of the work that the student has completed.

After all committee members have read the dissertation draft and have recommended changes, the candidate working with his or her research advisor incorporates the changes recommended by committee members. Individual committee members have the right to review changes prior to the final examination if they wish. When each committee member is satisfied that the dissertation draft is ready for defense, he or she communicates this to the research advisor in writing.

After all committee members have communicated to the research advisor that the dissertation is ready to be defended, the research advisor proceeds with the scheduling of the Final Dissertation Defense. The examination must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance. Notice of the time and

place of the final examination must be posted on the Graduate College website and within the major department. The examination is open to the public.

The research advisor chairs the examination. All members of the dissertation committee are expected to be present.

The final examination is oral. Questions must pertain primarily to the dissertation itself and to the implications of the results for future research in the dissertation field. All members of the dissertation committee are afforded the opportunity to ask questions. At the discretion of the research advisor, and if time permits, members of the audience may be invited to ask questions. The examination should last no more than two hours.

### ***9.9 Final Dissertation Defense Results***

At the end of the Final Dissertation Defense, the research advisor excuses the audience and the candidate and deliberates the result of the examination with the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee has three alternatives to consider: Pass; Provisional Pass; and Fail. "Pass" means that the dissertation requires no changes or requires only minor revisions that can be completed in a short amount of time. Under such circumstances, the dissertation committee signs the examination report and entrusts overseeing revisions to the research advisor. When these changes have been completed the student presents the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College in accordance with the procedures below. Ordinarily a "Pass" report requires unanimous judgment of the dissertation committee.

"Provisional Pass" means that the dissertation committee judges that more extensive revision of the dissertation is needed for it to be acceptable. Under such circumstances, committee members examine the revised dissertation before it is presented to the Graduate College in accordance with the procedures below, but another oral examination is not necessary. When the dissertation committee elects "Provisional Pass", a report is prepared by the research advisor. The report outlines the nature of the needed revisions and gives a time limit within which the student must complete them to the satisfaction of the dissertation committee. It must be signed by the dissertation committee and the student. Copies of the report are given to the Coordinator, and the Dean of the Graduate College. Once the revisions have been made to the satisfaction of the research advisor and the dissertation committee, members of the committee sign a statement indicating passage of the examination. This statement is then sent to the Dean of the Graduate College for approval. If the student fails to complete the necessary revisions within the appropriate time limit, the student must repeat the final examination.

"Fail" means that the dissertation is unsatisfactory as written and that the student will not be awarded the degree until he or she has rewritten the dissertation and taken another Final Comprehensive Examination. A committee which judges that the examination is a failure may recommend revisions to the dissertation draft or may require the student to undertake a new dissertation under the supervision of the same dissertation committee or a different dissertation committee. A report of "Fail" must be accompanied by a report prepared by the research advisor and signed by the dissertation committee. The report identifies the reasons that the dissertation is not acceptable and offers judgment as to whether the student is permitted to revise the dissertation draft or must attempt a new dissertation. The dissertation committee must sign the report. Copies of the report are given to the Coordinator, the Department Chair, and the Dean of the Graduate College.

The dissertation committee should strive for a unanimous decision if possible. A report of Pass requires unanimous agreement. Otherwise the decision must be made by majority vote of the dissertation committee. The decision is communicated orally to the student as soon as possible after

the decision has been made. The decision must be communicated in writing, along with the report in the event of a Provisional Pass or Fail, to the student within a week after the defense. Ordinarily, a student who fails the final comprehensive examination twice is withdrawn from the program.

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the dissertation committee. Appeals are heard by the Coordinator. The decision of the Coordinator is referred to the Department Chair, and the Department Chair's decision is referred to the Dean of the Graduate College for final resolution.

## **10. Dissertation Submission Guidelines**

### ***10.1 Presentation of the Dissertation to the Dean of the Graduate College***

The student must present the Dean of the Graduate College with an electronic PDF copy of the dissertation for approval along with the Dissertation Submission Form. The dissertation must be presented at least 21 days prior to commencement. The primary document of the thesis/dissertation must be in PDF, however supplementary materials in various formats are allowed. Refer to the end of this section for additional details.

With the Vireo system, the thesis/dissertation submission and review processes are completed entirely online. The submission process is a five-step process. Instructions for each of the five steps are provided below. The student will be notified by email once the submission is complete and received by The Graduate College. After The Graduate College reviews a thesis/dissertation, the student and committee chair are notified by email if revisions are required or if the document is approved. All email correspondence in Vireo is sent to Texas State University email accounts, so it is very important that those accounts are regularly checked once a thesis/dissertation has been submitted to The Graduate College for review. Instructions to complete the revision process are included below. The Library will retain a print copy of every student's thesis/dissertation for their circulating collection and a microfilm copy for the University Archives, regardless of the embargo selection. Supplementary files are excluded from this policy.

Students submitting in Vireo are not required to submit paper copies to the Library. However, a student has the option of taking one or more printed copies to the Circulation Desk of Alkek Library to be bound for personal use. Some programs require the student deposit a hard-copy with the department, so students should check with their departments regarding bound copies of theses/dissertations. The student is responsible for paying the binding fee at the time the order is placed at the Circulation Desk of Alkek Library for personal and departmental copies.

Prior to beginning the submission process in Vireo the student should do the following:

- Convert the thesis/dissertation to a PDF (see Chapter IX of this Guide for instructions).
- Discuss embargo options with the Chair of the committee and decide the best option to select for the document.
- Select several key words to enter into Vireo for searchability.
- Gather the Texas State email address(es) of the committee chair(s). These will be entered into the Vireo system, as the committee chair is requested to approve the document submission and embargo.

To log on to Vireo go to the following URL: <https://etd.library.txstate.edu/vireo>.

## ***10.2 Deadlines***

The Graduate College provides a statement of deadlines for doctoral candidates each semester. Students are expected to adhere to these deadlines.

<https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/students/deadlines.html>

## ***10.7 Summary of Approval Procedure***

The dissertation defense form must be signed by the dissertation committee, the Coordinator, the Department Chair, and the Dean of the Graduate College. The dissertation must be signed by the dissertation committee and by the Dean of the Graduate College. Deadlines for Final Dissertation Defense, when the dissertation is due to the Graduate College, and more, can be found at <https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/students/deadlines.html>

# **11. Style, Organization, and Mechanics of the Dissertation**

## ***11.1 Language***

The dissertation must be written in the English language. Neither the fact that many materials used by the student during the preparation of the dissertation may be in another language nor insufficient command of English is an acceptable justification for an exception to this requirement. Students who are not native speakers of the English language may obtain the services of professional editors to assist in the preparation of the dissertation in English of acceptable quality.

## ***11.2 Style***

Doctoral dissertations in Geography must be written in accordance with the style guidelines found in the most recent edition of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, following the parenthetical (PR) citation and reference list (RL) formats, or in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*.

## ***11.3 Arrangement of the Dissertation***

Please see Graduate College [Guide to preparing and submitting a thesis or dissertation](https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/docs/Thesis_Diss_Guide.pdf)  
[https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/docs/Thesis\\_Diss\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/docs/Thesis_Diss_Guide.pdf)

# **12. Reminders and Warnings**

## ***12.1 Plagiarism***

Plagiarism is a direct violation of University policy (UPPS No. 07.10.01, Academic Dishonesty; UPPS No. 01.04.24; <http://www.txstate.edu/effective/upps/upps-07-10-01.html>) and is subject to disciplinary action. All suspected incidents of plagiarism will be investigated and pursued in accordance with University regulations.

## ***12.2 Use of Copyrighted Materials***

Copyrighted materials (except for brief quotations and paraphrases) may not be reproduced without written permission from the copyright holder. In the event of any doubt about whether copyrighted material requires written permission for use in the dissertation, the student is advised to consult *Copyright Law and the Doctoral Dissertation* by Kenneth D. Crews, published by University Microfilms. Copies of this book may be obtained from University Microfilms (1-800-521-0600, extension 3871).

### ***12.3 Microfilm Publication of the Dissertation***

All dissertations must be published in microfilm through microfilm reproduction of the entire dissertation through Bell & Howell Information and Learning. The Graduate College submits a copy of the dissertation to University Microfilms. The student is billed for charges associated with microfilming the dissertation. In addition, the dissertation abstract is published in Dissertation Abstracts International.

### ***12.4 Human and Animal Subjects Procedures***

If human or animal subjects are used in the research, the student and the research advisor must submit the appropriate forms to obtain permission to use them. The student should refer to UPPS No. 02.02.05, Animal Care and Use Policy.

## **13. Revisions to the Handbook**

In accordance with Department policy, the Department reserves the right to change the policies and procedures described in this Handbook at any time. Changes must be approved by the Graduate Committee, the full faculty of the Department, and by the Department Chair. If changes occur during the academic year, the Coordinator will give ample notice to anyone affected by these changes.