

# Ph.D.s

## How to Earn a Ph.D.

General university and specific degree requirements for UAF doctoral programs are described in this section of the catalog, along with requirements for each doctoral program. Instructions for applying for admission can be found in the Applying for Admission to Graduate Degree Programs (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/getting-started/admission/#graduatedegreetext>) section.

## Academics, Policies and Regulations

Academic policies and regulations are guidelines that are relevant to the student's academic experience at UAF and are important to read and understand. Topics include definitions and requirements for official university communications, full-time and part-time student status, academic progress, academic dismissal, grading system and policies, FERPA and the student code of conduct. See Academic Regulations (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/academics-regulations/>).

## Graduate Advisory Committee

A graduate advisory committee guides students in developing and completing their degree programs. The student should form the committee and have it appointed within the first two semesters of their study. Committee members for graduate degrees are approved by the appropriate dean, usually upon recommendation of the department head, and by the director of the Graduate School. For interdisciplinary students, the graduate advisory committee chair's home department and college or school will also be the academic home of the interdisciplinary student and the student will follow the procedures of that home department.

The graduate advisory committee's major responsibilities are to formulate a graduate study plan in consultation with the student by the end of the student's second semester in the graduate program; to develop a tentative timetable for completion of all requirements for the degree program; to monitor the student's progress in coursework and research; to provide advice and feedback to the student on that progress; to file a Report of Graduate Student Advisory Committee with the Graduate School; to approve, where appropriate, a research topic; to supervise the preparation of the research thesis or project when one is required; to uphold the standards of the college or school and the university; to inform the unit dean, in writing, if a student's performance is inadequate and provide relevant recommendations; and to formulate and conduct the comprehensive examination and other exams as required by the department. The student's advisor (major professor, advisory committee chair) acts as chair of the graduate advisory committee and takes the lead in fulfilling these responsibilities.

## Committee Composition

- The advisory committee of doctoral degree students must consist of at least four approved UAF faculty members. At least four of the committee members must each have an earned Ph.D. or equivalent. For interdisciplinary students, one advisory committee member must be from a Ph.D.-granting department or be approved as the graduate school representative by the graduate school director, based on prior experience advising Ph.D. students. Committee membership must be approved by the home department, the unit dean and the director of the Graduate School.
- Retired or emeritus UAF faculty who have an association with the home department may serve on doctoral advisory committees upon expressed approval by the home department.

- Faculty from other universities and other professionals who are not employed by UAF may serve as committee members on doctoral advisory committees (all must have a Ph.D. or equivalent) upon expressed approval by the home department. They may not serve as the chair of an advisory committee, but may serve as co-chairs.

## Graduate Study Plan

Graduate students must file a Graduate Study Plan with the Graduate School before the end of their second semester in a UAF graduate degree program. The GSP outlines the curriculum of study and a timetable that the student must follow to meet graduate degree requirements. The GSP is prepared by the advisory committee in consultation with the student. It is an agreement of mutual expectations between the student and the faculty committee. The GSP not only contains the specific degree requirements but also indicates the mechanism for fulfilling these requirements, such as via coursework, examinations, readings, internships or other supervised experience, to include a projected timetable.

## Advancement to Candidacy

Advancement to candidacy formally establishes a student's specific degree requirements and should be done as soon as possible after qualifying. The student is required to submit an application for advancement to candidacy one semester before the student plans to graduate.

The Graduate Study Plan should be the basis for completing the Advancement to Candidacy form. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in the courses identified on the Advancement to Candidacy form. For the purpose of satisfying degree requirements, students must earn a minimum grade of B (3.0), with no Pass (P) grades, in each F400-level course and a minimum grade of C (2.0) in each F600-level course. A grade of B- is less than a 3.0 and, if obtained in an F400-level course, will not count for meeting degree requirements; a grade of C- is less than a 2.0, and, if obtained in an F600-level course, will not count for meeting degree requirements.

Admission to graduate study does not imply advancement to candidacy for a degree. The graduate advisory committee has the option of refusing to recommend a student for candidacy.

Graduate students may apply for advancement to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree if they meet the following requirements:

1. They are in good academic standing.
2. Completed the full-time equivalent of two academic years of graduate study.
3. Completed at least 9 UAF credits.
4. Received approval of the Graduate Study Plan.
5. Obtained approval of the advisory committee for the title and synopsis of the thesis.
6. Passed a written comprehensive examination.

## Examinations

Examinations are given in both written and oral form, depending upon the policy of the program unit, the decision of the advisory committee and the specific examination being taken.

## Placement Examinations

Some programs have formalized placement exams designed to pinpoint a student's strengths and weaknesses as an aid in developing the Graduate Study Plan. This evaluation is carried out during the student's first semester

at the university, preferably in the first month, and may be written, oral or both.

### **Comprehensive Examination**

The comprehensive examination is given to determine whether the student has integrated knowledge and understanding of the principles and concepts underlying the major and related fields. It may be oral or written or a combination of both. Ph.D. degree students normally take a written comprehensive examination within two academic years of entering the program, but no later than two academic years before the expected completion of the degree (whichever is earliest). The Ph.D. student's advisory committee may choose to give an oral examination to supplement the written comprehensive examination. Each Ph.D. student must pass the comprehensive examination prior to advancement to candidacy.

### **Defense of Dissertation Examination**

Doctoral students are required to complete a dissertation in partial fulfillment of their degree requirements and must pass an oral defense of dissertation examination. The defense will consist of a presentation followed by questions on the research, analysis and written presentation. The Graduate School will not accept a dissertation for final submission until the student has successfully defended it. The Ph.D. dissertation defense is to be conducted on any UAF campus. All committee members must participate in the defense of the dissertation.

The dissertation defense examinations are public events and open to the university and the wider community. The student should submit their name and dissertation title and the date, time and location of their defense examination to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to their defense examination date. The Graduate School, along with the home program, department, college or school, will advertise the examination.

The defense examination includes a public presentation of the dissertation moderated by the chair of the graduate advisory committee, followed by a private executive examination by the committee.

### **Examination Committee**

In most cases, the student's graduate advisory committee prepares and gives the examinations under guidelines formulated by the faculty of the department in which the degree is being taken. In a few programs, examinations are replaced or supplemented by departmental or school examinations and administered by an examining committee that is established by the program.

### **Outside Examiner**

An outside examiner representing and appointed by the director of the Graduate School is required at all Ph.D. oral examinations. The examiner must be from a different department than the student and the chair of the advisory committee. The outside examiner is present to determine that a stringent, unbiased examination is fairly administered and evaluated.

### **Language/Research Tool Requirement**

Proficiency in a second language or a research tool is not a university-wide requirement but may be required by some programs. An advisory committee may specify a language or research tool in addition to the requirements of the program.

The specific language or research tool is determined by the advisory committee, and guided by the policies of the administrative unit in which the degree is offered. Generally, competency in a second language is required. However, upon approval of the department or program head, the committee may substitute computer languages, statistics, mathematics or study in areas such as history or philosophy of science, business, administration,

law or economics. In all instances, the topics selected must support the student's degree program.

## **Changing Programs**

A graduate student may change their program.

To change the concentration, add a degree or change the degree within the same department, for example, from an M.A. in Anthropology to a Ph.D. in Anthropology, or from a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to a Ph.D. in Environmental Chemistry, the student may change or add programs by completing a graduate change of major form. The form is available from the Graduate School's website (<https://www.uaf.edu/gradschool/>).

To change to a program in a different department, school or college, for example, from an M.S. in Civil Engineering to an M.S. in Biology, the student must submit a new application for admission so faculty in the new degree program can fully review the student's credentials.

Regardless of when the form is submitted, a change of program doesn't become effective until the beginning of the upcoming fall or spring semester. For more information, contact the Graduate School at 907-474-7464.

## **Graduation**

### **Responsibility**

The student is responsible for meeting all requirements for graduation. The Advancement to Candidacy must be received by the Graduate School the semester before the student intends to graduate.

### **All Ph.D. Programs**

- The student must be registered for a minimum of 3 graduate-level credits within their discipline during the semester of successfully defending their dissertation and when they plan to graduate.
- If the student has already successfully defended their dissertation but missed the previous semester's graduation deadline, then they must be registered for a minimum of 1 graduate-level credit within their discipline during the semester when they plan to graduate.

Additional information on the steps or paperwork required to graduate for all Ph.D. programs is available on the Graduate School's website (<https://www.uaf.edu/gradschool/>).

### **Application for Graduation**

The student must file an application for graduation with the Office of the Registrar. The Graduate School encourages the student to work with their advisor or committee chair before applying for graduation to meet any departmental deadlines. Applications for graduation filed after the published deadline will be processed for graduation the following semester. The student does not need to have all requirements met before they apply for graduation. The application is an indication that they are planning to finish all degree requirements during the intended graduation semester. Students who apply for graduation and who do not complete degree requirements by the end of the semester must reapply for graduation.

### **Diplomas and Commencement**

UAF issues diplomas to graduates three times each year: in September, January and June. All students who complete degree requirements during the academic year are invited to participate in the annual commencement ceremony at the end of the spring semester. Names of students receiving degrees appear in the commencement program and are released to the media unless the student has a confidential hold on file with the Office of the Registrar. Students who do not want their names to be released may

so indicate by placing a directory hold through their UAOnline account. Graduates are responsible for ordering caps and gowns through the UAF bookstore in early spring.

## General University Requirements for Ph.D. Catalog and Time Limit

Graduate students may elect to graduate under the degree requirements in effect and published in the UAF catalog in any one of the previous 10 years as doctoral students. To be considered enrolled in their doctoral degree program they must meet the registration requirements per academic year. If a student is enrolled as a nondegree student, they are not eligible to utilize catalog years for those semesters.

All nonacademic policies and regulations listed in the current catalog apply, regardless of the catalog used for degree requirements. Students must satisfactorily complete all coursework listed on their Advancement to Candidacy form and all other degree requirements within 10 years as a doctoral student.

## Grades and Grade Point Average

Graduate students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in the courses identified on their Advancement to Candidacy form to both remain in good standing and graduate. In addition, for the purpose of satisfying degree requirements, students must earn a minimum grade of B (3.0), with no Pass (P) grades, in each F400-level course and a minimum grade of C (2.0) in each F600-level course. A grade of B- is less than a 3.0 and, if obtained in an F400-level course, will not count for meeting degree requirements; a grade of C- is less than a 2.0 and, if obtained in an F600-level course, will not count for meeting degree requirements.

## Artificial Intelligence

Graduate students must consult with their advisors and graduate committees and agree upon the use of artificial intelligence in the conduct and reporting of their scholarship and research. Graduate students must acknowledge and describe how AI is used in their dissertations. Agreements and changes in the agreements regarding how AI is used by the student should be documented in the reports of the advisory committee, starting in the first year.

## Registration Requirement

Graduate students must be registered for at least 6 credits per academic year that include fall, spring or summer, at the graduate or F400 level, in courses relevant to the graduate degree, while actively working toward a degree. Those who wish to temporarily suspend their studies should formally request a leave of absence.

Additionally, graduate students must be registered in both the semester of dissertation defense and the semester in which the degree is received as per the requirements under Graduation (p. 2).

## Temporary Leave of Absence

If a student needs to temporarily suspend studies while earning a graduate degree, they must obtain an approved leave of absence. If a student fails to register for at least 6 graduate or F400-level credits in a school year during the academic year that include fall, spring, or summer, or to obtain a leave of absence, they will be dropped from graduate study. A student must request to be reinstated before resuming graduate studies. Contact the Graduate School for information at 907-474-7464.

## Transfer Credit

Up to one-half of all graduate degree credits approved for a graduate program may be transferred from UAA and UAS. No more than one-third of approved program credits may be transferred from other accredited institutions outside the UA system. Transferred credits may not be used from previously earned undergraduate degrees. All graduate courses presented for transfer must have a minimum grade of B (3.0). Pass (P) grades are not accepted for transfer credit.

Transfer credits from international institutions require that transcripts be evaluated with a comprehensive course-by-course credential report through a NACES-approved evaluation service such as World Education Services (WES) (<http://www.wes.org/>). Except for transcripts from Quebec, transcripts from Canadian institutions may be sent directly from the issuing institution.

## Credits Earned as a Nondegree Student

Postbaccalaureate degree credits completed while studying as a nondegree student at UAF, with the approval of the graduate advisory committee, may be applied toward a graduate degree. No more than one-half of all credits used to meet the requirements of a graduate degree may be credits earned as a nondegree student, unless approved as part of the graduate study plan.

## Course Restrictions

Credit by examination, audited courses, F100-, F200-, F300- and F500-level courses, and courses taken under the credit/no credit option cannot be used to fulfill the basic course requirements of any degree program. A maximum of 12 credits from trial courses F694, individual study F697, or discontinued reserved-number courses F693 and F695 may count toward a graduate degree. The director of the Graduate School must approve requests for exceptions to the limit.

## Deficiencies

The graduate advisory committee may require that students remedy any deficiencies. The committee will determine early in the program both how to remedy the deficiencies and the minimum level of performance required of the student. Graded undergraduate courses taken to remedy a deficiency must receive a grade of B (3.0) or better. Deficiency courses cannot be listed on the Advancement to Candidacy form.

## English Proficiency

Graduate students must be proficient in written and oral English. The graduate advisory committee will determine the requirements to address any deficiencies in communication. These requirements may not be used to fulfill departmental language or research tool requirements.

## Cooperative Programs

Some students may develop cooperative programs using specific courses from other universities before being admitted to graduate study at UAF. As part of the application process, the cooperative program must be included in an approved Graduate Study Plan. The student must complete a minimum of 12 credits in residence at UAF, in addition to thesis and research.

The following guidelines are for collaborative Ph.D. graduate studies across all UA academic units. Some individual degree programs have additional requirements that are included in specific program descriptions in the Ph.D. Programs (p. 4) section. The guidelines described here apply only to programs that have not established different requirements.

1. At least four faculty members shall serve on the graduate advisory committee for each Ph.D. student. At least two committee members shall be UAF faculty. One of the UAF committee members must be

on a tenure-track appointment in a Ph.D.-granting department. The committee shall be chaired or co-chaired by a UAF faculty member.

2. The graduate advisory committee and its chair and/or co-chairs must be approved by the program director and the director of the Graduate School.
3. UAF rules and regulations on graduate studies shall apply to all UAF graduate students, including those concurrently enrolled at UAA and UAS.
4. The graduate advisory committee must meet at least once a year to update the Graduate Study Plan and to review the student's progress toward the degree. The annual progress report must be signed by all committee members and submitted to the director of the Graduate School.
5. A comprehensive exam committee composed of the student's advisory committee will administer the Ph.D. comprehensive exam for each student.
6. The Ph.D. thesis defense is to be conducted on the UAF campus.

## Ph.D. Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is granted in recognition of scholarly attainment and proven ability. UAF's tenured faculty, tenure track faculty and research faculty are not eligible to become candidates for a graduate degree within the discipline in which they teach at UAF.

## Steps Required for all Doctoral Degrees

- The Ph.D. degree requires at least three full years of study beyond the baccalaureate degree. (See Transferring Credits (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/getting-started/transferring-credits/>))
- In addition to the satisfactory completion of a plan of study developed in accordance with the requirements listed above, the Ph.D. candidate must:
  - a. Meet all requirements set forth in the General University Requirements (p. 3) section.
  - b. Submit an Appointment of Committee form by the end of the second semester of study.
  - c. Submit a Graduate Study Plan by the end of the second semester.
  - d. Submit a Report of Advisory Committee form by May 15 or Oct. 15 (for students starting in the fall or spring semester, respectively) of every year.
  - e. Pass a written comprehensive exam.
  - f. Submit an Advancement to Candidacy form to the Graduate School. Once submitted, this form supplants the GSP and formally establishes specific degree requirements.
  - g. Satisfactorily complete a dissertation that is a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge in the area studied.
  - h. Pass an oral defense of the dissertation (an outside examiner is required). The oral defense of the dissertation must be conducted on any UAF campus.
  - i. Apply for graduation and be registered for a minimum of 3 graduate credits within the student's discipline and maintain enrollment during the semester that the student successfully defends their thesis; must be registered for a minimum of 1 graduate credit within the student's discipline and maintain enrollment during the semester of graduation.
  - j. Complete all degree requirements within the 10-year time limit.
  - k. Archive dissertation in the UAF Rasmuson Library.

## Credit Requirements

1. A minimum of 18 thesis (F699) UAF credits must be earned.
2. No F100-, F200-, F300- or F500-level credits or audited courses may be applied toward the Ph.D. degree requirements.

## Exceptions to Degree Requirements

Deviations from academic requirements and regulations for graduate students must be approved by academic petition using the form available on the Graduate School website. Petitions must be approved by the student's graduate advisory committee, the department chair of the student's program, the dean of the school or college and the director of the Graduate School.

## Ph.D. Programs

- Anthropology Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/anthropology/>)
- Atmospheric Sciences Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/atmospheric-sciences/>)
- Biochemistry and Neuroscience Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/biochemistry-neuroscience/>)
- Biological Sciences Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/biological-sciences/>)
- Earth System Science Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/earth-system-science/>)
- Engineering Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/engineering/>)
- Environmental Chemistry Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/environmental-chemistry/>)
- Fisheries Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/fisheries/>)
- Geophysics Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/geophysics/>)
- Geoscience Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/geoscience/>)
- Indigenous Studies Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/indigenous-studies/>)
- Interdisciplinary Studies Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/interdisciplinary-studies/>)
- Marine Biology Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/marine-biology/>)
- Mathematics Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/mathematics/>)
- Natural Resources and Sustainability Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/natural-resources-sustainability/>)
- Oceanography Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/oceanography/>)
- Physics Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/physics/>)
- Space Physics Ph.D. (<https://catalog.uaf.edu/phd/physics-space/>)