

Steps to Completion in the Ph.D. Program

(Revised August 2022)

Abbreviations used:

EDST	Department of Educational Studies
G+PS	Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
PAC	Program Advisory Committee
POS	Program of Studies
RSC	Research Supervisory Committee

Note: The sequence of some of these events may vary depending on the circumstances, and some events may occur simultaneously.

1. Admission

Applicants submit required materials using the online UBC application system accessible through the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) website. The Department then reviews the application and makes an admission recommendation to G+PS, based on all available evidence (transcripts, reference letters, statement of intent, etc.). The applicant is then notified by email and, if admitted, must accept or decline the offer in the system following the link provided in the offer of admission. An offer of admission is good only for the academic year in which it is made.

Please note: under current policies of G +PS, doctoral students *have six years* from initial registration to complete all program requirements. Under exceptional circumstances, extensions may be granted by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. This restriction applies equally to full-time and part-time students.

2. Appointment of Supervisor

A supervisor is designated at the time of admission and is responsible for assisting the student in the selection of courses and answering questions about the program. Unless a qualified faculty member agrees at the time the application is reviewed to serve as a supervisor, admission is unlikely. Once admitted, the student is responsible for contacting the supervisor and arranging an appointment to discuss course selection prior to initial registration.

Students may request a change of supervisor at any time as long as another qualified faculty member has agreed to serve in this capacity. To initiate the change, students need to correspond with current supervisor about their plan to work with a different supervisor. A change of supervisor must be requested using [this form](#) if Research Supervisory Committee (RSC) is yet to be formalized, and using [this form](#) if an RSC has been formalized. These forms need to be submitted to the Graduate Advisor gradadvisor.edst@ubc.ca and Graduate Programs Assistant grad.edst@ubc.ca.

3. Completion of Program of Studies Worksheet

The Program of Studies (POS) [worksheet](#) is completed by the student in consultation with the supervisor, prior to or immediately following the student's initial registration.

Changes can be made to the POS from time to time, but all changes must be approved by the supervisor. In practice, decisions about which courses will be taken are often made session-by-session or year-by-year. What is important at this stage is that the student receives good advice about what courses to complete in order to prepare for both the comprehensive examination and the thesis research project. A completed POS worksheet should be submitted by the supervisor to the Graduate Program Assistant who will place the original worksheet in the student's file. The student will receive a photocopy of the completed worksheet from the supervisor.

4. **Supervision Principles**

The document entitled [Graduate Student/Supervisor Expectations](#) provides definitions and sets out the roles and responsibilities for research supervisors. At their first meeting, the document should be reviewed and discussed by the student and the supervisor. Once these guidelines have been reviewed, student and supervisor should write or type in their names on the last page of the guidelines and submit this page along with the student's program worksheet to the Graduate Program Assistant (students should keep copies of the Expectations for their own files). The document should be reviewed when the student's research committee is formed, and also reviewed and co-signed if there is a change in supervisors.

5. **Continuous Registration and Program Interruption**

It is the student's responsibility to maintain registration throughout the program and to enrol in and complete all courses included in the POS. If for any reason, the student must temporarily interrupt studies, an immediate request should be made to the supervisor for a leave of absence from the program. Information about types of leaves and the policies governing each can be found [here](#).

6. **Completing Required and Elective Courses**

PhD students need to take three required courses and are expected to take courses in their specialization so that they are familiar with current theory and research. The number and topics of elective courses will vary depending on the student's academic background and research focus. All electives—including research methods—should be discussed with and approved by the supervisor. In general, elective courses may be regularly scheduled on-campus courses, including Directed Studies (EDST 580), approved online courses, courses at UBC Okanagan (UBCO), or courses at other universities that have formal agreements (i.e. Western Dean Agreement (WDA), with UBC.

For EDST 580: Directed Studies, you will need to receive approval from your cohort advisors or supervisor/s. Once that approval is received, you can approach a faculty member to discuss the nature of the course, including both faculty and student expectations. You will then need to fill out [the form](#) and submit to the Graduate Program Assistant (grad.edst@ubc.ca) to register for the course.

For courses at UBCO, students need to apply for authorization and course registration using [the form here](#). Should you take courses at other universities, you will need to apply for permission from your supervisor. If you plan to take WDA courses, you will need to apply for authorization and course registration by filling out [the form here](#).

Upon successful completion of the courses outside of UBC Vancouver campus (please note [the criteria](#) that you would need to meet in order to get the credits transferred to your

EdD program), you will also need to apply for credit transfer by using [this form](#).

7. **Completing and Submitting Annual Academic Progress Reports**

Students in the Department of Educational Studies (EDST) are expected to complete an [annual progress report](#). These reports are a means of tracking student progress through the program and identifying problems that may be impeding timely completion of requirements. Reminders to complete these reports are sent annually on EDST-net, but it is the student's responsibility to download and complete Part A this form by May 31 each year they are enrolled in the program. To reduce paper use and to facilitate data entry, students are expected to fill out the form electronically (Part A only), and forward to their supervisor for their review and completion (Part B). The completed form (Part A & B) should be submitted via Qualtrics by following the link in the form.

Students should follow the instructions on the form to submit the completed forms. Students who find they cannot make any progress on their programs for four or more months due to unexpected work, family or health changes should request [a leave of absence](#) through their supervisor or the EDST Graduate Advisor

8. **Formation of Research Supervisory Committee**

The Research Supervisory Committee (RSC) consists of the student's Research Supervisor (who usually chairs the committee and most often holds the rank of Associate Professor or Professor) and at least two other faculty members who are members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. As the title suggests, the role of this committee is to supervise the student's research and preparation of the thesis.

The Research Supervisor and student jointly identify other faculty members who may have interests and skills compatible with the proposed research. Normally, the student is expected to initiate discussions with Research Supervisors and to extend invitations to other faculty who might serve on the committee. The specific approach used to constitute the committee is worked out between the student and the Research Supervisor. Once the membership of the committee is confirmed, the Research Supervisor notifies the Graduate Program Assistant of the composition of the committee.

9. **Comprehensive Examination**

All doctoral students take a comprehensive examination. Written procedures for the examination are available [here](#). Generally, the comprehensive examination is taken once the student has completed all or most of the courses included in the POS. Students consult their Supervisors when they believe they are ready to take the exam.

10. **Development and Approval of Research Proposal**

In consultation with the Research Supervisor and other members of the RSC, the student drafts and revises the research proposal until the committee is ready to approve the project. The Committee determines the requirements of the proposal, but most often it includes:

1. a clear and complete presentation and justification of the research problem, questions, and/or hypotheses;
2. a critical review of relevant literature and a presentation of the study's conceptual or theoretical framework; and
3. a complete presentation of the research methodology.

The Research Supervisor is responsible for placing a copy of the approved proposal with [a cover page](#)—in the student’s file and for notifying the Graduate Program Assistant that the proposal has been approved.

11. **Admission to Doctoral Candidacy**

Please note that UBC policy is that all PhD students should have achieved candidacy within 24 months of beginning their program and must be admitted to Candidacy by 36 months. Candidacy is achieved when a student completes required coursework, passes the comprehensive examination, and produces an approved research proposal. At this stage, the chair of the Research Supervisory Committee (most often the supervisor) completes the form [Advancement to Candidacy](#). Once this form is filed with G+PS, the student is considered admitted to candidacy.

Doctoral candidates are eligible to apply for certain teaching assignments that are not otherwise available to graduate students. Achieving candidacy is also an important milestone because it indicates that the only remaining requirement for completion is the thesis. A student who is not admitted to candidacy within this time period would be advised to withdraw from the program. Extension of this period may be permitted by the Dean of the G+PS in exceptional circumstances.

12. **Approval of Research Protocol by Behavioural Research Ethics Board**

If the student’s research involves collecting data from humans (via interviews, questionnaires, observations, etc.), the research protocol must be approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). The student is responsible for completing the necessary forms and attachments in the [web-based RISE](#) (Research Information Services) system. The student prepares drafts of the application and attachments, then these are reviewed by the student’s research supervisor. Once the supervisor has approved the materials, the department head is notified that they are ready for review and approval. Once the application is signed by the department head and submitted to the BREB, the review process normally takes 4-6 weeks. This timeline may be longer during the summer. Please visit the BREB website for the most up-to-date information on submission deadlines and turnaround times.

Please note that no data can be collected until the approval certificate is granted by the BREB.

Please also note that students must complete an online research ethics tutorial before their application can be submitted to the BREB. Information on how to access the tutorial can also be found on the [Office of Research Services website](#).

13. **Complete Research**

It is the student’s responsibility to carry out the research as planned, consulting with the RSC as needed. Any deviations from the research proposal should be approved by the members of the RSC. If there are major changes to the methodology the student must submit an addendum to BREB. The student is expected to keep all members of the committee informed of progress or problems in completing the research. It is the responsibility of the RSC to actively follow the student’s progress with their research and to provide advice and support.

14. **Write and Revise Thesis**

An agreement should be reached between the student and RSC members regarding the way drafts are written and reviewed. In some cases, the research supervisor will want to see some or all of these drafts before they are circulated to committee members. The student consults with and receives feedback from members of the committee as drafts are produced. Generally, faculty members expect to have at least two weeks (10 working days) to read material submitted by students. Students can reasonably expect faculty to provide written and/or oral feedback shortly after the two weeks has passed, unless the faculty member indicates—when the draft is received—that more time is needed.

Students are encouraged to read [the guidelines](#) on final dissertation and thesis submission which can be found on the G+PS. These guidelines cover many technical aspects of thesis preparation that are important to know about early in the process.

15. **Nomination of External Examiners**

When the RSC members believe the thesis is nearing completion, they discuss who is best qualified to serve as External Examiner. Students can suggest some examiners but cannot be party to the final deliberations of which examiners are nominated by the RSC. The names, contact information, and qualifications of two or three nominees for External Examiner are submitted using [the form here](#) to the G+PS. External Examiners must be nominated at least four to five months before the thesis is ready to be examined – for specific deadlines, please consult [the G+PS website](#). Nominations must be received 8 weeks before the thesis is submitted to G+PS who then send it to the External Examiner. The Dean of G+PS (or designate) contacts the nominees and determines if one of them is willing to serve. Only when the thesis is submitted to G+PS for examination is the name of the External Examiner made known to the students and RSC. If students will not be submitting their thesis to G+PS for examination by the date specified on the External Examiner form, their supervisors must notify G+PS and indicate a revised date. [The policies](#) of the G+PS regarding nomination of External Examiners and communication with nominees are strictly enforced.

16. **Thesis Ready to be Examined**

When the supervisory committee believes the thesis is ready to be examined, the Research Supervisor need to fill out [the graduate program approval of doctoral dissertation for external examination](#). The form needs to be submitted to Graduate Program Advisor or Head (or designate), who must confirm that

1. the supervisory committee members have approved the dissertation for submission to the External Examiner;
2. that all graduate program requirements for the degree have been met;
3. that the candidate is currently registered in good standing.

Submit an electronic version of the dissertation in the Portable Document Format (PDF) via email to the Doctoral Exams team as an attachment. Please **do not** submit a disk and **do not** bring the dissertation to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office on a memory stick. If the dissertation is too large to submit by email, please contact the Doctoral Exams team to discuss other options for electronic submission.

If requested by members on the exam committee, students will need to deliver one printed copy of the completed and approved dissertation to the committee members. The paper copy must be cerlox-bound with a clear front cover. This copy may be submitted with double-sided pages. The Candidate and Research Supervisor will be notified of the External Examiner's format preference by email when the External Examiner is confirmed by Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

17. Date Set for Final Oral Examination

Once the dissertation has been transmitted, the Candidate and Research Supervisor will be notified by email about the earliest possible date for the Final Oral Defence. Under normal circumstances, the earliest possible Oral Defence date will be 6-7 weeks after submitting the dissertation for examination.

The Research Supervisor, in consultation with the student and all members of the Examination Committee, proposes a date and time for the examination. Some negotiation with G+PS may occur, but eventually the date, time, and location of the examination are confirmed.

18. Nomination of University Examiners

The Research Supervisory Committee, with or without consulting the student, will identify two faculty members (usually one from within EDST and the other from outside the Department) who are qualified and willing to serve as University Examiners. These faculty members are nominated by the Research Supervisor who sends their names and qualifications to G+PS. The Research Supervisor is responsible for contacting the University Examiners to determine if they are willing to serve, supplying them with copies of the thesis, and ensuring that they have all details about the Final Oral Examination.

19. Examination Program Information Submitted to G+PS (Optional)

Doctoral candidates are no longer required to include [an Examination Programme](#) in the Oral Defence. Candidates, and/or research supervisors wishing to include an Examination Programme as part of the doctoral defence are still welcome to do so. You do not need to submit a draft to G+PS for approval.

20. Departmental Seminar or “Dry Run”

Doctoral students are encouraged to schedule a departmental seminar in advance of the Final Oral Examination. This seminar provides a good opportunity to practice the presentation that will be made at the Oral Examination and to answer questions similar to those that will be asked at the Final Oral. If a seminar is not scheduled, an alternative “dry run” is recommended at which the student performs and receives feedback from one or more members of the RSC on the 20-30-minute presentation that will be made at the beginning of the Oral Examination.

21. Chair of Examination Committee Appointed by G+PS

The Dean of G+PS appoints the Chair of the Examination Committee. The duties of the Chair include introducing the candidate, monitoring the time, calling on committee members for comments and questions, leading a discussion of the candidate's performance, and preparing a report of the examination for the Dean.

22. Report of External Examiner Received by G+PS and Distributed to the

Examination Committee

The written report of the External Examiner is distributed by G+PS to members of the Examination Committee a few days prior to the exam. The report is considered confidential at this point and is not to be shown to the student.

23. **Final Oral Examination**

The protocol followed in the examination is spelled out in great detail in “[Final Doctoral Examination Guide](#)” available on the Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies website. All examinations are public, and students are encouraged to attend several—in advance of their own—to become familiar with the process. At the conclusion of the examination, the Chair of the Examination Committee notifies the student of the outcome. Often, editorial or more substantive changes to the dissertation are required by the Examination Committee before it is submitted to G+PS.

Given the COVID-19 Pandemic, G+PS has developed a process to support total virtual participation in a doctoral defence. G+PS has the ability to support the inclusion of a small invited audience. If the candidate and supervisor wish to invite an audience, they should contact the Doctoral Exams Office at least 2 weeks before the defence date.

24. **Approved Thesis Submitted to G+PS**

The student is responsible for submitting the final, post-defense approved dissertation to G+PS (via UBC’s digital repository known as “cIRcle”) before the published deadline for completing all program requirements (see the University Calendar). G+PS/cIRcle will provide a receipt that will be placed in the student’s file. The student must also complete a series of forms which are downloadable from the G+PS website. Guidelines provided by G+PS regarding format and final submission requirements must be observed. Once the student’s dissertation has been accepted to cIRcle, then G+PS will automatically “close” their program.

We recommend you submit your thesis a minimum of 3 - 5 days before the deadlines, as corrections may be required, and the thesis must be approved in order for you to meet deadlines.

25. **Graduation**

The student is responsible for completing by the published deadline an [Application for Graduation](#). This application confirms your eligibility for graduation. You are required to apply for graduation, even if you don't plan on attending the ceremony. Please note that it is not necessary to complete all program requirements before applying for graduation. Students who believe they will complete program requirements by the published deadline should apply for graduation. A final check is made for all students who apply to graduate to confirm they have satisfied all program requirements.

The student is responsible for completing by the published deadline their Application for Graduation which can be done [online](#)

It is important to maintain an up-to-date email and mailing address on the SIS in order to receive information on graduation.

26. **Celebration!**