

Progress to PhD Degree

(Guidelines for Civil & Environmental Engineering; Geological Engineering;
Environmental Chemistry & Technology)

PhD major coursework:

The academic program for each doctoral student is planned on an individual basis with his or her advisor. Advanced coursework in a major area of civil and environmental engineering is required. The Graduate School minimum PhD credit requirement is 51 credits (including minor credits), maintaining a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale). Out of the minimum 51 credits, 32 graduate credits (including minor credits) must be residence credits. 32 graduate residence credits (including PhD minor coursework) must be completed prior to achieving dissertator status (for students who have earned an MS degree, credits accumulated for the MS may be applied towards this coursework requirement, if approved by the faculty advisor). Pre-dissertators will enroll in course number, 890 Pre-dissertator research. Once the preliminary exam is passed and dissertator status is granted then students will enroll in course number 990, dissertator research. The minimum 51 credits may include formal graded graduate level courses; research sections; independent study sections; seminars; minor coursework)

Students may request to complete the MS degree on the way to PhD with advisor approval. Students will complete the Add/ Change Program (within the same department) approval form.

Timeline for progress to degree (based on a five-year timeline)

(Please note that each individual student's timeline and specific requirements may vary slightly; discuss concerns with your faculty advisor)

First Year: Submit, faculty advisor approved, tentative curriculum form to the graduate student services coordinator in the first term.

Students who previously attended an MS program at another institution may request to use prior-graduate level coursework to fulfill curriculum credits. Students must discuss with faculty advisor and submit the Prior-Coursework request form in the first term.

Second Year: The qualifying exam may be administered after one year of graduate study beyond the M.S. degree.

Third Year: The qualifying exam may be administered after two years of graduate study for students entering the PhD program without an M.S. Degree

Third/Fourth year: The Preliminary exam may be administered after student have passed the qualifying exam, completed the PHD minor requirement and completed 32 graduate credits in residence. Dissertator status is granted for the following term (ex. Exam pass in fall= dissertator status for spring). The preliminary exam should be taken at least two terms prior to graduation.

Fifth year: Once a research project is finalized, the student must choose his or her final oral exam committee (typically his or her preliminary examination committee) for the final PhD defense.

[Preparing Your Dissertation >>](#)

Final term: Students must meet minimum enrollment requirements in the final term (three cr. in 990), hold a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.0, meet the minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement and credit requirement. Students must request the PhD final oral committee approval form from student services at least three weeks prior to final defense date. Finalized dissertations must be submitted in term in which the student wishes to Graduate. Students must be enrolled during the semester that you defend and deposit. Submit signed Final PhD Oral defense warrant and dissertation.

PhD Requirements and Milestones

Seminar requirement:

All graduate students must register for a one-credit seminar course once or twice per academic year; students will discuss seminar options with faculty advisors.

PhD minor /certificate coursework (Breadth Requirement):

Option B (Distributed): Requires a minimum of 9 credits in one or more departments/programs and can include course work in the major department/program. The Distributed minor coursework requires the approval of the curriculum committee/faculty advisor and department chair.

Option A (External): Requires a minimum of 9 credits (some departments may require more credits, please see the minor department requirements) in a single department/program. Selection of this option requires the approval of the minor department/program. [Doctoral Minors](#)

Option C (Graduate Certificate): Specific Graduate certificates meet the Graduate School breadth requirement. See a list of approved certificates here [Graduate / Professional Certificates](#) coursework requires the approval of the curriculum committee/ faculty advisor and department chair.

Tentative Curriculum Form: Please complete a tentative curriculum planning form with your faculty advisor before the end of your first term. Turn the form in to the student services office. You will be required to turn in an updated curriculum and minor approval form prior to taking the Preliminary Exam.

Qualifying Exam Milestone:

(required for CEE and GLE students; qualifying exam is not required for EC&T students)

The qualifying exam is usually given after one year of graduate study beyond the M.S. degree. For students entering the PhD program without an M.S. Degree, the qualifying exam may be administered after two years of graduate study. However, the student must consult with their faculty advisor and/or the exam coordinator in the major area of study for the schedule and specific procedures. A letter and/or signature form verifying that a student passed the qualifying exam, must be signed by the student's advisor/committee and returned to the staff in the Student Services Center.

Preliminary Exam Milestone (leading to dissertator status):

The preliminary examination may be taken only after approval of the minor proposal and should be taken at least two semesters prior to graduation. The completion of PhD minor credits and 32 residence credits must be met, or in progress during same term of the exam. This oral examination is based upon a written proposal and a detailed plan to carry out the Ph.D. dissertation. Students must consult with their advisor for specific details of the requirements for the preliminary examination. An exam committee is required; student will discuss committee member options with the faculty advisor. The committee is usually the same as the final PHD final defense committee. At least three weeks prior to sitting for the preliminary exam, PhD major curriculum and PhD minor curriculum forms must be approved, by the

curriculum committee, and then submitted to the Graduate Student Services Center with the Preliminary Exam [Warrant](#) Request form. When the preliminary exam is passed the student will gain Dissertator Status in the next term. The Graduate School will e-mail an official notification to the student stating dissertator status for the following term (ex. Exam pass in fall= dissertator status for spring).

Dissertation Research and Final Oral PhD Defense:

Full time enrollment for dissertators is continuous enrollment for three credits of dissertator research, 990 (or course directly related to the research) every term up to graduation. Funded students will also enroll in three credits during the eight weeks summer session. Attainment of a Ph.D. degree requires the preparation of a dissertation on a research topic selected by common agreement between the student and the advisor. Once a research project is selected, the student must choose his or her final oral exam committee (typically his or her preliminary examination committee). Students must meet minimum enrollment requirements in the final term, hold a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.0, meet the minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement and credit requirement. Students must request the PhD final oral committee [warrant](#) form from student services at least three weeks prior to final defense date. Finalized dissertations must be submitted in term in which the student wished to Graduate. You must be enrolled during the semester that you defend and deposit; After your graduate program coordinator submits the doctoral degree warrant request, the Graduate School will review this request and send the approved doctoral degree warrant to your graduate program coordinator. The final warrant should be printed out and committee member signatures should be obtained at your defense. Once the final warrant has been signed, an electronic copy should be uploaded in the administrative documents section of the ProQuest/UMI ETD Administrator website (along with your dissertation). The original signed hard copy of the final warrant should be kept with the student and a copy given to the graduate program coordinator.

Doctoral committees (Ph.D.) The chair or one of the co-chairs of the committee must be graduate faculty from the student's program. The committee must have at least four members, from at least two University of Wisconsin—Madison graduate programs. Three of the members must be Graduate Faculty or former Graduate Faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement. At least one of the four members must be from outside of the student's major field (often from the minor field). However, if one of the four members of the doctoral committee is not a member of the Graduate Faculty or former Graduate Faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement, then one of the three Graduate Faculty or former Graduate Faculty members shall be from outside the student's major field. Three of the members of a doctoral committee must be designated as readers.

Department handbooks, forms and minimum enrollment requirements

[Civil & Environmental Engineering Handbook](#)

[Geological Engineering Handbook](#)

[Environmental Chemistry & Technology Handbook](#)

The minimum graduate coursework (50%) requirement states that at least 50% of credits applied toward the program's graduate degree credit requirement must be courses designed for graduate work. You can see if a course fulfills the requirement in the course description listed in [GUIDE](#). The course designation will state, "Grad 50% - Counts toward 50% graduate coursework requirement"

Approximately 26 credits of the 51 required credits must be designated as Grad 50%. All courses number 700 and above have this designation, including research/independent study courses: 790, 890, 990, 999.

Enrollment Requirements: Fulltime enrollment for Fall/Spring terms is 8-15 credits. Summer enrollment is required in some cases, see below. Minimum enrollment for fulltime status in the summer must be taken in the eight-week session. Courses taught in the eight-week session are research and Independent study sections.

ALL of the following credit requirements (except F-1 and J-1 visa requirements) must be satisfied by graded courses taken at 300 or above; courses numbered below 300, audit, and pass/fail do not satisfy enrollment requirements.

CATEGORIES	MINIMUM ENROLLMENT FOR FULL-TIME STATUS: FALL OR SPRING	MINIMUM ENROLLMENT FOR FULL-TIME STATUS: SUMMER (GENERAL 8-WEEK DHH SESSION)
Dissertator	Exactly 3 credits directly related to research	Not required unless receiving summer degree or if RA, trainee (with 12-month appointment), or fellow (with 12-month appointment), 3 cr. required.
RA, non-dissertator	8 cr.	2 cr.
TA/Lecturer (SA) 33%, non-dissertator	6 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum.
TA/Lecturer (SA) 50%, non-dissertator	4 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum.
PA 33%, non-dissertator	6 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum.
PA 50%, non-dissertator	4 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum.
Fellow, non-dissertator	8 cr.	2 cr. for 12-month appointments. Not required for 9-month appointments.
Trainee, non-dissertator	8 cr.	2 cr.
International student (F-1/J-1 visa), non-dissertator, if no other category in this list	8 cr.	4 cr. when summer is admit semester (2 cr. when summer is admit semester and student holds RA appointment or at least 33% TA or PA appointment)
If none of the above, full time enrollment is:	8 cr.	4 cr.