

# Doctoral Student Handbook

Prepared for

**Doctoral Students and Graduate Faculty**



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  

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**COMMERCE**

Created by  
**The Graduate School**

Revised February 2019

# CONGRATULATIONS!

Welcome to Texas A&M University-Commerce!

The Graduate School is pleased you have chosen to pursue your doctoral studies at Texas A&M University-Commerce. As you progress through your doctoral program, you will become aware that numerous rules and procedures must be followed for you to be successful in your doctoral program. The Graduate School is here to help guide and assist you during each step of your doctoral program.

This handbook is designed to assist you in meeting all of the requirements and deadlines, from the time of admission until your graduation. The handbook has a doctoral program checklist to help you with timelines and progression. We also have a Dissertation Manual that will guide you through the dissertation process.

*If you print out a hard copy of this handbook, please be aware that it is subject to change. The most current handbook will always be available online. Therefore, as you progress through your doctoral program, please check the [Graduate School's forms and guidelines web page](#) for the most current version of this handbook.*

Departments have the right and may exercise the right to have program requirements higher than those set by The Graduate School. However, in no case can a department set criteria lower The Graduate School minimums. Please consult your advisor, departmental student handbook, or written guidelines for your specific department requirements.

Everyone in The Graduate School will work with you to ensure your success. Ask questions or let us know of any concerns you might have; we are here to help you. If you have questions or concerns that are not answered in this handbook, please feel free to contact the Doctoral Degree Coordinator (903/886-5167 or [vicky.turner@tamuc.edu](mailto:vicky.turner@tamuc.edu)) or The Graduate School (903/886-5163).

**Vicky Turner**

Doctoral Degree Coordinator  
(903) 886-5167

[Vicky.Turner@tamuc.edu](mailto:Vicky.Turner@tamuc.edu) or [Graduate.School@tamuc.edu](mailto:Graduate.School@tamuc.edu)

University Website: <http://www.tamuc.edu/>

The Graduate School Website: <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/default.aspx>

## **THESIS AND DISSERTATION SERVICES**

[OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu)

Karin Thomas

DISSERTATION AND THESIS SPECIALIST

[Karin.Thomas@tamuc.edu](mailto:Karin.Thomas@tamuc.edu) 903/886-5968

McDowell Business Administration Building 250

## **OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS**

903-886-5766

## **PURPOSE OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM:**

1. To educate a person who has developed a breadth of vision, a capacity for interpretation, and the ability to carry out a critical investigation.
2. To help acquire new concepts, a zeal for adding to the sum of human knowledge, and development of the ability to conduct original research, and to think clearly and independently.
3. To develop the professional competencies necessary for applying knowledge in the essential areas of human and public interest.

## **DOCTORAL DEGREES AWARDED at A&M-Commerce**

1. **Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)**
  - a. Educational Administration
  - b. Higher Education Leadership
  - c. Supervision, Curriculum, and Instruction
2. **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**
  - a. Counseling
  - b. Educational Psychology
  - c. English

## **Admission to Doctoral Degree Programs**

Students wishing to be considered for admissions into a doctoral program must meet the general requirements for admission to Graduate Studies; have an overall undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 on a 4.00 scale, a 3.00 on the last 60 undergraduate hours, or a 3.40 for a master's degree and work beyond the master's level; and must meet all departmental requirements, such as GRE, letter of recommendation, interviews, portfolio, etc. Individual departments may establish additional requirements for admission to a specific degree program. Applicants will be required to fulfill any additional requirements established by the major department.

Applications of students who have met the requirements listed above will be forwarded to the major department. The department will review each application and make a recommendation regarding admission status to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will send notice of the admission decision to the applicant. Some departments have specific dates for the departmental review of applications. Applications submission deadlines are available:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/doctoraladmissionpacket.pdf>

A student is either granted full admission or denied full admission. There is no provisional or conditional admission status. A doctoral student who has not enrolled for 1 year must apply for readmission under current admission standards for doctoral programs. If a student does not enroll for a semester, their matriculation will close and must contact the Graduate School to open their registration again.

# Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

## DegreeWorks

DegreeWorks is a web-based planning tool to help students and advisors monitor student's progress toward degree completion. DegreeWorks is not a substitution for consultation with an academic advisor. DegreeWorks shows the student in an easy-to-read format, the courses and program requirements that must be completed to achieve their chosen degree. All currently enrolled graduate students who attend Texas A&M University-Commerce should use DegreeWorks.

## Course Requirements

- A minimum of 90 semester hours beyond the baccalaureate degree or 60 semester hours beyond the master's degree is required for the doctoral degree.
  - At least 45 hours of graduate course credit must be earned from A&M Commerce (not including 718 hours).
  - Master's level 595 research courses cannot be used toward a doctoral program.
  - All courses applied toward a doctoral degree must be 500-level or higher.
  - Undergraduate courses taken for graduate credit are not applicable to a doctoral degree.
  - No more than 12 graduate semester credit hours (including hours completed in non-degree status) beyond the master's degree taken prior to admission to a doctoral program can be applied toward a doctoral degree.
1. **Major.** A major requires a minimum of 36 semester hours excluding dissertation hours (718); however, a specific program may require additional semester hours for a major. (Specific program requirements are listed under each departmental section of this catalog.)
  2. **Minor.** Students selecting the 60 hours beyond the master's degree option are not required to have a minor. A minor consisting of a minimum of 30 semester hours is required in all 90-hour programs except Counseling, Educational Psychology, and English programs. The minor requirement can be fulfilled by one of the following options:
    - a. *A comprehensive minor with all course work in one academic area.* A committee member will be assigned from the academic area and will determine the courses to be taken and be involved in evaluating the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation, and the dissertation defense.
    - b. *A split minor of two academic areas with at least 12 hours in each area (a 12-18 or 15-15 format).* Committee members will be assigned from both academic areas, and they will determine the courses to be taken and to be involved in the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation, and the dissertation defense.
    - c. *An interdisciplinary studies minor in three academic areas (a 12-9-9 format).* In rare cases, an interdisciplinary studies minor consisting of at least 9 hours in each of three academic areas may be approved. Committee members will be assigned from each of the academic areas, and will be involved in the written and oral qualifying examination, the dissertation proposal, and the dissertation defense.

Regardless of the option chosen the following conditions will apply: assignment of minor advisors rests with the head of the minor department or departments; all courses applied to the minor areas must be approved by the head of the appropriate minor department; at least one dissertation committee member must be from outside the student's major department; transfer courses applied toward a minor must be in academic areas taught at Texas A&M University-Commerce.

## Other Requirements:

Credit for no fewer than nine semester hours and not more than 12 semester hours of dissertation (718) will be given. Electives and other course requirements as indicated under each departmental section of this catalog. Specific program requirements are listed under each departmental section of this catalog.

## Grade Point Average.

- A grade point average of 3.00 or better on all graduate work completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce and an overall grade point average of 3.00 or better on all graduate courses completed, is required for graduation.
- If a course is retaken, the last grade will be counted toward graduation and computation of the overall grade point average.
- No grade of "C" (including a grade of "U") or below will count toward a doctoral degree.
- A course in which an "F" is received is considered a course completed.
- Only grades earned at Texas A&M University-Commerce will be calculated into student's grade point average.
- A doctoral student may not earn more than 2 grades below a B.

- If a doctoral student receives a 3rd grade below a B and/or U; they will be permanently suspended from the doctoral program.

### **Academic Probation and Suspension from Doctoral Degree Programs.**

- A student who fails to achieve and maintain an overall 3.00 graduate grade point average during **any** semester of enrollment will be placed on academic probation. A student who fails to achieve a 3.00 overall graduate grade point average by the end of the next semester of enrollment will be placed on academic suspension for a minimum of two semesters (two summer terms count as one semester).
- A student on academic suspension may, after the suspension period, be allowed to re-enroll only upon the recommendation of the major department and with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. Failure to achieve an overall 3.00 graduate grade point average during any subsequent semester of enrollment will result in dismissal, and the student will not be allowed to pursue further study toward the doctoral degree at this institution
- All courses completed while the student is on probation and those completed upon enrollment following suspension must be appropriate to the degree sought.
- No course with a grade of "C" or lower (including a grade of "U") will count toward a doctoral degree.
- A student receiving a grade of "C" or lower (including a grade of "U") in a third graduate course will be withdrawn from his/her courses and will not be allowed to pursue further doctoral study at this institution. This provision applies to all courses taken, including all duplicated courses.
- Courses taken from other institutions will not be transferable if taken during a period of suspension from Texas A&M University-Commerce.
- Students on academic suspension from another institution will not be admitted to A&M Commerce until their specific period of suspension expires.
- A student who fails to meet the professional expectations of the field for which they are preparing may be suspended from further study in that program by the department administering that program.

A doctoral student who has not been enrolled for a period of at least six years may petition the Dean of the Graduate School to have previous grades eliminated from the calculation of the official grade point average. No courses eliminated from such calculation could be used toward a graduate degree. Students on academic probation or suspension are not eligible to change their degree or major.

**Doctoral Degree Residency.** After admission to a doctoral degree program, each student is required to engage in activities that fulfill departmental residency requirements. The departmental residency plan specifies requirements in the following areas:

1. Involvement in events that broaden intellectual growth.
2. Use of academic support resources.
3. Faculty-student interactions that promote scholarship, mentoring, and opportunities for evaluation.
4. Involvement with cognate disciplines and research scholars in those disciplines.
5. Engagement in meaningful peer interactions.

Please check with the major department for specific requirements. Successful completion of residency is conferred by approval of the department.

**Time Limitation.** Course work taken beyond the master's degree that is over 10 years old at the time the doctoral degree is to be conferred cannot be used toward the doctoral degree. A doctoral student who has not enrolled for one year must apply for readmission under current admission and program standards for doctoral programs.

**Catalog Privileges.** A student is entitled to use the degree provisions of any catalog in effect between the semester the student is admitted to the doctoral degree program and the semester the student's degree is conferred, provided the catalog used is not more than 10 years old at the time the degree is conferred.

**Research Tools.** All research tools courses must be taken at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Candidates for the doctoral degree must possess proficiency in the use of the research skills necessary to successfully complete the doctoral dissertation. Research tools courses must include bibliographic research skills, so that the candidates are able to find, evaluate, use, and communicate information in all its various formats. It is desirable for students to demonstrate these proficiencies early in their program; however, if that is not possible, students should demonstrate such proficiency prior to taking the qualifying comprehensive examinations.

**Research tools requirements for doctoral degrees in the College of Education and Human Services can be met by successfully completing required coursework.**

- The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) requires 12 hours of prescribed coursework.
- The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) requires 15 hours of prescribed coursework.
- Courses must be completed with a grade of B or better.
- Only doctoral research tools courses approved in advance of their offering, by the Graduate Council, can be used to satisfy these requirements.
- These course requirements cannot be met through individual studies courses (689 or 589).

**The research tools requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in English can be met with any of the following options:**

1. Twelve semester hours of college-level classes in one foreign language, as verified by official transcript, or
2. Successful completion of a foreign language reading exam, as assessed by department faculty and written verification sent to the Graduate School, or
3. Verified native or near-native competence in a second language, as assessed by department faculty and written verification sent to the Graduate School, or
4. Completion of any four of the following courses, with a grade of B or above: ENG 501, ENG 520, ENG 599, ENG 613, ENG 686, ENG 710, ENG 780, PSY 612.

**Research tools courses must include bibliographic research skills, so that candidates are able to find, evaluate, use and communicate information in all its various formats.**

**These requirements are to be viewed as minimal requirements. Consequently, a department may require additional research tools courses either for all of their students or as a requirement for an individual student based upon that student's need.**

**Students cannot be admitted to doctoral candidacy until the research tools requirement has been met.**

**Comprehensive Examinations.** Upon the completion of approximately 2 full years of study, doctoral students take written and oral comprehensive examinations. The comprehensive examinations are designed to test the student's knowledge in the major and minor fields and are administered under the direction of an advisory committee consisting of representatives from the major and minor departments. Students must contact their major department for information regarding the comprehensive examinations and scheduling. A doctoral student who does not pass the comprehensive examination/s may be suspended from the doctoral program; however, upon the recommendation of the advisory committee and with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, the student may be permitted to repeat the examination/s for a second and final time. A doctoral student who does not pass the comprehensive examinations on the second and final attempt will not be allowed to pursue further study at the doctoral level and will be permanently withdrawn from the program. This procedure also applies to the final oral examination and dissertation defense.

**Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degree.** After the qualifying comprehensive examinations and all research tools have been satisfactorily completed and all requirements have been verified by the Graduate School, the student will be admitted to candidacy. Notification of admission to candidacy will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School. After a student has been admitted to candidacy and all course work (except 718 Dissertation) has been completed, the student may qualify for reduced tuition for a 718. The degree can be conferred no sooner than 8 months after admission to candidacy. Students must have successfully passed all qualifying comprehensive exams and been granted doctoral candidacy by the Graduate School before they can schedule their proposal defense.

**Dissertation Committee.** A doctoral advisory committee will be appointed for each doctoral student to oversee the dissertation process from initial proposal to completion. After consulting with the student and the faculty member in question, the head of the major department will appoint one faculty member from the major field as the dissertation advisor. After consultation with the advisor and the student, the Department Head will approve at least one or two other department members to serve on the committee, as well as an outside member. The committee will consist of a minimum of three faculty members from the student's major and minor areas of study with at least one committee member from outside the student's major department University Procedure [11.04.99.R0.23 Doctoral Advisory Committees and Dissertations](#). Once the committee has been formed, approved, and the form signed, the student will submit the Dissertation Committee Form to the Graduate School.

**Process to Schedule Dissertation Proposal Defense.** Scheduling of the dissertation proposal defense is a major step in the academic history of a doctoral student at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Below are guidelines to help students navigate through this important time. Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of research conduct and strictly adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations involving research.

To ensure integrity and compliance in research, all students involved in research activities must successfully complete training in *Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship* <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx>. Students conducting studies that do not require IRB, IACUC, or IBC approval may begin data collection after completing the Responsible Conduct in Research training and after receiving approval from their advisor to do so. Proof of training completion must be submitted to the Graduate School with the proposal document. Data collection prior to completion of the required training is an ethical violation and the use of those data will be disallowed. Additional training is required for students (see #2 in below section: To be able to schedule proposal defense) whose research involves human subjects and must adhere to the University research compliance procedures. Students conducting studies using human participants, animal subjects, or biological agents must seek approval from the IRB, IACUC, or IBC, respectively. Data collection may begin once approval from the appropriate reviewing body is received. Proof of approval must be submitted to the Graduate School with the proposal document. Data collection prior to completion of the required trainings and receipt of the required approval is an ethical violation and the use of those data will be disallowed. For questions or clarification about the student's responsibilities regarding research compliance, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, 903-886-5766. Additional information is located online at <http://www.tamuc.edu/Research/>.

1. Students must complete the online training for **Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship** <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx> before the student can submit the schedule form. **This training is required of all doctoral students and is good for three (3) years.**
2. Student must complete the following if their proposed research/study involves:
  - a. **Human Subjects:** Human Subjects research is defined as a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalize knowledge, which involves the collection of data from or about living human beings. In addition, all student research involving human subjects outside the classroom is considered to be in this category see <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/humanSubjectsIRB.aspx>.
    - i. Student must complete the Human Subjects online training **and** gain approval for the inclusion of human subjects in their research/study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. The online training can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/humanSubjectsIRB.aspx>
    - ii. Student must gain IRB approval for their study. The process to gain approval from the IRB includes protocol application completion, submission, and revisions (if required by the Departmental IRB Representative and/or IRB) of the IRB protocol form see <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateForms.aspx>. IRB protocol forms must be submitted to the [ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu](mailto:ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu) through the departmental IRB representative. Final approval for the inclusion of human subjects in students research/study rests with the IRB. Attach IRB approval email to schedule form
3. The student will work with the members of the advisory committee in developing the dissertation proposal. The proposal will be presented to the advisory committee in a session that will be open to all Graduate Faculty Members. **Submit the [Schedule Form for the Proposal Defense](#) (fully filled out and signed) to the Graduate School by the 20th of the month preceding the month** in which the presentation of the Dissertation Proposal Defense is to be held. Should the 20th fall on Saturday or Sunday, the form must be filed on the Friday prior to the 20th. It is the responsibility of the student to collect all required signatures, and to submit the completed form to the Graduate School.
4. **Proposal.** The student must gain proposal approval from the Graduate School at least one semester prior to graduation. After the proposal, students must submit their proposal to the Graduate School for approval. In order to submit a proposal to ([OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu)), a student must have committee approval and meet research compliance requirements, including IRB approval if applicable. Proof of compliance must be included in the submission to the Graduate School. Students may not begin collecting data for their study until they have completed all required ethics training and gained University IRB approval, if applicable. It is the responsibility of the student to submit his or her proposal and all required documents to the Graduate School. The following items must be included with a proposal submission to the Graduate School:
  - a. Dissertation Proposal (Word document)
  - b. Proposal Approval Form
  - c. Advisor's Approval to Submit Form
  - d. A copy of all required training certificates and IRB approval (if applicable)
  - e. iThenticate similarity report and score justification (if score is above 12%)

Students are not permitted to run an iThenticate report for themselves. The thesis advisor or another member of the student's advisory committee must run and interpret the report for the student. Faculty experiencing difficulty accessing their iThenticate account should contact Anne Phifer ([Anne.Phifer@tamuc.edu](mailto:Anne.Phifer@tamuc.edu)) from the Office of Academic Technology. Contact [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) with questions regarding how to print or share the report with the Graduate School. Again, before collecting any data you must have completed the following:

- Ethics Training (CITI trainings, i.e., RCR)
- IRB, IACUC, or IBC Approval (if applicable)

**Dissertation Credit.** A dissertation (718) is required for all doctoral programs, and credit will be given for no less than nine semester hours and no more than twelve semester hours of dissertation. After doctoral candidates are admitted to

candidacy, they will be required to enroll in at least three hours of Dissertation 718 each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed and approved by the advisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School. Doctoral candidates will not be required to enroll during the summer term, unless the student is using the counsel and advice of the major advisor and/or university facilities, such as the library. Students who fail to enroll for dissertation during a fall or spring semester after admission to candidacy will be required to enroll for extra 718 hours to make up for the missed hours. Individual departments may impose additional course requirements beyond those required by the Graduate School.

**Scheduling the Dissertation Defense.** A student should review their DegreeWorks audit (or contact the Graduate School for review) prior to filling out and submitting the Final Defense schedule form to ensure they have Graduate School proposal approval. A completed and signed: [Schedule for Final Dissertation form](#) must be filed in the Graduate School by the 20th day of the month prior to the month the defense is to be held. Refer to the University [Academic Calendar](#) for dissertation defense deadline if graduating in the current semester. It is the responsibility of the student to collect all required signatures, and to submit the completed form to Graduate School.

**Dissertation Defense.** The student will defend the completed dissertation and respond to any questions related to his/her program of study before the advisory committee in a session open to all Graduate Faculty Members. Students must be in good academic standing with the Graduate School and have a proposal approved by the Dean of the Graduate School to be eligible to defend.

**Submission of Dissertation.** Registration in the dissertation course (718) is required the semester that the dissertation is submitted. It is the responsibility of the student to submit his or her dissertation and all required documents to the Graduate School. A dissertation and required forms must be submitted to the Graduate School by the deadline indicated in the University [Academic Calendar](#) for that particular semester (this deadline is approximately 6 weeks prior to commencement). It is the student's responsibility to submit his or her dissertation and all required documents to the Graduate School. Submit the following items:

- Final Dissertation (Word document)
- Final Examination/Dissertation Defense Report
- Survey of Earned Doctorates (required for PhD students only, not EdD students)
- Advisor's Approval to Submit Form
- Dissertation Information Sheet
- iThenticate similarity report and score justification (if score is above 12%)

Students are not permitted to run iThenticate report for themselves. The thesis advisor or another member of the student's advisory committee must run and interpret the report for the student. Faculty experiencing difficulty accessing their iThenticate account should contact Anne Phifer ([Anne.Phifer@tamuc.edu](mailto:Anne.Phifer@tamuc.edu)) from the Office of Academic Technology. Contact [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) with questions regarding how to print or share the report with the Graduate School.

The candidate will be contacted with any changes to the manuscript. After making these changes, and gaining the advisor's approval, the student will resubmit the corrected dissertation for final approval (final approval of the dissertation rests with the Dean of the Graduate School). Once the Graduate School has given final approval of the dissertation the student will upload the dissertation to ProQuest and pay for publishing, binding, and copyrighting (if applicable). Three copies will be bound and distributed to the student's major department, major advisor and the library. The student may order more copies through ProQuest. Once the Graduate School has given full approval of the dissertation the student will upload his or her dissertation to ProQuest.

**Filing for Graduation.** Commencement exercises are held three times each academic year in May, August, and December. Students must file for graduation with the Registrar's Office during the semester they plan to graduate. Students will be approved for graduation and the degree after they have completed all degree requirements satisfactorily, have been approved by the Graduate Committee of the department, and the Graduate School. Please check the University [Academic Calendar](#) for deadline dates for filing. Graduation information and a graduation application are available online at <http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/default.aspx>. Students may apply for graduation through [MyLeo](#). A student must be in good academic standing in order to complete graduation requirements. Participation in the commencement ceremony does not guarantee conferring of any degree. Texas A&M University-Commerce has the right to rescind any conferred degree if the University becomes aware that the student did not meet degree requirements.



# Earning Graduate Credit

## *Transfer of Credit*

- Transfer courses applied to a doctoral degree must be in a graduate academic area taught by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Credit for graduate coursework taken from other regionally accredited graduate schools in the United States is granted in accordance with approval by the student's advisory committee and evaluation by the Graduate School.
- Time limitations on transfer courses are the same as for A&M-Commerce courses.
- Research tool courses and 718/dissertation must be taken at Texas A&M University-Commerce and are not allowed to be transferred.
- Transfer credit will be granted for only those graduate courses in which the student received a grade of “B” or better.
- At least 45 hours, not including 718/dissertation, must be taken at Texas A&M University-Commerce towards the doctoral degree. This will limit transfer courses in a 60-hour doctoral program to 1-2 courses. Some programs allow no transfer courses.
- Credit earned by correspondence or experiential will not apply toward a doctoral degree.

## *Independent Studies*

Registration in an individual studies (689) course shall imply an expected level of effort on the part of the student comparable to that associated with an organized class with the same credit value.

- No more than twelve (12) graduate semester credit hours of individual studies courses (689) may be applied to a doctoral degree.
- Independent Studies course credit cannot be used toward fulfilling the research tools requirement.

## *Enrollment Limitation or Administrative Withdrawal*

Enrollment in any graduate course is subject to approval by the department offering the course, the instructor teaching the course, and the Dean of the Graduate School, whether or not such is specifically stated in the course description. A student may be prevented from enrolling in the course or dropped from the course if it is already in progress if the Graduate Dean, Department Head, or a faculty member considers the student physically or mentally incapable of performing satisfactorily or safely in a course, or if the student becomes a threat to the instructor or others in the course or is disruptive in any way. In such cases, the Graduate Dean will confer with the faculty member and Department Head involved and then take appropriate action. Any tuition refund to which the student is entitled will be determined according to the University schedule for refunds and will be based on the date on which the student was dropped from the course.

# **DOCTORAL PROGRAM CHECKLIST**

(Check with your department for additional requirements)

**ALL DOCTORAL FORMS ARE AVAILABLE HERE:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateForms.aspx>

- ❑ **MEET MAJOR ADVISOR:** Shortly after acceptance into the program, meet with your assigned advisor to develop a degree plan. This can be done in person, online, or by email. You will use DegreeWorks for your degree plan.
- ❑ **DEGREE PLAN:** You will utilize DegreeWorks as your degree plan tool. It will help you see what your degree requirements are, which courses need to be taken, and your progress in the degree. Access DegreeWorks through your myLeo.
- ❑ **REGISTER FOR AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE COURSES:** Register for and successfully complete courses recommended by the advisor. You must maintain a graduate GPA of 3.00 or higher at all times and have no more than 2 grades below a B at any time. No grade lower than a B can be used towards a doctoral degree.
- ❑ **RESIDENCY:** As soon as possible after admission, declare and complete a residency. Check with your major department for residency requirements. Doctoral residency requirements must be completed prior to candidacy. Secure necessary forms from your major department to document residency.
- ❑ **MEET RESEARCH TOOLS REQUIREMENT:** All research tools should be completed prior to taking comprehensive exams. You cannot be granted candidacy until all research tools courses are completed.
- ❑ **SUCCESSFULLY PASS ALL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS AND BECOME DOCTORAL CANDIDATE:** When all your coursework is complete, you will schedule your comprehensive exams with your department. Contact your department for details. (Note: PhD Educational Psychology students start taking their comprehensive exams before all coursework is completed.) You must successfully pass all comprehensive exams and be a doctoral candidate before you can schedule your proposal. If you fail one or all sections of your comprehensive exams, you must be approved by the Graduate School Dean to retake the comprehensive exams for the second and final time. Failure of all or any section of the comprehensive exams for a second time will result in permanent suspension from the doctoral program.
- ❑ **BEGIN REQUIRED TRAINING MODULES:** Complete required (Responsible Conduct in Research & Scholarship) module (required of all students) and any other module pertaining to your research. You must repeat training every 3 years as the training is only good for 3 years. All training modules must be completed prior to submission of the IRB to the department IRB chairperson. You must gain university IRB approval before you will be granted proposal approval. Direct any questions you have concerning training and IRB to the Office of Sponsored Programs, Research Compliance: ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu.
- ❑ **REVIEW DISSERTATION PROCESS CHECKLIST:** Be aware, procedures/processes change over semesters so please ensure you are following the most recent process checklist.
- ❑ **WORK WITH YOUR ADVISOR TO SELECT DOCTORAL DISSERTATION COMMITTEE:** This committee will consist of a minimum of three faculty members. If you have minor, you must include your minor advisor. At least one committee member must be from outside your major department. Submit Doctoral Dissertation Committee request form to the Graduate School for approval.
- ❑ **ENROLL IN 718:** You are required to enroll in at least three hours of 718 each fall and spring semester after your admission to candidacy until the dissertation is completed and approved. Enrollment during the summer term is not required unless you are utilizing the counsel of your major advisor and/or university facilities/resources or you are going to graduate in August. **A grade of U (unsatisfactory progress) in 718 counts as a grade below a B.**
- ❑ **DEVELOP DISSERTATION PROPOSAL:** Develop your dissertation proposal in collaboration with your Doctoral Dissertation Committee. You must propose and be given proposal approval from the Graduate School at least one semester before graduation. You cannot hold your proposal defense and final defense of your dissertation the same semester you wish to graduate.
- ❑ **SCHEDULE PROPOSAL DEFENSE WITH THE GRADUATE SCHOOL and HOLD PROPOSAL DEFENSE:** Schedule the dissertation proposal defense with the Graduate School by completing and obtaining all signatures on the Schedule for the Presentation of Dissertation Proposal form. This form must be completed and submitted to the Graduate School by the 20th of the month preceding the month in which the proposal will be presented. You must submit an electronic copy of your proposal along with the schedule form. The Graduate School will email you additional proposal information once your proposal is approved and on the defense schedule for the month.
- ❑ **WORK WITH YOUR ADVISOR AND COMPLETE THE IRB APPROVAL PROCESS:** Complete the Protection of Human Subjects form for approval by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or obtain IACUC approval for animal subjects or IBC for biosafety. Failure to obtain IRB/IACUC/IBC approval will result in a delay of proposal approval.
- ❑ **REPORT OUTCOME OF PROPOSAL DEFENSE AND SUBMIT PROPOSAL TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:** After the proposal defense, the outcome of the defense is reported on the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form. This form

must be signed by your major advisor, all committee members, your major department head, and dean of your college. You do not submit the document/s right after the defense; you must make all committee-recommended corrects, obtain necessary approval signatures, and email all documents to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) in one email.

Prior to submitting the proposal to the Graduate School, you must carefully revise and edit your proposal. This includes, but is not limited to, editing for mechanics and formatting and making all revisions required by the advisor and committee. After completing all revisions and editing, you must provide a copy of the revised proposal to your major advisor for review and approval to submit to the Graduate School for review. Your advisor must sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Proposal, Thesis, or Dissertation form to signify submission approval.

- ❑ Submit an electronic copy of your final proposal to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) (including Title Page, Signature Sheet, Abstract, and Table of Contents along with the chapters and references) with the Advisor's Approval to Submit Proposal or Dissertation, the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form (with all signatures), the IRB approval email and copy of the ethics training completion record to the Graduate School for proposal review and approval. Your proposal does not have final approval until you have received the proposal signature form back from the Graduate School with the Dean's signature.
- ❑ Proposals, along with all required documents, should be submitted to the Graduate School within the same semester the proposal defense was held and at the latest, within one semester of the proposal defense semester.

❑ **\*Three levels of approval must be obtained. The three levels of approval are:**

- ❑ After your proposal defense, your committee, department head, and Dean of College must agree that you have successfully defended your proposal and approve your proposal.
- ❑ You must seek approval of your proposal from the appropriate research compliance committee – IRB, IACUC or IBC. (This can be before or after your proposal. Your proposal research must match your IRB approval).
- ❑ With your advisor's permission and AFTER obtaining committee approval and IRB approval, you must submit your proposal and all required documents to the Graduate School for final approval.

- ❑ **VERIFY YOU RECEIVE FINAL GRADUATE SCHOOL PROPOSAL APPROVAL:** Verify you receive your proposal approval email from the Graduate School and print it for your file. You should keep a copy of all important event/notice emails from the Graduate School for future reference and confirmation of approval.
- ❑ **WORK TOWARDS COMPLETION OF DISSERTATION:** You are expected to make progress toward the completion of your dissertation each semester. All degree requirements beyond the master's degree must be completed within ten calendar years from the date of admission to the doctoral program.
- ❑ **FILE FOR GRADUATION:** File for graduation with the Registrar's office by the deadline noted in the Academic Calendar. This is completed through your myLeo when the application is opened and appears. You may file for graduation beginning with the first class day of the semester you will graduate. Order graduation regalia.
- ❑ **DISTRIBUTION OF COPY OF DISSERTATION FOR DEFENSE:** Ensure that committee members have received all final chapters of your dissertation a minimum of two weeks prior to your defense. Work with your advisor and committee to make corrections prior to your dissertation. Check with your department for additional distribution requirements and deadlines.
- ❑ **SCHEDULE DISSERTATION DEFENSE:** Submit the Schedule for the Presentation of Final Examination/Defense to the Graduate School by the 20th of the month prior to the month of defense. Be aware of all deadlines for defending your dissertation and dissertation submission listed here:  
<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesisanddissertationdeadlines.pdf>  
There are different deadlines for the date of defending your final dissertation and for submitting the initial final dissertation.
- ❑ **DEFEND THE DISSERTATION:** Defend the dissertation at the scheduled time. Obtain signatures of the committee members, and the department head on the Final Examination Report (the Office of Graduate Studies will email the form to you and your doctoral advising committee chair prior to the dissertation defense).
- ❑ **REVISION OF DISSERTATION:** After the defense of the dissertation and prior to submitting it ELECTRONICALLY to the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Services, carefully revise and edit your dissertation. This includes, but is not limited to, making corrections from the committee/ department and thoroughly reviewing the dissertation to ensure it aligns with the Graduate School formatting and APA or MLA requirements. The dissertation copy submitted to the Graduate School should be line edited and error-free and include all components that will be in the bound copy. Once you have made all revisions, you must show a copy of your dissertation to your advisor for submission approval. Before you may submit the dissertation to the Graduate School, your advisor must sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Proposal, Thesis, or Dissertation form.
- ❑ **OBTAIN THE SIGNATURE OF THE DEAN OF YOUR ACADEMIC COLLEGE:** After the dissertation defense and when all corrections have been made and approved by your advisor and department head, obtain your academic college dean's signature on the Final Examination Report. For the process of obtaining the signature, check with the office of your academic college dean. Most deans prefer you schedule an appointment but your department and advisor may help you obtain signatures.
- ❑ **SUBMIT INITIAL DISSERTATION COPY TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR REVIEW:** Submit your dissertation, and all forms ELECTRONICALLY BY EMAIL to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) (which includes Advisor's Approval to Submit Proposal, Thesis, or Dissertation form, dissertation information form, email from Survey of Earned Doctorate (only

done by PhD students), and Final Examination Report) to the Graduate School by the deadline stated in the Academic Calendar (approximately six weeks before commencement.) Your dissertation processing fees will be posted to your myLeo during this submission so you can pay at this time. You will also pay during the Proquest submittal process for your binding and copyright.

The dissertation will be reviewed by the Graduate School. You and your advisor will be contacted the Graduate School regarding any revisions to the dissertation and final submission deadline. You will send a new updated copy of the dissertation back to the Graduate School once you have made the corrections we suggest.

- ❑ **SUBMIT FINAL DISSERTATION:** After your dissertation has been reviewed and you have addressed all areas of concern, your dissertation will receive the “final approval” email from the Graduate School. The final approval email will instruct you to email the Graduate School a copy of your final dissertation as a pdf. Once you send the dissertation pdf to the Graduate School, you will receive the “Proquest upload” email that has a link to Proquest. You will upload your dissertation pdf to Proquest for final processing by the deadline stated in the email. You must have your dissertation as one document, not multiple sections so that you can make it a pdf and upload it to Proquest. They have free pdf software available on their site which you can use once we send you the Proquest link. You will fill out all their documents online and pay for 3 copies to be bound and distributed as follows: One copy to the library, one for the department, and one copy to your advisor. At this time, you will also order any additional copies you may wish for yourself.
- ❑ Submission to Proquest and copyrighting your dissertation is a requirement of the doctoral degree and graduation, not an option. Failure to upload your dissertation by the deadline stated in the Proquest upload email can result in a delay in graduation.
- ❑ **ATTEND COMMENCEMENT:** You are expected to be present at commencement. If circumstances will prevent you from attending, you must notify the Dean of Graduate Studies in writing if you will not attend. The Graduate School will hold a reception in your honor before commencement.

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- No grade below a B or a U (718/unsatisfactory progress) will be used towards a doctoral degree. More than 2 grades below a B and/or U will result in permanent removal from the doctoral program.
- **Most doctoral students will complete their degree in under 7 years.** If a doctoral student has not completed their degree by their 7th year in the program, they will be required to submit a completion plan to the Graduate School. Failure to adhere to the completion plan and meet the stated graduation deadline could lead to dismissal from the doctoral degree. The ten-year program completion deadline is based on the first course taken (for example: if the first course taken is from Fall 2008, the student must graduate no later than Fall 2018).
- **At no time will a student be allowed to go past the 10 year deadline to complete the degree.**
- If a student does not stay continuously enrolled and is absent from the program for more than one year, the student will have to apply for readmission, meet the new admission requirements, and the department has the right to review the student for readmission and either accept or deny the readmission. If readmitted, the student will not be given additional time (past the 10-year deadline) to complete the degree.
- **IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS ARE SENT TO THE APPROPRIATE OFFICES FOR PROCESSING.** The department and advisor may aid in obtaining signatures and routing documents but the student is responsible to verify they are received in the proper offices for processing.
- **IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE ALL NECESSARY APPROVALS ARE RECEIVED BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR DISSERTATION PROCESS.** Always ensure you have received Graduate School proposal approval prior to scheduling your final defense. Proposals should be submitted to the Graduate School within the semester of the defense. Review this link for submission deadlines:  
<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesisanddissertationdeadlines.pdf>
- **Our goal is to help you successfully complete your degree and achieve your goals!**

### **GRADUATE SCHOOL CONTACTS**

**VICKY TURNER** [Vicky.Turner@tamuc.edu](mailto:Vicky.Turner@tamuc.edu)

DOCTORAL DEGREE COORDINATOR

903/886-5167

**KARIN THOMAS** [Karin.Thomas@tamuc.edu](mailto:Karin.Thomas@tamuc.edu)

903/886-5968

[OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu): for proposal and dissertation document/s submission

## **USEFUL INFORMATION AND WEBPAGES**

ALL DOCTORAL FORMS AND THE DOCTORAL HANDBOOK CAN BE FOUND AT THE WEBSITE BELOW. THIS WEBSITE WILL ALWAYS CONTAIN THE MOST UP-TO-DATE VERSION OF ANY DOCUMENT OR FORM. PLEASE REFERENCE LINK BELOW.

**Graduate Forms and Guidelines:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateForms.aspx>

**Texas A&M University-Commerce homepage:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/>

**The Graduate School homepage:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/default.aspx>

**Thesis and Dissertation Services:**

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Services/default.aspx>

**Graduate Catalog:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/catalogs.aspx>

**MyLeo access:** <https://leo.tamuc.edu/>

**Registrar's Office:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/default.aspx>

**Class Schedule:** <http://appsprod.tamuc.edu/Schedule/Schedule.aspx>

**Financial Aid:** Doctoral students who have full admission to the doctoral degree program may be eligible for several forms of financial aid. For information and application forms, contact the Office of Financial Aid, (903) 886 5096.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/tuitionCosts/financialAidandScholarships/>

**Funding your education:** For current graduate scholarship information from the Office of Graduate Studies, please review this link: <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/funding/default.aspx>

There are more scholarships and funding opportunities through your department and the scholarship office so please contact them for details.

**Library:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/library/>

**Campus Map:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/theCampus/oldcampusMap.pdf>

**IRB information:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/>

**Texas Bookstore:** <http://www.amcbookstore.com/home.aspx>

**Tuition and Fees:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/tuitionCosts/default.aspx>

**Academic Calendar:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx>

**University Directory:** <http://famis.tamuc.edu/pb>

**Graduate Assistantships:** <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/funding/assistantships/default.aspx>

**Housing:** A&M-Commerce Department of Housing can accommodate single students and families in campus housing. The Department of Housing is located on the first floor of Halladay Student Services, room 100, (903) 886-5797.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/CampusLife/housing/default.aspx>

