Ph.D. Degree

The Ph.D. is the highest academic degree offered by CSU. Those who earn it must demonstrate significant intellectual achievement, high scholarly ability, and great breadth of knowledge. The nature of the degree program will vary greatly depending on the discipline involved. In addition, doctoral work requires heavy participation in research or other kinds of creative activity. Particular projects may assume any of an almost infinite number of forms.

Ph.D. Candidacy

Doctoral students at CSU are considered to achieve “candidacy” for the degree upon passage of preliminary examinations. Candidates generally retain that status through the completion of the degree. However, candidacy is lost if

1. the student is placed on probation due to insufficient grade point average;
2. the student’s graduate advisory committee finds that insufficient progress is being made toward the degree; or
3. the student is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons.

The students who lose candidacy may regain it, when appropriate, through the established procedures for improving grade point average, demonstrating satisfactory progress, or achieving readmission.

The preparation of a dissertation is required. The dissertation is a formal written document which presents the results of sustained research or investigation on an important intellectual problem. The dissertation must represent independent intellectual achievement and must make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge, accumulated wisdom, or culture of the field in which it is written. Students typically earn a number of research credits while completing the work which underlies the dissertation.

Credit Requirements

A minimum of 72 semester credits beyond the baccalaureate is required.

For students who submit a master’s degree in partial fulfillment of these requirements: A master’s degree from an accredited college or university may be accepted for a maximum of 30 credits. In addition, up to ten credits in courses earned after the date on which the master’s degree was awarded may be accepted in transfer if approved by the student’s advisory committee, the department, and the Graduate School. A minimum of 62 credits must be earned at CSU after admission to a doctoral program. At least 37 credits beyond the bachelor’s degree must be earned in courses numbered 500 or above.

For students enrolled in a continuous master’s/Ph.D. program at CSU: All courses taken during the master’s program may be applied to the doctoral degree, even if the total master’s degree credits exceed 30. These courses must be specified on the Ph.D. program of study and approved by the student’s advisory committee, the doctoral department, and the Graduate School. Continuous programs are those in which the student is admitted to the Ph.D. program and formally registers the Fall or Spring semester immediately following receipt of the master’s degree. All other prescribed credit requirements of the master’s and Ph.D. degrees remain in effect in such cases.

For students who do not submit a master’s degree in partial fulfillment of these requirements: Up to ten credits earned at an accredited college or university may be accepted for transfer if approved by the student’s advisory committee, the department, and the Graduate School. A minimum of 62 credits must be earned at CSU after admission to a doctoral program. At least 37 credits beyond the bachelor’s degree must be earned in courses numbered 500 or above.

A professional post baccalaureate degree in Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Law, or Divinity may be accepted for a maximum of 30 credits. The institution granting such a degree must be certified by one of the major regional accrediting agencies. Students contemplating this option may be required to pass an equivalency examination to assure that they possess levels of knowledge and skill generally expected of master’s degree holders.

Residency Requirement

There is no CSU residency requirement for Ph.D. degree programs; however, such requirements may exist at the department level. Students should check with their departments about such policies. Whether or not a residency requirement exists, registration policies as outlined above must be followed.

Preliminary Examination

A preliminary examination shall be administered at least two terms before the final examination to determine whether the student is qualified to continue toward the doctorate. The usual procedure is to have written examinations in the field of specialization and supporting areas followed by an oral examination. In order to assure full information to all concerned (student, major professor, all committee members, department head, Graduate School), the intention to hold a Ph.D. Preliminary Examination is to be publicized two weeks in advance by the advisor. The student is responsible for obtaining the Report of Preliminary Examination (GS Form 16 (http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/forms/#GS16)) from the Graduate School and returning it, appropriately completed, after the conclusion of the examination.

Providing the committee approves, a candidate who fails the preliminary examination may be reexamined once and, for the reexamination, may be required to complete further work. The reexamination must be held not later than 12 months after the first examination. The examination must not be held earlier than two months after the first examination unless the student agrees to a shorter time period. Failure to pass the second exam results in dismissal from the Graduate School.

Participation in oral examinations by the student and/or one or more members of the examining committee may be via electronic link so long as all are participating simultaneously and all committee members and the student have agreed to this in advance.

Final Examination

At least one month before the final examination, the advisor will inform the student and the committee members of the nature and scope of the examination. Normally, the final examination will cover primarily the dissertation, but additional subject matter, specified by the committee at the time of the preliminary examination, may also be covered. Dissertation defenses are open to all members of
the CSU community and the public at large. In order to assure timely notification across the entire campus, advisors should announce this information to CSU community and public at large at least two weeks in advance. Advisors may publicize the defense through CSU's electronic announcement and message delivery system. The chairperson of the committee shall have the prerogative to decide whether those in attendance (outside of the committee) should be allowed to ask questions of the candidate during an oral examination.