Doctor of Education Student Handbook
Welcome to Plymouth State University’s Doctor of Education (EdD) program. The information contained in this handbook will support you in your journey toward earning your degree. Please take time to read this handbook and discuss any questions or concerns with your primary advisor.

Program Characteristics and Overview

The Doctor of Education is a degree oriented to the improvement of professional practice by extending the knowledge, expertise, and skill of candidates through the application of research to leadership issues. The purpose of the Doctor of Education program is to provide challenging professional growth to experienced practitioners and professionals, including educators, administrators, counselors, and individuals working in higher education and related community agencies or organizations.

In this program we promote intellectual inquiry, research, and creative thinking from global and integrative perspectives through a commitment to five hallmarks.

Leadership and Advocacy
Leaders influence others to stay on course and keep moving toward their goal. Leadership describes how a leader carries out, or does, his/her leadership; it is the practice of being a leader. To advocate is to encourage others and promote activism. Leadership requires a capacity to lead as well as a willingness to inspire action.

Scholarship and Application
Scholarship refers to the qualities of a scholar, or learned individual. The purpose of graduate study is to contribute to the knowledge base of professionals, but gaining knowledge is not enough; it is the application of knowledge and the act of putting it into practical use that makes the difference.

Reflection and Innovation
Reflection is the practice of looking back to contemplate the journey one has taken. Reflective practitioners consider where they were, where they are, and where they’re going; they learn from their experiences. The act of reflecting allows for innovative thinking so that new ideas can be born.

Professionalism and Service
Professionalism refers to the way trained specialists (professionals) conduct themselves. At Plymouth State University the purpose of graduate study is to master the skills necessary to become a qualified professional and to apply those skills in service to others.

Global Awareness and Social Responsibility
Global awareness requires students to remain conscious of the worldwide community. Doctoral study promotes an understanding of the social systems in which people, organizations, and communities thrive. As members of worldwide social systems we have an obligation to act for the benefit of society. Social responsibility pertains to everyone whose actions impact the environment.
The Cohort Model

Students in the PSU doctoral program participate in their core courses as part of a cohort. A cohort program is a group of people working together in a degree program.

Cohort programs provide an active, interactive, and dynamic setting for students to grow their knowledge and skills. Rather than the professor-teaching-student model of traditional learning, cohort programs bring students together to build community, foster creativity, build leadership skills, and encourage greater progress. (http://www.ccu.edu/blogs/cags/2011/08/what-is-a-cohort-program/, para 3)

Through our cohort model we create an environment in which doctoral students engage in collaborative inquiry by participating in whole class and cooperative group discussions using prior knowledge; explore, analyze, apply, connect and share knowledge related to course discussion topic(s); and transfer learning to personal and professional understanding.

Two cohort models exist, and they begin in alternating summers (year round cohorts begin in odd numbered years and summer cohorts begin in even numbered years).

**Year round cohort.** Doctoral students in the year-round cohort model complete their core doctoral courses on campus throughout a 2-year period. All students in the year round cohort must have completed a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS), or equivalent post-master’s work, so their specialization courses are complete before enrolling.

**Summer-only cohort.** Doctoral students in a summer cohort will complete two core courses on campus each summer over a period of four years. They may complete specialization coursework (hybrid or online), conduct research, and/or participate in associated professional activities during the academic year (falls, and springs).

Program Requirements

This is a 60 credit doctoral program. In some instances, career goals may require a degree program in excess of 60 credits; therefore, consultation with an academic advisor prior to taking courses is essential. Twenty-seven credits are completed in post-master’s level specialization courses, and a minimum of 33 credits are completed through the core doctoral and dissertation coursework. All written work must conform to APA style and format requirements, and students must maintain a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 throughout their graduate program.

Concentration/Specialization

(27 credits)

Students select 27 credits of postmaster’s coursework from various disciplines based on their professional goals, certification needs, and interests. Course selection must have the approval of the doctoral program coordinator and be at the 7000 level or equivalent; practicum credits will not be accepted. Concentration/specialization component coursework may be fulfilled with courses completed in the student’s CAGS or equivalent post-master’s program, if those courses were completed within six years of admission to the EdD program. Practicum credits will not
be accepted to fulfill concentration/specialization component coursework.

Doctor of Education List of Approved Electives
The following courses will serve as possible electives to meet the necessary 27 post Master’s credits requirements.

CAGS Core
EP 7020 Collaborative Leadership
EP 7030 Transforming the Educational Agenda
EP 7040 Planning in Education and Human Services
EP 7050 Advanced Mixed Research Methods
EP 7060 Legal Issues in Policy Making
EP 7080 Ethical Leadership and Data Decision

Superintendent Educational Leadership Program
EP 7100 School Labor Relations and Negotiation
EP 7200 School buildings and Transportation
EP 7300 Superintendent and School Leadership

General Electives:
Ep 7130 Shaping Policy and Practices in Arts Education
EP 7110 Arts and Learning
EP 7121 Designing and Leading Healthy Organizations
EP 7210 Leading Curriculum and Instruction to Transform Schools
EP 7120 Appreciative Inquiry
EP 7090 Critical Perspectives in Art Advocacy
EP 7400 Conducting A Qualitative Study
EP 7215 Leaders as Professional Developers

Higher Education Curriculum, Instruction and Administrative Leadership
HD 7020 Collaboration in Higher Education
HD 7030 Organization and Administration in Higher Education
HD 7040 Emerging Trends in Higher Education
HD 7000 Foundations in Higher Education
HD 7010 Legal Issues in Higher Education
HD 7045 Strategic Enrollment Management
HD 7050 Coaching Innovative Leaders
HD 7060 Integrating Technology in Higher Education
HD 7070 Teaching Post Secondary Learners
HD 7080 Innovation in Curriculum and Instruction
HD 7090 Teacher Transformation
HD 7055 Transformational Research
HD 7015 Special Topics in Higher Education (by permission of EdD coordinator only)
Prerequisite course requirements: a graduate-level course in Research or Research Design; a post-master’s level course in Qualitative Methodology and Applied Research.

Students are required to take all doctoral core courses (EP 8000, 8010, 8030, 8020, 8045, 8025, 8050) with their cohort. The Externship (EP 8820) is scheduled independently but must be completed before being advanced to doctoral candidacy.

The total time to complete the doctoral degree may not exceed eight years. The final date for completion will be August 31st of the 8th year of being in the program. If the student has not defended their dissertation by this due date they will be forever considered ABD (all but dissertation).

Leave of Absence during Coursework:

In the event a student needs to take a Leave of Absence during the doctoral coursework (all courses beginning with 8000’s only), the student will be required to join a new cohort at the beginning of the EdD program. The student will not be allowed to rejoin their original cohort or jump into existing cohorts to complete coursework.

The student will not be required to repeat the coursework already completed but will be required to attend and be part of all the instruction and requirements of the courses up to the point they took the LOA. Students will not be charged tuition for the courses they have already successfully completed. This will apply to all courses regardless of when the LOA of absence is granted.

Withdrawal from the Program

If at any time a student decides to withdraw from the EdD program, this decision will be final and the student will no longer be able to continue or return to the program at a later date. This decision is irreversible.

Dispositions

In the event that a student demonstrates inappropriate behaviors (outbursts in the classroom, writes rude or threatening emails, harasses other students and/or faculty etc. this student will be referred to the Dean of Students here at PSU. I urge you to review the student code of behavior. https://campus.plymouth.edu/frost-house/student-rights-and-code-of-conduct/

If just cause has been found after a thorough investigation the student may be asked to withdraw from the Doctor of Education program.
Doctoral Core Component Courses (in the order in which they are taken)
(3 credits each; 24 credits)

1. EP 8000 Emerging Perspectives on Learning and Development
2. EP 8030 Leadership in a Diverse World
4. EP 8020 Ethical Leadership and Advocacy
5. EP 8045 Quantitative Research Methods
6. EP 8025 Writing a Literature Review
7. EP 8820 Externship
8. EP 8050 Vision: Synergy and Synthesis

Dissertation Component Course (3 credits each; 9 credit minimum)

EP 8800 Dissertation Research- This course occurs every term that the student is working on their dissertation until completion. The average is approximately 5-6 terms to complete a dissertation.

Course Descriptions

EP 8000 Emerging Perspectives on Learning and Development - 3 graduate credits
Leaders play an important role in constructing, guiding, and improving learning in organizations. This course explores research-based discoveries and insights about the brain, learning, and development from multiple disciplines. Topics will include current developmental concepts as they are connected to understanding people, organizations, and policy settings. Prerequisites: Member of the PSU EdD cohort.

EP 8030 Leadership in a Diverse World - 3 graduate credits
Leaders often find themselves making decisions, facilitating programs, and mediating conflicts that emanate from the many ways in which humans differ, including ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and cultural beliefs. In this course, attention will be given to central topics and critical issues that address global leadership competencies in working with diverse populations. Students will critically examine the complexity of culture, the building of community, and the promotion of social justice from individual, community, and global perspectives. Furthermore, students will consider and evaluate both reactive and proactive roles for leaders in educational, social, and political settings. Prerequisites: Completion of EP 8000.

EP 8010 Program Evaluation: Theory and Practice - 3 graduate credits
This course engages students in understanding and using the theory and practice of program assessment and evaluation, including the effective communication of results. Students work directly with an agency or program to design an evaluation proposal. Various methodologies and approaches are investigated. Students discuss how to use data to inform decisions and to plan and assess programs. Prerequisites: a research design course and a qualitative research course; member of the PSU EdD cohort.
**EP 8020 Ethical Leadership and Advocacy** - 3 graduate credits
This course focuses on ethical leadership and advocacy with an emphasis on personal and professional standards. Students apply ethical decision-making models to dilemmas drawn from professional contexts. The psychological and moral development needed to effectively advocate for social justice is considered. Students will demonstrate understanding of effective advocacy at the individual, community and socio-political levels. Pre-requisite: Completion of EP 8000 and 8010 and member of the PSU EdD cohort.

**EP 8045 - Quantitative Research Methods**- 3 graduate credits
This course presents an overview of quantitative research design. Understanding the logic and underlying rationale of these research methods is of prime importance in this course. The course includes material related to measurement, sampling, research design, data collection and analysis, and statistics. Students will define and refine a substantive area of intended study and research. Prerequisites: EP 8000, EP 8010, EP 8020.

**EP 8025 Writing a Literature Review** - 3 graduate credits
In this course students will utilize scholarly literature to develop a conceptual framework for their dissertation research. Using their work with the literature as a foundation, students will be expected to draft a high quality, comprehensive and compelling prospectus for recruiting their dissertation chair and committee. The proposal will continue to be refined in EP 8050.

**EP 8820 – Externship** - 3 graduate credits
The externship represents an important stage in the preparation of doctoral candidates. The externship provides an opportunity to explore and research topics of interest related to the dissertation at domestic and international locations outside the University. Externship placements allow candidates to gain new perspectives, sample different career paths, gather practical experience related to the dissertation and network with leaders in education and related fields. Candidates work with their instructor to establish the focus and site of the externship placement. Candidates develop and present their research project at the conclusion of the externship to faculty and peers. Students should be aware that a background check might be a requirement of certain externship sites. Prerequisites: Successful completion of EP 8040, and permission of the instructor.

**EP 8050 Vision: Synergy & Synthesis** - 3 graduate credits
Transformational leaders facilitate the regeneration of organizations as visionary workplaces where synergy and synthesis are the ingredients for evolutionary change. Students will explore emerging paradigms of leadership and organizational behavior to enhance their understanding of vision, synergy, and synthesis. In order to ensure synergy between course work and dissertation the research prospectus will be refined using the concepts learned.

**EP 8800 Dissertation Research** - 3 graduate credits (9 credit minimum)
This course is designed to facilitate successful completion of the doctoral dissertation. Students collaborate with their dissertation chair to determine tasks and resources needed to move toward dissertation completion. This course is repeatable. **Doctoral candidacy is a prerequisite for EP 8800 Dissertation Research.**
Admission to Doctoral Candidacy
(Moving from Doctoral Student to Doctoral Candidate)
Following successful completion of all specialization coursework, the doctoral core component courses (51 credits earned), and the externship presentation, a student is recommended for doctoral candidacy. **Doctoral candidacy is a prerequisite for EP 8800 Dissertation Research.**

**Continuous Enrollment**
Doctoral candidates must remain continuously enrolled during the dissertation phase of the program. Students must register for EP 8800, Dissertation Research, (3 credits per term) until the degree is conferred. Failure to register during each academic term will result in termination of the candidacy.

Doctoral candidates who are *international students* enrolled in EP 8800, Dissertation Research (a three credit course), may be considered full-time for immigration purposes. International students should consult with a representative from the Global Engagement Office to determine if they qualify for this exception.

**Leave of Absence**

**Graduate Leave of Absence Policy**
Graduate students matriculated in a degree program that requires continuous enrollment may interrupt their enrollment by requesting a leave of absence (LOA). A student may petition for a LOA if compelling, extenuating circumstances arise. Examples of such circumstances include medical issues, military service, and family emergencies. Eligible students who apply for and are granted a LOA retain their Plymouth email account and access to myPlymouth, as they are expected to return to active status in the appropriate enrollment term that immediately follows the expiration of the leave.

**Eligibility for a Leave of Absence**
To be eligible for a leave of absence the following criteria must be met:

- The student must be in good academic standing.
- The student must not be subject to university initiated disciplinary action.
- The student must have no restrictions/holds on their registration.
- The student must provide documentation to support the leave of absence request.
- Foreign visa students are not eligible for a leave of absence.

**Additional Conditions for a Leave of Absence**
- A leave of absence is granted for one or two consecutive semesters. A leave of absence may be granted more than once, but may not exceed a total of two years for all approved requests.
• Students granted a leave of absence must re-establish continuous enrollment by registering for degree-required credits in the appropriate enrollment term that immediately follows the expiration of the leave. Failure to re-establish continuous enrollment will result in withdrawal from the program. Subsequent continuation in the program requires reapplication for admission. If readmitted, students may be required to follow updated program requirements.

• Students who break their continuous enrollment without an approved leave of absence will be immediately withdrawn from the degree program. Subsequent continuation in the program requires reapplication for admission. If readmitted, students may be required to follow updated program requirements.

• Students granted a leave of absence will not be penalized with regard to their time-to-degree requirement.

• A leave of absence will not be granted for the initial semester of program enrollment.

• Students are not eligible to receive financial aid payments from the university during the leave of absence period.

Financial Aid Implications: If a student currently receives federal loans, their loan eligibility will be recalculated as a result of the leave. If the date of the leave precedes the start of classes, the federal loan(s) will simply be cancelled. If the date of the leave is after the start of classes, the federal loan(s) will be adjusted according to Return to Title IV federal regulations and institutional policies. The decision to take a leave of absence may affect a student’s eligibility for future federal loan(s) if a repayment of loan funds is required. If money is owed to PSU, arrangements must be made prior to return of the approved leave.

Federal Loan Repayment: A student who is granted an approved LOA will remain in an in-school status (maximum 180 days) for Title IV loan repayment purposes.

For a student who does not return at least half time (3 credit hours) for the following term, the date (for loan repayment purposes) the student began their leave of absence will become their withdrawal date. This may exhaust their one-time grace period for repayment of their Federal Direct Loans and may result in these loans being placed into immediately repayment status. A student who has exhausted his or her grace period and is unable to begin repayment of a loan may apply for a deferment or forbearance of repayment.

DEFERMENT

Your admission to the doctoral program cannot be deferred to a future semester. If you are unable to enroll in your program for the semester you were accepted into, you will need to re-apply for admission. Admission to the initial cohort does not guarantee admission to the subsequent cohort. Your application materials will be considered against the applicant pool for which you are re-applying.
The Dissertation Journey

Establishing a Dissertation Committee
The dissertation committee will consist of the **chair** and a **minimum of two committee members** (candidates may choose to select an additional individual to serve on their committee, for a total of four dissertation committee members). The chair must be a member of the PSU faculty and must have earned a terminal degree which required completion and defense of an original research project (dissertation). The other committee members may be PSU faculty or professionals external to the University. All dissertation committee members must have earned a terminal degree in their field.

Candidates are expected to select dissertation committee members in consultation with their chair. Candidates must submit a [Dissertation Committee Proposal Form](#), and all other required documents, to confirm committee membership.

Committee Chair Responsibilities
The committee chair is responsible for:
- assisting the candidate in selecting Dissertation Committee members and requesting member appointment from the doctoral program coordinator;
- approving all proposals and dissertation drafts before submission to the committee;
- providing guidance throughout the dissertation process;
- explaining and upholding the standard expected of successful doctoral work; and
- responding in a timely fashion to communications from the candidate.

Committee Member Responsibilities
Each committee member is responsible for:
- reviewing the proposal and dissertation in its various stages;
- providing appropriate and timely feedback regarding content, methodology and editing;
- preparing substantive questions for both the proposal and dissertation defenses.

Changing Dissertation Committee Membership
At times and for various reasons, a candidate may wish to change the committee membership or committee members may request to withdraw from the committee. The doctoral program coordinator must approve any changes.

Prior to initiating a change in the committee, the candidate must consult with his/her chair. If the candidate and his/her chair wish to change committee membership, the candidate must:
- meet with the doctoral program coordinator to discuss changing the committee; and
- submit a written request for appointment of a new committee member to the doctoral program coordinator.

If a committee member wishes to be replaced:
- the committee member must inform the candidate and the committee chair that a change is considered necessary;
- the chair must submit written notification of the change to the doctoral program coordinator;
• the candidate must submit written notification of the change to the doctoral program coordinator; and
• the candidate must meet with the committee chair, and/or the doctoral program coordinator to discuss identifying a new committee member.

The doctoral program coordinator must approve removals and appointments. Upon approval of a change in committee membership, the doctoral program coordinator will notify the candidate and the committee members. After the change of committee membership, the new committee must meet and review the candidate’s progress to confirm the direction of the dissertation.

**Working with the Dissertation Committee**
Communication between the candidate and the dissertation committee is of the utmost importance. It is the responsibility of the committee to provide candidates with appropriate and timely feedback, therefore all communication should be open, honest, and respectful.

It is expected that the candidate will maintain communication with the committee chair on a regular basis and with committee members as needed. Various drafts of the dissertation must be submitted to the chair. The chair will submit drafts to the committee members when it is deemed appropriate. Committee members’ recommendations shall be delivered to the candidate through the chair, and the chair will negotiate with committee members when there is a difference of opinion among them.

**Academic Integrity.** Academic integrity is the foundation of the pursuit of knowledge. All members of the academic community are expected to be dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge in an honest, responsible, respectful, and ethical manner. A violation of academic integrity includes any act that portrays a member of the academic community as having acquired knowledge through legitimate study or research when, in fact, it has been stolen. Members of the academic community should report any instances of violations which come to their attention. Both faculty and administration consider it their duty, as guardians of academic standards and intellectual honesty, to enforce the PSU policy by prosecuting all cases of violation of academic integrity to the fullest extent. Students are urged to consider that it is the toleration of violations of academic integrity, and not the reporting of it that is dishonorable. Please see plymouth.edu/office/registrar/academic-policies/academic-standing for more information on University policies and procedures regarding academic integrity.

**The Dissertation Proposal**
The dissertation proposal requires the candidate to conduct a formal presentation of the research study and methodology to be used to conduct the research. The written portion of the proposal is comprised of chapters one through three of the dissertation. While students often begin thinking about various elements of their dissertation during their doctoral core courses, research for the dissertation may not be conducted prior to the approval of the proposal by the doctoral dissertation committee. *Candidates may not propose their dissertation until approval has been confirmed by the Plymouth State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).*

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**
The IRB serves as an oversight committee, governed by Federal Regulations, with the purpose of protecting and managing risk to human participants involved in research. All research conducted in association with Plymouth State University must promote the safety and well-being of human participants; ensure adherence to the ethical values and principles underlying research; ensure that only ethical and scientifically valid research is implemented; and assure the general public that research is conducted in a responsible manner. See https://www.plymouth.edu/office/institutional-review-board/ for information regarding the IRB process. **Note that the candidate and the dissertation committee chair must complete a CITI Human Subjects Research training module** (see website below). https://campus.plymouth.edu/research-administration/training-2/compliance-training-citi/ Candidates must include a CITI certificate of completion with their IRB proposal.

After the chair has received confirmation that the candidate has IRB approval and all committee members agree he/she is ready to defend the proposal, the dissertation proposal defense will be scheduled. The candidate will defend the dissertation proposal before the committee; this is not open to the public.

It is the charge of the dissertation committee members to determine if the proposed dissertation will:

- Produce knowledge, insight, and methods in candidate’s field of specialization by identifying a problem/question and addressing it.
- Make a significant contribution to the understanding of the problem/question that it examines by providing an ethical, reliable, and valid study of the problem.
- Provide a research approach that has been approved by the Institutional Review Board.
- Demonstrate the candidate’s ability and willingness to carry out sound independent research.

After the proposal discussion, the committee will recommend one of the following:

- Approval of the proposal including the signing of the proposal approval form.
- Minor revisions to the proposal with revisions to be approved by the chair prior to the signing of the proposal approval form by the committee.
- Major revisions to the proposal with revisions to be approved by the full committee prior to the signing of the proposal approval form by the committee.
- Major revisions with a repeat of the oral defense of the proposal before the full committee.
- Rejection of the proposal.

**The Doctoral Dissertation**

The EdD is a practitioner based degree program oriented to the improvement of professional practice through the extension of knowledge, expertise, and practical application of original research. As such the doctoral dissertation represents the candidate’s ability to make a significant contribution to their field.

**Dissertation Format**
The completed dissertation contains five chapters (see specific information about page layout and text requirements in the Dissertation Guide section of Lamson Library page):

**Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose of the Study.** This chapter makes a case for the significance of the problem. It provides an introduction to the basic components of the study and states the research question(s) that guide the inquiry. It should include an overview of the purpose and focus of the study, why it is significant, how it was conducted, and how it will contribute to professional knowledge and practice. Research questions are directly tied to the purpose. They should be specific, clearly stated, and open ended (stay away from yes/no questions if you can). Research questions cue readers to the direction the study will take and help to delineate the scope of the study.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review.** This chapter locates the study in the context of previous research and scholarly material pertaining to the topic, presents a critical synthesis of relevant literature according to themes or variables, and outlines the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study. A high quality literature review incorporates: a comprehensive and thoughtful selection of resources that cover the material directly related to the study’s problem statement, purpose, and research questions; primary sources and empirical research studies; and correct use of American Psychological Association (APA) format, citations, and references.

**Chapter 3: Methodology.** This chapter situates the study within a particular methodological tradition, provides a rationale for that approach, describes the research setting and sample, and describes data collection and analysis methods. The chapter provides a detailed description of all aspects of the design and procedures of the study.

**Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings.** This chapter reports study findings, including the presentation of relevant quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (narrative) data. A clear, complete, and valid representation of the data (e.g. patterns, themes) that have emerged as a result of the study are reported in this chapter. Findings are presented objectively, without speculation. Presentation of data findings should be related to the research questions and focus of the study.

**Chapter 5: Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research (or Analysis and Synthesis; or Conclusions and Recommendations).** This chapter synthesizes and discusses the results in light of the study’s research questions, literature review, and conceptual framework. This chapter reflects a deep understanding of what lies beneath the findings—that is, what those findings really mean. Interpretation is presented systematically, and is related to the themes or patterns that have emerged. This chapter presents a set of concluding statements and recommendations based on findings, and warranted by the findings. This chapter reflects the contribution the researcher has made to the knowledge and practice in his or her field of study. In many ways, it provides validation for the researcher’s entrance into the ranks of the body of scholars in the field.

A Very Helpful Resource: OWL Purdue Online Writing Lab (for APA format information and examples): https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/
**Dissertation Defense**

The dissertation defense is scheduled when the doctoral candidate has successfully completed all aspects of the research study - all five chapters have been submitted to, and approved by, committee members - and all committee members agree that the candidate is prepared to defend the dissertation.

After the candidate has completed all data collection, he/she will draft chapters four and five. Upon completion of chapters four and five the candidate will review and prepare chapters one, two and three for final revisions. The chair will work with the candidate throughout the dissertation writing process. During that time the chair will consult with committee members a forward chapter drafts to request feedback as appropriate. Committee members are expected to review and submit all feedback to the chair in a timely fashion.

When all five chapter drafts are complete and have been forwarded to committee members for feedback, the chair will consult with committee members to determine whether they agree that the candidate is ready to defend the dissertation. If a committee member(s) indicates the dissertation is not ready for defense, the chair will work with the candidate to provide appropriate feedback to improve the dissertation. This process will continue until all committee members agree that the dissertation is ready for final defense.

*The dissertation must be successfully defended by April 1 for candidates to participate in May Commencement.*

**Dissertation Defense Overview**

The dissertation defense will be delivered in a public forum in the presence of the candidate’s full dissertation committee and a moderator. The program coordinator, or their designee, will act as moderator. Candidates should use the Dissertation Research Self-Assessment guide (see document following this section) and Dissertation PowerPoint template to plan their presentation. They will have approximately 45 minutes to present their dissertation research. At the conclusion of their presentation the moderator and audience will have the opportunity to ask questions of the candidate. The question and answer session will take approximately fifteen minutes.

**Process**

- The moderator welcomes those in attendance and introduces the candidate and the committee to the audience.
- The moderator explains what will happen during defense presentation.
- The candidate presents their defense. (45 minutes)
- The moderator, and his/her designees, use the Dissertation Self-assessment to ask questions which further elucidate the: importance of the research problem; creativity and rigor of the solution; rigor of the research; and significance of results.
- The moderator invites audience members to ask questions.
- The moderator asks the audience to leave the auditorium so that the candidate can meet with their committee.
- Committee members meet with candidate to provide feedback, request clarification if needed, and/or address any concerns regarding the dissertation presentation.
• The committee dismisses the candidate to deliberate on their decision to accept, accept with minor revisions, accept with major revisions, or reject the dissertation.
• The committee chair invites audience members to return to the room to announce their decision.

Dissertation Defense Outcomes
Immediately after the dissertation defense, the committee, without the candidate present, will determine whether or not the candidate has successfully defended the dissertation. The following options are available to the committee:

• The candidate successfully defended the dissertation. The signature page is signed. The doctoral program coordinator and chair of ELLC are notified. The candidate prepares the dissertation for publication in consultation with the Lamson Library and Learning Commons staff.
• The candidate successfully defended the dissertation with provisions for minor modifications. The signature page is signed, and the doctoral program coordinator and chair of ELLC are notified. The candidate will work with the chair to complete, and get approved, all minor modifications. Following modification approval, the candidate will prepare the final dissertation for publication in consultation with the Lamson Library and Learning Commons staff.
• The candidate does not successfully defend the dissertation. The candidate meets with the chair to determine next steps.
Dissertation Research Self-Assessment

I. Importance of the Research Problem
   A. Can you clearly articulate the problem or phenomenon of interest?
   B. Can you explain clearly who your audience is?
   C. Who are the key players in this area? If one of them asked you why he or she should be interested in your work, do you think you could convince them?
   D. If someone asked you, why does the world need a solution to this problem/phenomenon, or to further understand it, what would you say?

II. Creativity and Rigor of the Solution
   A. Can you clearly explain what is different about your approach than other approaches that have been taken to solve or conduct inquiry on this problem/phenomenon in the past?
   B. Can you clearly explain what new insight(s) you have brought to bear on this problem/phenomenon?
   C. Is your research robust enough to be of practical use? In what contexts could it be used?

III. Rigor of the Research
   A. Can you clearly state what hypothesis you were testing or what questions are guiding your research?
   B. Can you utilize the existing literature to provide a theoretical or conceptual framework for your study?
   C. Can you provide a rationale for the design of your evaluation in terms of reliability and validity? (Truthfulness in qualitative studies)
   D. Have you identified any biases and limitations of your study and provided appropriate strategies for addressing them?
   E. Did you use the evaluation metrics and methodologies that are standard for your research area?
   F. Have you evaluated the generalizability of your result?
   G. Are you able to clearly explain the results of your study and the process of data collection and analysis you used to arrive at them?

IV. Significance of the Results
   A. What new insights into the problem have you found? What new directions do your findings suggest for ongoing work?
   B. Did you utilize previously published work related to the phenomena under study to evaluate your findings?
   C. Studies using Quantifiable Measures: Did you evaluate the statistical significance of the difference between your performance and the baseline? What was the effect size?
   D. To what extent do the results of your study answer the research question(s) you started out with? What new questions does it raise?

Adapted from Carnegie Mellon’s School of Computer Science’s Research Design Self-Assessment
Degree Conferral
Candidates must submit a Petition for Degree Conferral form as soon as their defense has been scheduled. In most cases, forms must be submitted by February 1 for May conferral. See dates on degree conferral form online for confirmation.

Commencement
To be able to be hooded at the Commencement ceremony in May, students must have defended their dissertation by April 1st. All of the revisions, completed dissertation must be handed in by the end of the spring term see term dates requirements for that particular year.

Submitting Your Dissertation
Completed dissertations must be submitted to Lamson Library before a final grade can be posted and the degree conferred. The ownership of the completed dissertation rests solely with the candidate. All of the contents, as well as all formatting, are the responsibility of the candidate.

Two bound copies of the dissertation will be maintained at Lamson Library, and the candidate as noted in the Lamson Library Dissertation Guide (see http://library.plymouth.edu/dissertation/LibrarySubmission) can order additional copies.

You must drop off two hard copies (the binder recommends using 60 lb. white acid free paper to print dissertations), plus any additional personal hard copies you wish to have bound (at a cost of $20 each), and a PDF Disc-copy, of your Dissertation to the Technical Services Department of the Library. This department is located on the upper floor in the Lamson Learning Commons. In addition to your dissertation hard copies you must submit a completed Thesis/Dissertation Order Form and appropriate fees associated with extra copies requested. A copy of the signed, completed dissertation order form must be forwarded to the Chair of your dissertation committee in order for a final grade to be posted.

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IRB Final Report
A Human Subjects Research Final Report summarizing the findings of your dissertation research must be submitted to the IRB (see Appendix C, p. 27, in PSU Human Subjects Guidelines and Procedural Manual, 8/2017)