

Guidelines for CTR scholar working on their PhD

1) General Research Requirements

- a) All Ph.D. students are required to complete the UNMC Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) program and must participate in the IDeA-CTR or monthly UNMC graduate seminars on campus.
 - i) RCR will be provided for the CTS scholars yearly in December.
- b) All MSIA CTR sub plan scholars pursuing a PhD degree must pass both a Comprehensive Exam and a Final Oral Exam (dissertation defense).
- c) Ph.D. students who have begun training/research related to the dissertation topic under the mentorship of their permanent Supervisor committee can enroll in 999 (Doctoral Dissertation) prior to the comprehensive exam but the majority of credits will probably be taken after comprehensive exam.
- d) Scholars may register for MSIA 999 (Doctoral Dissertation) either before or after admission to Candidacy.
- e) A manuscript (dissertation) of publishable quality must be completed and successfully defended (see below). In addition, evidence must be presented that the dissertation material has been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, with the student listed as first author on the manuscript.
- f) Shared first-authorship with another individual (i.e. author X and author Y contributed equally to this work) is acceptable with the Supervisor's written verification of the student's major role in the study.
- g) In extraordinary circumstances, the Supervisory Committee may request a waiver of the submitted publication requirement, or any aspect of the requirement. Such a waiver requires approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

2) Comprehensive Exam

A comprehensive examination is an exam that covers a broad base of material. It assesses the student's knowledge and capacities to earn a given graduate degree and is the gateway to the [dissertation](#). The exact content varies by graduate program and by degree: masters and doctoral comprehensive exams have similarities but **differ in detail, depth, and expectations**.

a) When do you take the Comprehensive Exam?

The comprehensive exam is generally given toward the end of coursework or afterward completing all courses in your program of study to determine

how well one can synthesize the material, solve problems, and think like a professional. You may take comps with only 1 elective course left in your plan of study. Passing a comprehensive exam lets you move to the next level of study.

b) *What Is the Format/Process for Comps?*

Students will write a proposal that is comparable to a R21 NIH grant for the comprehensive exam. Writing a R21 or equivalent grant is an expectation of the MSP program. Students will meet with their committee to discuss a proposed format (an oral, written, or both oral/written exam) as well as discuss and approve a research proposal topic that is in your area of study and depicts your research knowledge, skill, and capacities learned in the program. Once a topic is agreed upon, students will write and schedule the comprehensive exam in Seguidor. Before the scheduled exam, students will send their completed proposal to their chair who will then send to the committee for review. Committees will have two (2) weeks to review and send questions/comments back to the student to prepare. The student will have two (2) weeks to prepare before the scheduled comprehensive exam.

c) *MSIA PhD Comprehensive Exam Policy*

Scholars can view the MSIA Comprehensive Exam Policy for further guidance. This policy can be viewed here:

<https://www.unmc.edu/gradstudies/documents/msia-phd-comprehensive-guidelines.pdf>

3) Dissertation

a) *What Is the Dissertation?*

The dissertation will be comprised of a research proposal, results, and 2 or 3 articles resulting from their dissertation work in the program. These papers should be submitted for publication in peer-review journals prior to graduation.

b) *Approval of Dissertation Topic*

The subject of the dissertation must be approved by the supervisory committee. The dissertation work should reveal a capacity to carry on independent study or research and should demonstrate the scholar's ability to use the techniques employed in the field of investigation.

4) Dissertation Defense

- a) The dissertation and abstracts are to be presented to the members of the Supervisory Committee at least 4 weeks before the Final Oral Exam (dissertation defense).
- b) During the ensuing period of at least 2 weeks, the members of the Supervisory Committee will have the opportunity to review the dissertation to determine whether it is in a fit condition, based on formatting, writing quality and preliminary scientific criteria, for the dissertation defense.
- c) Upon receiving such approval (or if no serious objections are raised), the student must login to Seguidor to request official scheduling of the Final Oral Exam to occur at least 2 weeks after submission of the request.
- d) The student's Supervisory Committee should serve as the Examining Committee, although additional examiners may be included. The exam can be administered only upon approval by the student's Supervisor, Graduate Program Director and Dean for Graduate Studies.
- e) The Final Oral Exam cannot be held until at least 7 months, and no more than 3 years, after admission to Candidacy.
- f) This final examination is oral and public. It is administered by the Supervisory Committee after all other requirements have been met. The Supervisory Committee also determines the character and length of the defense, while maintaining compliance with the guidelines and usual practices followed by the major program.
- g) The examination may be devoted to the special field of the dissertation or to related matters. The Chair of the Supervisory Committee and at least 2 other Graduate Faculty members of the Supervisory Committee must be available for the examination. Exceptions may be made only by permission of the Dean for Graduate Studies.
- h) The report of the outcome of the exam must be filed (via Seguidor) within 7 days following the examination.
- i) When the Final Oral Exam has been completed successfully, the final version of the dissertation must be submitted electronically to the DigitalCommons@UNMC.
- j) PhD timeline for requirements and dates for submission.
<https://www.unmc.edu/gradstudies/programs/phd-timeline.html>
- k) Final Oral Exam
The supervisory committee will have final approval of the format of the final oral exam. In general, scholars will have a 45-60 minute period to present their study. A formal presentation with a PowerPoint is expected. If others are present for the presentation, they can ask their questions of the candidate and

then will be asked to leave. The committee will then proceed with the final oral exam with the scholar.