

PhD Student Handbook

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[School of Planning, Design and Construction Home Page](#)

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MSU Catalog Description

The many aspects of our built and natural environment—buildings, facilities, interior spaces, infrastructure, neighborhoods, and communities—are an integral part of our society. Every new space and structure serves to define and shape a community’s personality. Poor planning, design and/or construction can compromise a community’s appearance and drain its resources. Conversely, well-planned, designed and constructed environments sustain and enrich a community.

The Doctor of Philosophy in Planning, Design, and Construction prepares students for academic, private sector, and government positions within the concentrations of Construction Management, Environmental Design, or Urban and Regional Planning. Graduates of this program will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the effects of plans, regulations, design, materials, project management techniques, and construction systems on the economic, environmental, and social concerns of stakeholders and society.

General PhD Program Requirements

Introduction to SPDC

The School of Planning, Design and Construction (SPDC), jointly administered by the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the College of Social Science, is composed of four major disciplines:

- Construction Management;
- Interior Design;
- Landscape Architecture;
- Urban & Regional Planning.

Through the College of Agricultural and Natural Resources the School offers graduate programs leading to:

- Master of Science in Construction Management;
- Master of Arts in Environment Design;
- Doctor of Philosophy in Planning, Design and Construction with transcriptable concentrations in:
 - Construction Management;
 - Environmental Design;
 - Urban and Regional Planning.

Through the College of Social Science the School offers graduate programs leading to:

- Masters in Urban & Regional Planning.

The graduate student population of the school is characterized by diversity. There is a substantial representation of domestic and international students from a variety of countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Many students, both domestic and international, have completed undergraduate degrees in Construction Management, Interior Design, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Planning or degrees in related disciplines.

Applicants should communicate with the doctoral faculty in their desired concentration to identify a good match for them based on their and faculty’s research interests. If no Major Professor is identified in advance, the application will be circulated among the doctoral faculty in the desired concentration to identify a Major Professor. No applicant will be admitted unless an approved faculty member is willing to sponsor their application. A list of approved faculty may be found in the section specific to their degree of this handbook or on the SPDC webpage. (This information is important in reading this document.)

Facilities for advanced study and research are located on the top three floors of the Human Ecology Building, which is immediately East of the MSU Student Union. These facilities include multiple studio and computer laboratories, state of the art lecture halls, faculty offices, workrooms, and dedicated graduate student research and office space. Galleries for temporary displays and critique-presentations are located on two floors of the building.

General Requirements

All on campus graduate students are expected to attend the School of Planning, Design and Construction's new graduate orientation that's held at the beginning of your first fall semester. The orientation will include an overview of the graduate degrees as well as school policies and procedures. Most importantly we want to familiarize students with the school and provide an opportunity for them to meet their fellow graduate students. During orientation students will also be introduced to the graduate faculty within SPDC. The faculty will give an overview of their research interests and activities, as well as any special research opportunities that currently exist. The orientation session should help students develop a plan for their program and identify potential members for their Guidance Committee.

Changes in the Doctoral Major Professor

Major Professors/Committee Chairs for PhD students in Planning, Design, and Construction are determined at admission. Students are expected to stay with their Major Professor from start to finish of their doctoral program. At any time, if the student has concerns about the treatment by the Major Professor, he or she can meet with the Associate Director.

Changes in Major Professor require the agreement by the existing Major Professor, the new Major Professor, and the Associate Director. If all involved agree to the change, student must draft a letter with the request, including any applicable funding source considerations, and submit it to SPDC. If there is not agreement among the involved faculty, the Associate Director will work to come to an equitable solution. If the Associate Director is one of the faculty involved in the changes, then the Director will decide. If both the Associate Director and Director are involved in the changes, a designated alternative administrator will be selected.

Please note, changes in Major Professor may entail completion of additional required coursework. Students may be required to retake their comprehensive exams if there is a change to their Chair.

In rare cases, when a student needs to request a change, the following guidelines must be followed:

- During the first semester, the student can request a change by submitting a written request with justification to the Associate Director of the program. If the student was funded by the doctoral Major Professor, he or she will need to sign off that the work expected under the funding has been completed.
- After the first semester, the student will only be allowed to change the Major Professor if he or she makes a case for a substantial change in the research area that aligns with another faculty member by submitting a written request with justification to the Associate Director of the program. If the student was funded by the Major Professor, he or she will need to sign off that the work expected under the funding has been completed.

Formation of Guidance Committee

- The Guidance Committee shall be formed no later than the third semester of doctoral study, or within two semesters beyond the master's degree or its equivalent.
- By the end of the second semester, a Guidance Committee is selected by the student with advice from the Major Professor.
- Within one semester after the committee has met, the Major Professor shall file a Guidance Committee report with the Dean of the College, listing all degree requirements.

Members of the committee act as mentors, advisors, and evaluators for the student's program and research. They recommend the course plan and conduct the comprehensive examination, the dissertation proposal, and the final defense. All committee members are regular faculty of MSU or specialists that have been approved by the Graduate School to serve on doctoral Guidance Committees.

The Guidance Committee should be comprised of a minimum of four faculty members including the doctoral Major Professor who will serve as the committee chairperson. The chairperson and one other committee member should

be from the student's area of concentration within the school, a third member can be from the student's area of concentration or another area of concentration within the school, and a fourth member must be from outside the school.

Changes in the Guidance Committee Members

Students are expected to stay with their Guidance Committee from start to finish of their program. If a student needs to make a change to their committee membership, they should discuss the changes with their Major Professor and draft a request to the Associate Director requesting the change and the reasons behind the change. If the Associate Director is involved in the change, the request should be addressed to the Director.

In rare cases, when a student needs to request a change, the following guidelines must be followed:

- Any change in the Guidance Committee must have a written request from the Major Professor with justification to the Associate Director of the program. The acceptable justifications include:
 - Substantial change in the research area;
 - Unavailability of the member.

Changes in Grades

The Following changes are not permitted in the PhD degree plan:

- Adding or deleting a course for which a grade has already been assigned under any of the three grading systems (numerical, pass-no grade, or credit- no-credit).
- Adding or deleting a course for which grading was postponed by the use of DF- deferred or I- incomplete marker.
- Adding or deleting a course with the student dropped after the middle of the semester and for which "W" or "N" or "0.0" was designated.

Approval of the PhD Degree Plan

By the end of the first academic year, all PhD students must complete a degree plan in [Grad Plan](#). The plan must be approved by the Major Professor and the Guidance Committee. Once submitted, any and all changes to the plan must be made with recommendation from the student's Major Professor and the Guidance Committee. The subject matter and instructor must be specified for every independent study, special problems, or selected topics course that is included in the student's program.

The degree plan and any subsequent changes must be approved by the Associate Director and the College Associate Dean. It is strongly suggested that all PhD students map out their coursework and requirements early as many courses are taught only one semester per year and others may have prerequisites.

Doctoral Required Course Credits

The Student must complete 9 credits in the following courses:

- PDC 901: Integrated Approach to Planning, Design and Construction (3 credits);
- PDC 992: Advanced Research Methods in Planning, Design and Construction (3 credits);
- An advanced statistics course or other related course (3 credits);

- Complete a minimum of 4 additional elective courses related to the area of concentration as specified (12 credits);
- PDC 999: Dissertation Research (24 credits).

Each student working toward a Doctor of Philosophy degree must conduct original research upon which a dissertation which makes a significant contribution to knowledge is to be prepared and published. The research is to be under the direction of and acceptable to the guidance committee. Twenty-Four (24) dissertation credits are

required for graduation; students can enroll for a maximum of 36 credits. Requests for overrides to exceed the maximum of 36 credits of 999 must be directed to the Office of the Register. To do so, access the “Request for RNR Override” form online at the [Office of the Registrar Online Forms Menu](#). Should the total of number of credits go above 45, the RO will confer with the Graduate School before considering the request for an exception.

Doctoral Degree Components

All Doctoral students engage in a combination of formal coursework as well as independent efforts that result in a Thesis. THE SPDC PhD degree programs are structured around the following components:

- Core courses;
- Elective courses;
- Research component.

Transfer Courses

Students may [transfer no more than 9 approved semester credits](#) of course work, excluding research and Dissertation credits. Credits transferred are established through the Program of Study as agreed upon by the student’s committee. Credits must be verified through official transcripts. Transferred credits must have been graduate level courses and earned at a 3.0 or above, or equivalent as determined by chair (if not on a 4.0 scale), to be included.

Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination

At the end of the semester in which they will complete their required coursework, students will be eligible to take a comprehensive examination covering the major and related fields. At least one component of the comprehensive examination must be written and must be maintained in the department for three years. Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 1 credit during the semester in which they take comprehensive examinations (current semester enrollment covers student until the day before classes start for the following semester).

A passing evaluation must be given by 2/3 of committee members in order for student to pass. Students who fail the initial evaluation will work with their Chair and committee members for guidance on how to improve and may be re-evaluated the following semester. The student must meet the minimum enrollment requirement for the University during this additional semester. Students who fail a second attempt will be dismissed from the program.

The comprehensive examination must be completed before the dissertation proposal defense can be scheduled. Any change in the Major Professor after passing the comprehensive examination may require retaking and passing the comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination must be passed within five years of starting the degree. All remaining requirements for the degree must be completed within eight years from the time a student enrolls into their first class at MSU that appears on his or her doctoral program. Request for extensions beyond the eight year period must be submitted by the School for approval to the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Independent Study

At Michigan State University an independent study is a planned study that is highly individualized and not addressable through any other course format. In essence, a student must design a full course for his or her program with the help of a faculty member.

Students electing to undertake an independent study must select a faculty member who agrees to supervise the project. The student must complete and submit an [Application for Independent Study](#) to the Major Professor for approval. The application should then be submitted to the Graduate Secretary to obtain the Associate Director’s

approval. Once this has been completed, an override will be issued and the student may register for the course and the number of credits agreed upon.

The independent study must:

- Consist of work not described in the MSU description of courses book in any other format.
- Relate to a subject for which the student has adequate preparation.
- Be directed by a faculty member with whom they have periodic contact with throughout the study.
- Not exceed a maximum of 4 credits of independent study per semester or 8 credits in a single academic year, subject to the School, College and Graduate School restrictions.
- Be applied for on the application for independent study form.
- Be approved by the Major Professor and the department offering the course before the student may enroll.
- Enroll during the regular enrollment period.

Ideally a student should begin designing the independent study course with the prospective faculty member one semester prior to beginning the application process.

Internships

PhD students may have the option to participate in industry internships but they are not allowed to use an internship for academic credit.

Graduation Guidelines

Certification for Graduation

In order to be certified to graduate, students must verify their graduation status with the SPDC Graduate Secretary. Student should then proceed with applying for graduation with the Office of The Registrar by completing the [Application for Graduation Form](#). If the student does not graduate during the intended semester, a new application must be submitted for the semester of intended graduation. Following is detailed information on the [Final steps to complete Graduate Degree](#).

Commencement Ceremony

The Graduate Advanced Degree ceremonies will be held on the Friday of finals week, 3:30 PM in the Breslin Center. Graduates and Faculty should arrive one hour in advance, allowing time to put gowns on and be properly ordered for the procession. Students who will graduate in fall semester will participate in the December ceremony. Students who will graduate in spring or summer semesters will participate in the ceremony held at the end of spring semester. To be listed in the ceremony program students who will graduate in fall, should apply for graduation at the beginning of September and spring/ summer Graduates should apply in January.

Student Responsibilities and Expectations

It is the responsibility of ALL doctoral students to:

- Learn and adhere to University and Academic Unit rules, procedures and policies, including those outlined in this handbook. The academic programs, [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), and The Academic Freedom for students at MSU are all available at the [Graduate School Website](#).
- Select a Major Professor and form a Guidance Committee that meets University and school requirements. These committee members should remain informed of the students' academic progress throughout the length of their program.
- After consultation with the Major Professor a completed [academic progress report/annual evaluation](#) should be submitted to the Graduate Secretary at the end of each spring semester.
- Follow disciplinary and scholarly codes of ethics in course work, research, and professional activities found online at [MSU Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

- Follow high ethical standards in accordance with University and federal guidelines in collecting and maintaining data, including seeking regulatory approval for research before any research project begins;
- Provide the school with copies of research related documents (such as permits, approvals, grant proposals, research proposals) within the prescribed deadlines.

Academic Standards

Grades

The student must earn a grade of 2.0 or higher in each course in the approved PhD degree plan. Any course in the approved PhD degree plan for which the grade earned falls below 2.0 must be repeated.

Cumulative Grade-Point Average

The student must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.0 in the courses listed in the approved PhD degree plan.

Annual Evaluation

Graduate students receive an annual evaluation of their academic progress, performance, and professional potential. The [Evaluation Form](#) should be completed when the Major Professor meets with the graduate student at least once a year prior to the start of fall semester to review the student's progress concerning his or her research or creative activity as well as plans for work in the coming year (GSRR 2.4.8). A letter/written report on the results of this review will be signed by the Major Professor and the graduate student. This report will be filed with the Major Professor and a copy filed in the student's academic file together with any response the student may have to the report of the Guidance Committee.

Probation Status

A student is placed on probation if the student's cumulative grade-point average for the courses in the approved PhD degree plan is below 3.0.

Academic Records

Each student will have an academic file on record containing submitted application materials, grade reports, academic program of study materials, and copies of official letters from the school and faculty. Students have the right to challenge the accuracy of academic files. This challenge, correction or inaccuracy is addressed by the student writing a letter that is to be placed in his or her academic file. Students are allowed to examine their file by making an appointment with the Graduate Secretary. If a student is an employee of MSU, a separate employment file will be maintained by the employing office/program/department.

Retention in and Dismissal from the Program

Should a student's cumulative grade-point average fall below 3.0 in the approved PhD degree plan, the student will be placed on probationary status in the doctoral degree program for one additional semester. If at the end of the additional semester the student's cumulative grade-point average is 3.0 or higher, the student will be placed on full graduate status for the doctoral degree program. If at the end of the additional semester the student's cumulative grade-point average is still below a 3.0, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Residency Requirements

One year of residence on the campus after first enrollment for doctoral degree credit is required to permit the student to work with and under the direction of the faculty, and to engage in independent and cooperative research utilizing university facilities. A year of residence will be made up of two consecutive semesters, involving the completion of at least six credits of graduate work each semester.

Time for Completion of Degree

It is vital that students make adequate progress in their graduate programs. Lack of satisfactory progress toward the degree may jeopardize the student's funding status and other graduate student benefits, and it may lead to dismissal. The Major Professor will conduct an annual review and inform the student of his or her level of progress.

The following time limits have been set by the University:

- The time limit for completion of the requirements for the PhD degree is eight years from the date of enrollment in the student's first course in the doctoral degree program.
- The PhD comprehensive examination must be taken within five years of initial acceptance to the program, and will expire after three years if there has been no progress toward the degree.
- All remaining requirements for the PhD degree must be completed within eight years, from the time when a student begins the first class at MSU as a PhD student in SPDC.

Applications for extensions of periods of time toward the degree must be submitted by the school for approval by the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Grief Absence Policy

For all PhD students, it is the responsibility of the student to:

- Contact their Major Professor and faculty of the course(s) in which they're currently enrolled, requesting the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation.
- Provide appropriate verification for the grief absence as specified by the Major Professor and faculty.
- Complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the Major Professor and faculty.

It is the responsibility of the Major Professor to:

- Determine with the student the allowable periods of absence – it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on the individual circumstances.
- Receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return.
- Make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief.

If employed as a Graduate Research or Teaching Assistant, the student must also notify their employer as soon as circumstances permit. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. The graduate assistant shall have the right to return to the assistantship, within the original terms of the appointment, at such time as he or she is able to reassume the duties of the position. Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) should refer to the bereavement policy in the MSU GEU CBU Article 18. Students who believe their rights under this policy have been violated should contact the University Ombudsperson.

Course Waiver

Students requesting course waivers must compile suitable documentation concerning the course proposed as a substitute for the course to be waived. Suitable documentation may include but is not limited to: course syllabi, examinations, term papers, bibliographies, textbooks, reading lists, and lecture notes. A lack of suitable documentation may result in a denied request. Once documentation is compiled, students will request written permissions from their Guidance Committee and from the instructor of the course to be waived. After completing the preceding steps, students must submit all materials to their Major Professor.

Polices Regarding Integrity and Safety in Research

Integrity in Research and Creative Activities

The conduct of research and creative activities by faculty, staff, and students is central to the mission of Michigan State University “[Mission Statement](#)” approved by the Board of Trustees on April 18, 2008, and is an institutional priority. Faculty, staff, and students work in a rich and competitive environment for the common purpose of learning, creating new knowledge, and disseminating information and ideas for the benefit of their peers and the general public. The stature and reputation of MSU as a research University are based upon the commitment of its faculty, staff, and students to excel in scholarly and creative activities at the highest standards of professional integrity. As a partner in scholarly endeavors, MSU is committed to creating an environment that promotes ethical conduct and integrity in research and creative activities.

Innovative ideas and advances in research and creative activities have the potential to generate professional and public recognition, and in some instances, commercial interest and financial gain. In rare cases, such benefits may become motivating factors to violate professional ethics. Pressures to publish, to obtain research grants, or to complete academic requirements also may lead to an erosion of professional integrity.

Breaches in professional ethics range from questionable research practices to misconduct (MSU Faculty handbook, chapter VI, “Research and Creative Endeavor—Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities”). The primary responsibility for adhering to professional standards lies with the individual scholar. It is, however, also the responsibility of advisors and of the disciplinary community at large. Passive acceptance of improper practices lowers inhibitions to violate professional ethics. Students should also refer to MSU Graduate School’s “Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities.” Integrity in research and creative activities are based not only on sound disciplinary practice but also on a commitment to basic personal values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. These guidelines are intended to promote high professional standards by everyone—faculty, staff, and students alike.

Key Principles

Integrity in research and creative activities embodies a range of practices that include:

- Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research;
- Recognition of prior work;
- Confidentiality in peer review;
- Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest;
- Compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements;
- Protection of human subjects and humane care of animals in the conduct of research;
- Collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources;
- Adherence to fair and open relationships between senior scholars and their coworkers.

Students are encouraged to read the complete text of “Integrity in Research and Creative Activities” which is available at the Graduate School website.

Environmental Health & Safety (EHS)

The use of hazardous materials in research, teaching, or outreach activities are subject to State and Federal Laws and guidelines. The Vice President for research and graduate studies has been assigned responsibility to see that appropriate practices are followed where hazardous materials are involved, to maintain a safe environment for campus personnel, to protect the surrounding community, and to assure that MSU meets its obligations under the Law.

Oversight of activities involving hazardous substances is provided by EHS. EHS is assisted by faculty committees in the area of radiation safety, chemical safety, and biological safety. The radiation safety committee has responsibility and authority under Federal Law for specific actions.

The EHS provides live and online training classes throughout the year to educate the employees and students of Michigan State University on safe work practices. Completion of these courses by MSU personnel ensures that the University is fulfilling Local, State and Federal regulations in radiation, chemical, biological, hazardous waste, and environmental safety. For more information about courses available, contact the EHS at (517) 355-0153.

Human Subjects Research

A student whose research involves human subjects must receive approval for their project from the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) prior to initiating data collection for their Master's Thesis, Pre-Dissertation Research, or Doctoral Dissertation. HRPP is an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Federal and University regulations require that all research projects involving human subjects be reviewed and approved by an IRB before initiation. Under the regulations, research is defined as a formal investigation designed to develop or contribute to general knowledge. A human subject of research is an individual (1) from whom an investigator obtains data by interaction or intervention or (2) about whom the researcher obtains confidential information. **Anyone who conducts a study that requires IRB approval must meet the training requirements for human subjects' research protection before submitting an IRB application.** For training and education, please visit the [HRPP website](#).

Depending upon the level of risk to subjects in the protocol, HRPP assigns the student's application to one of three review categories (exempt from full review, expedited review, and full review) and sends it to one, two or five reviewers, respectively. If the reviewer(s) is satisfied that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are adequately protected, he or she approves it. However, if the reviewer has concerns, the reviewer returns written comments to the HRPP office for transmission to the investigator. The investigator must then send a response to each comment, in writing, to HRPP which will forward it to the reviewer(s). If the proposal is either an exempt or expedited proposal, an approval letter can be issued as soon as the reviewer(s) approves. When a proposal receives full (five member sub-committee) review, an approval letter is issued after the proposal is discussed and approved by vote of the full committee at its monthly meeting. More information can be found online at the [MSU Human Research Home Page](#).

Copies of the HRPP application form and the official notification of HRPP approval must be kept in the student's academic file maintained by the school's Graduate Secretary and in the files maintained by the student's Major Professor. The student also should keep copies in his or her own personal files. Failure to satisfy the University standards and HRPP regulations is considered grounds for dismissal from the program. A copy of the approval must be included as an appendix in the Thesis/Dissertation.

Michigan State University Guidelines on Authorship

Adopted by the University Research Council on January 15, 1998, is available online at [Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies](#).

Authorship

A person claiming authorship of a scholarly publication must have met the following criteria:

- Substantial participation in conception and design of the study, or in analysis and interpretation of data.
- Substantial participation in the drafting of the manuscript or in the substantive editing of the manuscript.
- Final approval of the version of the manuscript to be published.
- Ability to explain and defend the study in public or scholarly settings.

Note: This criteria follows closely with those recommended by several professional associations. See especially the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, Annals of Internal Medicine 1988; 108: 258-65.)

Acknowledgment

Contributions that do not justify authorship should be acknowledged separately in the notes to the manuscript. These may include general supervision of a research group, assistance in obtaining funding, or technical support.

"Honorary Authorship"

A claim of authorship by, or assignment of authorship to, persons who may have been associated in some way with a study but do not meet the full criteria in item one may constitute an unethical research practice.

Graduate Student Authorship

"Faculty should be especially aware of their responsibility to safeguard the rights of graduate students to publish the results of their research." (MSU Research Handbook, 1985, p. 16, section 4.3.1.)

Senior Author and Order of Authorship

The senior author is generally defined as the person who leads a study and makes a major contribution to the work. All the authors at the outset of a project should establish senior authorship, preferably in a written memorandum of understanding. This memorandum of understanding should reference the authors' agreement to abide by their departments' policy on authorship or the University default policy on authorship. At the outset of the study the senior author should discuss the outline of work and a tentative order of authorship with the study participants. As projects proceed, agreements regarding authorship may need to be changed. It is the responsibility of the senior author to assure that the contributions of study participants are properly recognized.

Disputes over Authorship

Disagreements over authorship, e.g. who has a right to be an author or the order of authorship, should be resolved by the senior author in collegial consultation with the other authors. When this process cannot reach resolution, the senior author should arrange with his or her chairperson for arbitration by a knowledgeable and disinterested third party acceptable to all the authors. If the authors cannot agree on a mutually acceptable arbitrator, then the Vice President for research and graduate studies shall appoint an arbitrator. During the arbitration process all the authors are expected to refrain from unilateral actions that may damage the authorship interests and rights of the other authors.

Accountability

Every author listed on a publication is presumed to have approved the final version of the manuscript. Each author is responsible for the integrity of the research being reported.

Plagiarism

The word plagiarism is derived from the Latin "plagiarist," an abductor, and plagiary, to steal. The expropriation of another author's text, and the presentation of it as one's own, constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism, in turn, constitutes misconduct in scholarship under University policies and procedures. Plagiarism in scholarly projects should be reported to one's Chairperson, Dean, or the University Research Integrity Officer (American Historical Association, Statements on Standards, 1993, p. 13).

Distribution

This policy should be widely distributed, especially to each new faculty, graduate student and research staff member in academic units.

In many disciplines the content of one or more chapters of a Thesis/Dissertation comes directly from papers already published, often with multiple authors in addition to the author of the Thesis/Dissertation. In this context, graduate program faculty and Thesis/Dissertation committees and their chairs are urged to consider the appropriateness of including a chapter in a Thesis/Dissertation that is a multi-authored published paper not written by the author of record of the Thesis/Dissertation. If this is deemed appropriate, that practice must be

described in the graduate handbook. Similarly, if not seen as an acceptable practice, that position must be part of the definition of what is acceptable or not as a Thesis/Dissertation by the department/program/school.

Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

Student Conduct

The University expects student conduct and behavior to reflect qualities of good citizenship. The out-of-classroom activities of Michigan State University students should reflect favorably upon the institution and should indicate the personal integrity of the individual. See Spartan Life: student handbook and resource guide for specific policies, ordinances and regulations that define some of the relevant University expectations. Students planning to use the Human Ecology Building after normal building hours must sign a code of conduct agreement available at the SPDC school office, Room 101 Human Ecology.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts involving a graduate student may be handled informally, or at the request of a party or parties, formally. Student's rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are detailed in the document: Student Rights and Responsibilities. Procedures more specifically designed for graduate students are to be found in the Publication Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities available in the Graduate School Office in Chittenden Hall, 2nd Floor. It can also be downloaded from [The Graduate School Website](#).

Grievance procedures outlined in these documents shall be followed and the College Advisory Council shall be responsible for the interpretation and execution of these procedures in the College. Students also have access to the University Ombudsperson for help with conflict resolution. A template and additional information on grievance procedures and resources available to students may be found online at the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

Other Resources

Study Abroad/ Travel Abroad

Study Abroad programs are designed to be of benefit to students of all disciplines. In some SPDC programs students can fulfill certain course requirements with Study Abroad credits; this fosters completion of the degree program while gaining valuable, overseas experience. THE SPDC offers a variety of Study Abroad options.

For additional information contact:

MSU Office of Study Abroad
International Center
427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 109
East Lansing, MI 48824-1035
Phone: (517) 353-8920

[Study Abroad Website](#)

Grad Plan

All PhD students are required to use [GradPlan](#) to track their degree progress and committee approvals. GradPlan is the only way to process final degree certification for PhD students.

Graduate Assistantships & Work-Related Policies

Graduate assistantship (GA) is a generic term referring to financial support of graduate students that results in a stipend and compensation and for which performance of defined duties is expected. Specific graduate assistant appointments are made in one of three categories: research assistants, teaching assistants represented by the Graduate Employees Union, and teaching assistants not represented by the MSU - Graduate Employees Union Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Graduate assistants are enrolled students whose primary association with MSU is directed toward advance degree completion. Satisfactory progress toward earning a degree is a condition of maintaining the assistantship.

Graduate assistants are covered under MSU policies, including those regarding laboratory and campus safety, Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace, policy on Religious Observance, Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct in Scholarship, MSU Anti-discrimination Policy, and the policies on Sexual Harassment and Conflict of Interest in Educational Responsibilities Resulting from Consensual Amorous or Sexual Relationships.

Selection of Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants are appointed on a quarter-time, half-time, or three-quarter-time basis are selected based on students' qualifications, background, and research or teaching needs of faculty and the school. Faculty members review application folders and make recommendations to the school's Director/Associate Director who makes the final appointment. Most assistantships available in SPDC are related to research grants. Students are encouraged to be in contact with faculty performing the type of research in which they would like to participate, so they will be informed when opportunities arise.

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistantships

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistantship support for students is determined on an individual basis depending upon recommendations, availability of funds, fellowship and scholarship support, and academic record. Assistantships are reviewed annually by the Associate Director of the school and may be renewed if satisfactory progress is being made and funds are available. Assistantship support will be limited to four years for PhD students. To request an extension of assistantship support, students may petition the Director/Associate Director of the school with an accompanying letter from the Major Professor.

If you have an assistantship, you are required to enroll for a minimum of 3 credits at the PhD level during the semester in which they hold the assistantship. Once you complete your comprehensive exams, the following semesters you need to only be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit. (This information is important in reading this document.)

Expectations

Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) play a vital role in the educational mission of MSU. Disciplinary knowledge and instructional skills are key requisites for being a successful teacher, but TAs are also expected to conform to ethical and professional standards described in the MSU code of teaching responsibility. TAs must treat students with respect, deal with conflict fairly and promote a classroom atmosphere that encourages free and meaningful exchange of ideas. Teaching Assistants (TAs) are subject to [collective bargaining agreement](#) with the Graduate Employees Union (GEU). Contract terms are determined by negotiation between the University and the union. Teaching assistants will be provided information about the GEU and their membership options when they are first appointed, and annually thereafter.

International students whose first language is not English are required to pass the SPEAK test offered by MSU's English Language Center (ELC) and achieve a score of 50 or better before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. If a student does not achieve a score of 50 or better, they may enroll in English 097 (the TA Speaking and Listening class) and subsequently achieve a score of 50 or higher on the ITA Oral Interview (ITAOI). The ITAOI is given by the ELC.

Graduate Research Assistants (RAs) at Michigan State University play a vital role in the research and outreach missions of MSU. Disciplinary knowledge and research/laboratory skills are key requisites for conducting research, but RAs are also expected to conform to ethical and professional standards described in the MSU faculty handbook section IV: Research and Creative Endeavors. This section includes information on working with animal and human subjects, radiation, chemical, and biological safety, and adherence to federal guidelines on data generation, management and control. Sections of the academic freedom report for MSU students and the graduate student Rights and Responsibilities document also contain valuable information. Research Assistants are not represented by the GEU.

Normal workload, averaged over the entire period of the appointment is:

- 10 hours per week for a quarter-time stipend;
- 20 hours per week for a half-time stipend;
- 30 hours per week for a three-quarter-time stipend.

Periods of Employment

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants Employment are as follows:

- Fall semester: August 16 - December 31;
- Spring semester: January 1 - May 15;
- Summer session: May 16 - August 15.

Stipends are compensation for completion of the entire body of work associated with a TA appointment, which includes through the submission of grades when that dates falls outside the employment period.

Responsibilities

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants are responsible for understanding the weekly workload expectations during the entire period of their appointments. This includes work assigned and the time frame within which the work must be completed, essential duties and responsibilities, work conditions and vacation opportunities, if any.

Appointed Levels

Level I

Students with less than one year of experience as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant or a full support fellow. They conduct research, perform administrative tasks or other supervised duties such as reading and grading papers.

Level II

Students with a master's degree or equivalent and/or one year of experience as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant or a full support fellow in the School of Planning, Design and Construction or in a department/unit considered relevant by the Director of the school. They conduct research, grade papers, or perform administrative tasks with moderate supervision. Advancement from Level I to Level II is usually routine. The advancement is accompanied by an increase in stipend at least to the minimum of the Level II range established by the University.

Level III

Successful completion of doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the School of Planning, Design and Construction in which the student is enrolled, and six semesters of experience as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant or a full support fellow in the School of Planning, Design and Construction or in a department/unit considered relevant by the Director of the school. The definition of equivalent experience is left to the discretion of the school Director, but it is expected that only experience in research-oriented or teaching-oriented assignments will count toward the six semesters of experience as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant or full support fellow. (Consistent with current practice, ¼ time and ¾ time appointments count the same as ½ time appointments, and summer semesters count the same as fall and spring semesters.)

Mandatory Training on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct

All TAs and RAs must complete the online training about the [Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). To access the training, login to the [Regulatory Training](#).

Click "Register," "Complete Registration" and then "Launch" to begin the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) Policy - faculty, staff training. (If it indicates that you have already registered, use "In Progress Training", then "Launch."). You will want to reserve approximately 30 minutes to complete all assignments. If you need assistance, contact the Helpdesk at train@ora.msu.edu or call (517) 884-4600.

Evaluation

Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) are evaluated at the end of each semester by the faculty on record for the course to which the TA has been assigned. Graduate Research Assistants (RAs) are evaluated by the faculty member who hires the graduate student. Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants are given specific assignments by their Faculty supervisor for the semester for which the student is being funded. The faculty supervisor evaluates the student's performance based on assignments given at the beginning of the semester.

Termination

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants can be terminated if:

- The student does not maintain an overall 3.0 GPA (or higher if set by concentration).
- The student is not making satisfactory progress toward his or her degree.
- Work performance is determined to be inferior.
- Funding is no longer available.

Health Coverage

Michigan State University offers Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants health insurance coverage. 'Student only' coverage is automatically provided at no cost to the students. Michigan State University will provide a full twelve month coverage for assistantship appointments of at least nine months. Students may also enroll a legal spouse, or other eligible individual (OEI), and/or children. Questions regarding enrollment, premium payment and coverage should be directed to the Aetna Student Health, (800) 859-8452. Questions or issues that cannot be resolved with Aetna Student Health may be directed to the MSU Benefits office at 1407 South Harrison Road, Room 140, Nisbet Building, or call (517) 353-4434 extension 170 or 144.

Right to Work

The payment of union dues and fees is now consistent with the Michigan Rights to Work legislation. Nothing in the application of Michigan Right to Works Laws impact the daily terms and conditions of employment of TA's. Union membership is voluntary; meeting the definition of a TA under the GEU contract is independent of union membership. One can be a TA covered by the contract and enjoy all the rights and responsibilities of the agreement but not be a member of the union. Union membership is not tied to the employment relationship and is a private matter between the employee and the union.

Leave Time

A graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of his/her appointment because of illness, injury, or pregnancy shall notify the Associate Director of the School as soon as circumstances permit. The graduate assistant shall have the right to return to the assistantship, within the original terms of the appointment, at such time as he/she is able to resume the duties of the position.

Article 18 now provides for possible medical disputes where TA's may not be able to perform their employment responsibilities due to physical or mental conditions. In addition, adoptions and parental leave time provides for pay during the first work week of applicable leave. The language on jury duty has been refined with regard to payment for lost time and reporting back to work after jury duty.

Additional Opportunities

Internships

The school believes that there is great advantage to our graduate students to seek additional professional opportunities. Internships for academic credit are allowed for students enrolled in the Urban & Regional Planning program. Students registered for the masters in Construction Management, and the Masters in Environmental Design may not use an internship for academic credit.

Career Fairs

Construction Management holds a career fair during fall semesters. Urban Planning holds a speed networking event during fall semesters. Interior Design and Landscape Architecture hold career fairs during spring semesters.

Travel

All travel by graduate students for academic or research project purposes requires prior approval through submission and signing of a [Travel Authorization form](#). Unapproved travel is not covered by University insurance. Rules regarding travel can be found at the [MSU Travel Office website](#). Completed Travel Authorization forms should be completed with assistance from Pat Daughenbaugh in room 101 Human Ecology.

Students traveling internationally for MSU-related work (professional conferences, research data collection, or other academic business) must consult with Pat Daughenbaugh to be entered into the [Travelers Abroad Database](#) (even if they are not being reimbursed for travel). Registration in the MSU Travelers Database allows the University to share important health and safety information pre-departure, and to provide emergency services if necessary.

Funding Opportunities

Travel and Research Funding

Reimbursement for research-related travel expenses should be discussed with the student's major professor before any travel expenses are incurred.

If you are presenting your research at a professional conference, you may apply for a [Travel Funding](#) fellowship through the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. There is a limit of ~\$400-600 approved during duration of a student's graduate program.

If need financial assistance with your research experience, such as data collection, short courses, attending a workshop for learning new techniques or ideas, you may apply for [Research Enhancement](#) funding through the Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies and administered by the Graduate School.

If you are confused about what funding to apply for, please contact the Graduate Secretary and she will help you through the process.

Scholarships and Fellowships

The School of Planning, Design, and Construction offers various competitive scholarships/fellowships for students, which encompass a range of different topics and requirements, including study abroad, financial need, leadership, and underrepresented students in a particular major.

Scholarships require a completed application submitted before the due date every spring semester. Awards are good only for the following school year. Students are expected to use the [SPDC website](#) to find the appropriate application and to watch for deadlines.

International students are taxed on fellowship funds and other awards that are above and beyond tuition and fees. More information on fellowships can be found at the [Graduate School's website](#).

Other Financial Aid Resources

Students are encouraged to be proactive in searching for funding opportunities. Not all opportunities are presented in this document.

- The Graduate School maintains a website dedicated to [funding opportunities](#) for graduate students.
- [The Office of Financial Aid](#)
- [The Council of Graduate Students](#) (COGS) offers short-term interest-free loans

Departmental Facilities

Mailboxes, Addresses, and E-Mail

The School of Planning, Design, and Construction maintains a Graduate Student listserv which is used to send notices to graduate students by email. Official correspondence from MSU will be sent to your MSU email address so it is suggested that you check this email on a regular basis.

All Graduate Students are provided with an on-campus mailbox in room 111 Human Ecology. These mailboxes are for departmental correspondence. Personal correspondence should be directed to the student's home address. It is the student's responsibility to check their mailbox.

Research and Office Space

The School of Planning, Design, and Construction provides graduate students with a work/lounge space in Human Ecology room 405. It is the students' responsibility to keep this room clean. Drawers are available for students to store their materials in while not in use. Drawers must be kept locked while not in use. Students must provide their own locks. SPDC is not responsible for any missing possessions from unlocked storage drawers. Students may choose their own drawer from any unassigned/unlocked drawers available, but must inform Janelle Curtis which drawer they are using.

Keys to the Grad lounge/office are available from Janelle Curtis in 101 Human Ecology.

24/7 Access

Access to the Human Ecology building is available for students involved in studio, design, and research production courses, or employed on a graduate assistantship. Instructors will provide a list of names of those approved to have 24/7 access due to course enrollment. To be granted 24/7 access, students must sign a Code of Conduct form and turn it in to Janelle Curtis in 101 Human Ecology. You will use your MSU ID card to access the building outside normal building hours (excluding football Saturdays).

Computer Labs

Graduate students can use the computers in HE 105, 106, or 309 whenever the rooms are not being used for a class or other scheduled activities. Students are expected to clean up after themselves and not to cause any damage to the equipment.

Copies

Graduate students are not allowed to use the department copy machines. Graduate Assistants who require use of copy machines for their research activities should obtain a copy code from their supervising professor.

University Resources

The Graduate School

The Graduate School offers many resources for graduate students in a variety of areas including academic, career, funding, and student life. Some other Graduate School resources have been described in other sections of this document.

- [MSU Graduate Student Career and Professional Development](#)
- [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Academic Resources

- [Vice President for Student Affairs and Services](#)
- [Office for International Students and Scholars \(OISS\)](#)
- [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [MSU Writing Center](#)
 - Multiple locations on campus, with the main office located in Bessey Hall.
 - Offers writing consultations, workshops, and writing groups related to papers, projects, even theses and dissertations.
- [Career Services Network](#)
- [MSU Libraries](#)
 - There are many branch libraries on campus, as well as a large number of electronic resources. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the large number of available resources, which include periodicals, journals, computers, copying/scanning/printing, a Passport Acceptance Facility, study rooms, and research guides
- [Technology at MSU](#)
 - Offers a variety of services including [technology support](#) and the [MSU Tech Store](#),
- Bookstores
 - [Spartan Bookstore](#), the on-campus book store, located in the International Center.
 - Several off-campus bookstores are located in downtown East Lansing, across from campus.

Student Life

- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Olin Health Center](#)
- [Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement](#)
- [Recreational Sports and Fitness](#)
- [MSU Student Food Bank](#)
- [MSU Safe Place](#)
- [Council of Graduate Students \(COGS\)](#)
- [The State News](#)
- [Spartan Student Life Handbook](#)
- [Parents Resource Center](#)

Parking

Any vehicle parked on campus must be registered with the Parking Division of the [MSU Police office](#).

MSU Responsible Conduct of Research Training

Background

Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research is essential in the preparation of future scholars and professionals. An understanding of the issues concerning the conduct of research in an increasingly complex world has become critical in successfully navigating the research landscape. To help prepare Michigan State University graduate students for their future scholarly work, a plan for providing the foundation of responsible conduct has been developed in coordination with the Graduate School, the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies Office, and college associate deans for graduate education. The plan is predicated on the principles that a basic understanding of issues is necessary through didactic training and a periodic reinforcement of the principles through discussion. It is the belief that this plan will provide a foundation for all graduate students as well as others pursuing a career in research and will offer the basic information to meet most, if not all, federal agency granting requirements.

The plan below represents the minimum university-level and School requirements

The Graduate School RCR Workshop series may be used to help fulfill both the annual refresher and discussion-based training requirements.

*Students who are supported by NSF, NIH, or USDA grants may be required to complete additional specific training; they must meet the timeline and content requirements of training for that grant.

*Students engaged in research involving human subjects or animal use must complete the Michigan State University training modules for those subjects before submitting IRB or IACUC approvals. These modules may be completed as part of the training requirements below, or in addition to them, depending on the department/program or college plan.

Requirements

All Graduate Professional, Master's and Doctoral Students

1) Year 1

All new graduate students will complete 4 CITI online modules within the first year of enrollment in their program: Completion of this requirement will be tracked in SABA and included in the annual student progress review submitted to the School.

- Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research
- Authorship
- Plagiarism
- Research Misconduct

2) Discussion-Based Training

All graduate students must complete a minimum of 6 hours of discussion-based training prior to receiving their degrees. This is through completion of the required course:

IDES 892 for Environmental Design Masters

CMP 892 for Construction Management Masters

URP 814 for Urban and Regional Planning Masters

PDC 901 and PDC 992 for Planning, Design & Construction PhD

Master's Plan A and Doctoral Students

In addition to 1 and 2 above, master's plan A and doctoral students will complete:

3) Year 2

Within the first 2 years of enrollment in their program, master's plan A and doctoral students will complete 3 additional MSU online training modules, to be selected from the following list as determined by the instructor for the required research methods course: IDES 892/CMP 892/URP 814/PDC 992. Completion of this requirement will be tracked in SABA and included in the annual student progress review submitted to the School.

- CITI Collaborative Research
- CITI Conflicts of Interest
- CITI Data Management
- CITI Financial Responsibility
- CITI Mentoring
- CITI Peer Review
- IACUC Tutorial for Animal Care Training (in <http://Train.ORA.msu.edu>)
- Human Research Protection/ IRB Certification (in <http://Train.ORA.msu.edu>)
- Rigor and Reproducibility Course (in production)

Doctoral Students

In addition to 1, 2 and 3 above, doctoral students will complete:

4) Annual Refresher Training

Starting in year 3, all doctoral students must complete 3 hours of annual refresher training; this can include discussion-based training, CITI refresher training and online courses beyond the 7 required in basic training. Selection is in consultation with the Major Advisor. Completion of this requirement will be tracked in SABA and included in the annual student progress review submitted to the School.

* Doctoral students who have completed an MSU Master's degree which included the basic RCR training requirements: The required PDC 901 and PDC 992 RCR activities will meet the annual refresher training in the first two years of academic study.

Record-Keeping and Accountability

Written documentation of completion of RCR requirements should be included in the annual evaluation conducted between a student and their Major Professor, and once signed, submitted to the Graduate Secretary to be filed in the student's academic folder.

Links & Resources

SABA: <https://train.ora.msu.edu/Saba/Web/Main>

Office of Regulatory Affairs links to SABA and CITI: <http://ora.msu.edu/train>

RCR information through Office of Regulatory Affairs: <http://ora.msu.edu/responsible-conduct-research>

RCR information through Grad School: <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>

CITI Training: <http://ora.msu.edu/citiprogramorg>

Advisory Faculty for PhD Concentrations

Dr. Tariq Abdelhamid, Construction Management – Associate Professor
tariq@msu.edu

Dr. George Berghorn, Construction Management – Assistant Professor, LEED® AP BD+C, CGP
berghorn@msu.edu

Dr. Jon Burley, Landscape Architecture – Associate Professor, FASLA
burleyj@msu.edu

Dr. Pat Crawford, Landscape Architecture Associate Professor
crawf203@msu.edu

Dr. Mohamed El-Gafy, Construction Management – Associate Professor, PE
elgafy@msu.edu

Dr. Peilei Fan, Urban & Regional Planning – Associate Professor
fanpeile@msu.edu

Dr. Roger Hamlin, Urban & Regional Planning – Professor
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Dr. Eva Kassens-Noor, Urban & Regional Planning – Associate Professor
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Dr. Sinem Korkmaz, Construction Management – Associate Professor, LEED® AP
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Dr. Zenia Kotval, Urban & Regional Planning – Professor, FAICP
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Dr. Eunsil Lee, Interior Design – Associate Professor
leeensi@msu.edu

Dr. Trish Machemer, Urban & Regional Planning & Landscape Architecture – Associate Professor
machemer@msu.edu

Dr. Linda Nubani, Interior Design – Assistant Professor
nubanili@msu.edu

Dr. Robert Schutzki, Horticulture – Associate Professor
schutzki@msu.edu

Dr. Eric Strauss, Urban & Regional Planning – Professor, JD, AICP

strausse@msu.edu

Dr. Matt Syal, Construction Management – Professor, LEED®AP, CPC

syalm@msu.edu

Dr. Mark Wilson, Urban & Regional Planning – Professor

wilsonmm@msu.edu

Dr. Dong Zhao, Construction Management – Assistant Professor, LEED®AP

dzhao@msu.edu

Doctor of Philosophy Degree Calendar & Progress Checklist

Prior to attending the first semester of classes

- Attend the required SPDC graduate student orientation. Students are encouraged to participate in orientation activities offered by the Graduate School (and, for international students, by the Office of International students and scholars).
- Formalize Assistantship expectations and paperwork (if relevant). If you have been awarded an Assistantship or are otherwise employed on campus, contact your supervisor immediately to complete employment paperwork, discuss your assignment and schedule, and address any issues related to your employment.
- Register for classes.
- Doctoral students must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credits per semester to be considered “full time.” (After the student has completed his or her comprehensive exam(s), he or she may be considered “full time” with 1 credit as long as record of passing comprehensive exams is recorded in GradPlan.)
- Doctoral students must register for PDC 901 during their first fall semester:

First Semester

- Take PDC 901, the required core SPDC course (offered fall semester).
- Prepare a draft of the report of the Guidance Committee which should outline courses to be taken during the doctoral program to meet degree requirements. Discuss your draft report of the Guidance Committee with your Major Professor to identify when you might take each of the courses, and modify the draft accordingly.
- Discuss potential Guidance Committee members with your Major Professor (see previous section for further information):
- Begin [Responsible Conduct of Research and Creative Activities \(RCR\)](#) training..

Second Semester

- Select Guidance Committee members in consultation with your Major Professor.
- Schedule and hold an official meeting with your Guidance Committee to discuss your academic and professional goals and the courses you intend to take. You may also wish to discuss preliminary dissertation topics with your committee at this time.
 - It is the student’s responsibility to find a date appropriate for all Guidance Committee members, to schedule a room, prepare an agenda (in consultation with Major Professor), and prepare the room as needed (suggestions include providing appropriate audio-visual aids, written agenda, preparing relevant written plans and forms [as appropriate to the meeting agenda]).
- Finalize your program plan; complete and submit it in the [GradPlan](#) website. Complete paper academic program of study form, signed by full committee and submit to Graduate Secretary.
- A copy of your completed, approved form will be placed in your permanent academic files.

Third Semester

- Take PDC 999 (fall semester).
 - Many faculty members are on academic appointments (nine-month) rather than annual appointments (all year), so be sure to schedule committee meetings and other committee activities (including reading of proposals and thesis/project drafts) when they are officially on duty. Exceptions can be made with the approval of all committee members; however, you should plan your work with respect for faculty appointments. Often they are involved in field research, Study Abroad programs, or otherwise away from the University during the time outside of their appointments. Most often this is during the summer; however, some faculty have non-traditional schedules. Be sure to find out appointments and schedules of your Guidance Committee members.

End of Third Semester

- Meet with your Major Professor to discuss procedures for and scope of your comprehensive program statement and the comprehensive examination.

Fourth Semester - Comprehensive Examination

- Prepare and submit your comprehensive program statement to your Major Professor. (See previous section for detailed description.) Be prepared to make revisions based upon feedback.
- Submit your comprehensive program statement to your Guidance Committee for approval. Be prepared to make revisions according to their suggestions.
- Secure the approval of your comprehensive program statement by your Guidance Committee no less than 60 days before the date of the comprehensive examination. Your Major Professor will subsequently send it to the department faculty for review.
- Schedule your written and oral comprehensive examination with your Guidance Committee. The oral examination should be held within 14 days of the completion of the written comprehensive examination.
- Complete your comprehensive examination no less than 60 days after final approval of your comprehensive program statement. Submit a record of comprehensive exam in [GradPlan](#).

Dissertation Proposal

- Prepare a written draft of your dissertation proposal. Discuss it with your Major Professor revise/edit and secure his or her approval prior to submitting it to your Guidance Committee.
- Make necessary corrections in your proposal (based on the feedback from your Major Professor, and committee members, as they elect to be involved).
- Provide each member of your Guidance Committee with a copy of your proposal at least two weeks prior to the proposal defense.
- Schedule a public presentation of your dissertation proposal with your Guidance Committee.
- Present your dissertation proposal, to be followed by a closed meeting in which Guidance Committee members will review and assess the proposal.
- Obtain signatures of the members of your Guidance Committee on the Thesis/Dissertation proposal approval form.
- Secure approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB), as appropriate to your research by submitted the application form found online at the [Human Research Protection Program](#).
 - Students should have peers (and, if needed, professional editors) review and provide editorial recommendations for your dissertation prior to submission to your Major Professor and Guidance Committee.

Preparing for Dissertation Defense

The following must be satisfied in order to schedule the Dissertation Defense

- Check deadline dates for dissertation defense, final submission, and commencement at [The Graduate School website](#).
- Complete and submit the [online application for graduation](#) early in the semester of planned graduation, form available at the Office of the Registrar.
- The student must be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit during the semester in which the defense takes place (current semester enrollment covers student until the day before classes start for the following semester).
- The student MUST provide their Major Professor and Guidance Committee a copy of the dissertation at least two weeks prior to the exam.
- Check STUINFO to be sure all DFs (deferred grades) have been converted to grades and that your GPA is at least 3.0. You cannot graduate unless these two conditions have been met.

Once student has confirmed a date and time, they must contact the Graduate Secretary to reserve a conference room. At this time the student will provide the title of his or her dissertation so the appropriate announcements can be sent out. This MUST be done at least two weeks prior to the exam, no exceptions.

For dissertations, the final oral defense/examination must consist of two parts. The first is a presentation that must be open to faculty members and members of the public without a vote. Only dissertation committee members may attend the second part, which is the examination portion of the defense per individual department/program/school's guidelines.

Completion of Dissertation

- Complete all required forms in the Thesis/Dissertation submission packets available at [The Graduate School ETD](#).
- Submit a draft of your dissertation to your Major Professor (and Guidance Committee members, if requested).
- Edit your draft, as needed. See the [format guidelines](#) online at The Graduate School.
- Register for a minimum of 1 credit for the semester in which you plan to defend your dissertation.
- Complete and submit the [online application for graduation](#) at the beginning of the semester. You must apply for graduation even if you do not plan to attend the ceremony. This will circulate the appropriate paperwork to the Graduate Secretary that is needed to approve and confer your degree.
- Schedule a time with your Major Professor and Guidance Committee for defending or presenting your work. This will be an open session to which students and faculty in the School of Planning, Design and Construction may attend.
- Once student has confirmed a date and time that will work for their Major Professor and Guidance Committee they should contact the Graduate Secretary to reserve a conference room at least two weeks before the intended Defense date. At this time the student will also provide the title of their Dissertation so the appropriate announcements may be sent out to SPDC faculty and students.
- Provide your Major Professor and each member of your Guidance Committee a copy of your Dissertation at least two weeks prior to the defense or presentation.
- Orally defend your dissertation.
- Modify your dissertation as required by your Guidance Committee.
- Obtain signatures from the members of your Guidance Committee on the record of dissertation and oral examination requirements for doctoral degree candidate form.
- Prepare the final copy of your dissertation according to the guidelines at [Theses and Dissertation Submissions](#).
- Enter the official dissertation title and IRB number (if applicable) in GradPlan.
- Prepare an abstract of your PhD dissertation to be filed with "Dissertation Abstracts."
- Electronically submit your dissertation to [The Graduate School ETD](#).

Electronic Submission of Thesis /Dissertations

The dissertation should be finalized according to the layout and specifications of the MSU Graduate School, see [Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide](#) and conform to "[Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)," which is available online from The Graduate School. The student must provide the Graduate School with a copy of the dissertation via the process described at [The Graduate School ETD](#). Students must submit a copy to their Major Professor and Committee Members, either bound or electronic as the respective faculty member prefers. When submitting an electronic Thesis/Dissertation to ProQuest, a student now has the option to open the document to searches using Google, Google Scholar, and Google Books. The option to block such searches continues to be available. The target date for the FINAL APPROVAL of an electronic Thesis/Dissertation to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission is FIVE working days prior to the first day of classes for the next semester (see future target dates below). Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been ACCEPTED. The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

Electronic Submission's Approval Target Dates

The [ETD Deadline Dates](#) can be found at The Graduate School. Graduation on the semester of the electronic submission is only guaranteed if the document is approved on or before the target date for that semester. Provide a PDF file of your dissertation to your Major Professor and Guidance Committee members (Individual committee members may request an alternative format, such as a soft-bound, unbound, or digital copy).

Final Logistics

- Read and comply with the MSU's exit check list to ensure that you have all requirements and submitted all appropriate forms and other paperwork.
- Submit your online exit survey.

Exit Surveys

A new short online exit survey for all students graduating with a master's Plan A or Plan B, as well as a doctoral degree was introduced on May 9, 2011. Only students who have applied for graduation will have access to the survey. The survey asks questions about educational experiences in MSU graduate programs, as well as about immediate professional plans. The Graduate School uses data from this survey when reviewing graduate programs and to guide decisions about services and initiatives for graduate students. The identity of all respondents will be kept confidential and only aggregate (group) information will be made available to faculty and administrators. The students will receive an e-mail message from the dean of the graduate school with a link to the survey. However, students do not need to wait for that e-mail message to complete the survey after applying for graduation. It takes about 5-10 minutes to complete the online survey. Instructions for completing the survey are available online from [The Graduate School ETD](#).

Instructions for Students:

- Doctoral students should access the following website for [Graduate School Exit Survey](#).
- Enter your MSU NetID (Login Name) and password.
- Complete all items on the survey- when finished, click submit.
 - If you cannot open this survey, please email exitsurvey@grd.msu.edu and include your name, student ID #, degree level (PhD, MA/MS) and semester of graduation. You will be notified when you are able to complete the survey.
- Complete all final forms/ questionnaires required by the Graduate School.
- Pay final fees.
- Prepare for [commencement](#); see guidelines and checklists provided by the University.