

Doctoral Dissertation

The Doctoral Dissertation is expected to be an original contribution to scholarship or scientific knowledge and to exemplify the highest standards of the student's discipline. The dissertation is the culmination of a training process designed to prepare the student to conduct independent research. The successful completion of the dissertation provides proof that the student has the ability to ask significant questions, develop appropriate, detailed approaches to addressing these questions and that the student can effectively gather and interpret data. Any data or contribution by anyone other than the student must be acknowledged in the dissertation and in the oral seminar. This information may be included in the acknowledgements section, in the relevant figure legends or in the text of the dissertation, as most appropriate.

Time Limitations: Students must complete the entire program for the doctoral degree, including the dissertation and final examination, during a four-year period after admission to candidacy, but no later than nine years after admission to the doctoral program. Under certain circumstances, time extensions may be granted by the Graduate School as outlined below. Admission to the degree program terminates if the requirements are not completed in the time specified. Time taken for an approved Leave of Absence for Childbearing, Adoption, Illness or Dependent Care is not counted in these time limitations.

Once the student is preparing to write their thesis, they should consult the Graduate School website for the current forms and deadlines for graduation. For clarification on any of the information provided students should consult <http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/student-resources/> or call the Graduate School at 410- 706-7131. The student must be registered for at least one credit in the period in which they intend to graduate, including summer and winter sessions, and must have been registered overall for a total of at least 12 doctoral dissertation research credits (GPLS 899) as well as having completed a successful Dissertation Defense. It is the responsibility of the student to follow and meet all Graduate School deadlines. Please note that the first deadlines occur 6 months prior to graduation and plan accordingly.

The Doctoral Dissertation and Thesis Style Guide is available on the Graduate School's website. Students are expected to carefully read and follow these guidelines as the final dissertation is being prepared. The Dissertation consists of an Introduction, several chapters presenting research results and a Discussion. The Introduction should include a thorough review of the literature and a general justification for the research project. Each chapter should include an introduction and justification for that particular experiment, unique methods, results and a discussion. A comprehensive final chapter should review the findings presented in the chapters, integrate them with each other and place them in the larger context of the existing literature. Questions left unanswered or identified for future exploration should be elucidated. Prior publication of findings in peer reviewed journals will facilitate final preparation of the dissertation and is strongly encouraged.

The Doctoral Dissertation should be completed and reviewed by the mentor at least 1 month prior to the anticipated defense date. The student should allow 2 weeks for the readers to provide comments, and then a minimum of an additional 2 weeks for review by the entire Doctoral Dissertation Committee. At least 2 weeks prior to the proposed examination date, the Certification of Completion of the Doctoral Dissertation form should be completed and signed by the mentor and the readers. The student should then make an appointment with the Program Director and bring the signed Certification of Completion of the Doctoral Dissertation form, the completed Alumni form, and the completed MMED Checklist certifying completion of all molecular Medicine program requirements, for her signature. This form then must be submitted to the Graduate School, and the thesis abstract for the Announcement of the Doctoral Dissertation Defense uploaded on the Graduate School website.

The Dissertation Defense will consist of a public seminar, announced campus-wide, and will be followed by a private examination of the candidate with the Doctoral Dissertation Committee (composed of the members of the Thesis Advisory Committee). It is crucial that the student reserve a time slot, along with the committee, of at least 3 hours for the dissertation defense. At this meeting, committee members may discuss with the any issue related to the dissertation. This may include, but is not limited to: challenges encountered, approaches considered to address problems, appropriateness of experiments, limitations of the approach, alternative interpretations of results, and future directions. The Committee will meet briefly in private to vote and will then immediately inform the candidate whether or not the defense has been accepted. If the committee decides that

the thesis or thesis defense is not acceptable, the candidate will be given one more opportunity to pass.