

# Doctor of Philosophy Degree

Middle Tennessee State University offers the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Economics, English, Human Performance, Literacy Studies, and Public History. The Ph.D. degree is offered for the purpose of developing doctoral-level expertise combining pedagogy with scholarly achievement and research excellence (applied or theoretical) in the fields of economics, English, human performance, literacy studies, or public history. Above all, the Ph.D. recipient from MTSU is a scholar who has acquired advanced academic skills and is well prepared to teach at the collegiate level, conduct independent scholarly investigation, and provide service to the private and public sectors associated with her/his academic discipline.

## Admission

General admission requirements for the Ph.D. degree may be found in the admission section of this catalog. Applicants for admission to this degree objective must hold a baccalaureate degree. Although a master's degree is not a general University requirement, each graduate program has the option of establishing such a requisite.

## University Requirements Leading to the Ph.D. Degree

Following are the minimum University requirements that must be met to be eligible for the granting of the Ph.D. degree. **In addition, please note that each individual Ph.D. program has established distinct curricular requirements that are specific to that program. Please refer to the applicable graduate program section in this catalog.**

## General Course and Credit Requirements

The required minimum is 60 semester hours of coursework with at least two-thirds of the program at the 7000 level. No more than 12 semester hours of dissertation research (course 7640) may be applied toward this 60-hour requirement. If recommended by the student's graduate advisor and approved by the graduate dean, up to 12 semester hours of coursework taken at the master's level may be applied toward this 60-hour requirement. In the case of a non-degreed D.A. student from MTSU or in the case of a D.A. recipient from MTSU wishing to pursue a Ph.D., additional hours (not to exceed twenty-five percent (25%) or twenty (20) hours whichever is greater of the D.A. requirements may be applied toward the 60-hour requirement if recommended by the director of graduate studies and approved by the graduate dean.

## The 60-credit requirement must include the following:

- At least 42 hours in discipline-specific coursework. Undergraduate or dual-listed 4000/5000 courses (or their equivalents) **cannot** be used toward this requirement.
- At least 12 semester hours for the dissertation research (course 7640).

**NOTE:** Once a Ph.D. student has begun taking dissertation research, he/she is **expected** to enroll in **at least 1 semester hour of dissertation research (exclusive of Summer semester) until the dissertation is completed.** Thus, Ph.D. students normally enroll for more than 12 total semester hours of dissertation research. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment while in the dissertation phase will require the student to apply for readmission to the program. Readmission is not guaranteed.

- At least six (6) semester hours (two courses) in an educational pedagogy core. MTSU recognizes that competency and understanding of current teaching strategies and technologies is an important component of a contemporary, well-rounded Ph.D. curriculum. Thus an educational core consisting of at least two 3-credit pedagogy courses is required. Please refer to the applicable graduate program section in this catalog for your specific pedagogy requirement.

## Additional Program Requirements

Each doctoral program establishes degree requirements which are specific to that discipline and **may be in excess of the minimum University requirements.** Students should consult the appropriate graduate program section in this catalog. The graduate advisor/director of graduate studies each graduate program, in consultation with the advisory committee when relevant, may also specify additional requirements above the required sixty (60) hours for the Ph.D., such as prerequisites, a reading knowledge of foreign language(s), a working knowledge of statistics, computer literacy, or specific courses related to graduate teaching assistantships or research assistantships.

## Pre-dissertation Advisory Committee

As soon as practicable, each Ph.D. student will be assigned an advisor or advisory committee. The advisor/committee is appointed by the director of graduate studies, in consultation with the student and the potential major professor. If warranted, the advisor/committee membership may be reconstituted upon a recommendation from the director of graduate studies and approval by the dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

The advisor/committee provides academic guidance to formulate a curricular plan best suited for the academic needs and interests of the student.

## Degree Plan

As early as possible during the student's program of study he/she should complete a degree plan in consultation with

his/her advisor/advisory committee. The degree plan must be approved by the student's advisor and submitted to the College of Graduate Studies before the completion of 30 graduate hours. The degree plan may be amended as necessary by submission of a Change to Degree Plan Form.

## Examinations

Each Ph.D. student may be required to take a set of examinations administered by a graduate program. A less than satisfactory outcome including a fail decision on any component of the examinations may result in additional academic requirements and/or a re-examination. A re-examination may be given only once. A second fail decision on any component of the examinations results in a recommendation to the dean of the College of Graduate Studies for academic dismissal. The student may appeal the dismissal recommendation, for cause, to the Appeals Subcommittee of the Graduate Council via the chair of the Graduate Council or the dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

**Qualifying Examinations:** Each Ph.D. student may be required to take a qualifying examination. The qualifying examination is administered by a graduate program early in the student's doctoral program; often after the first year of the doctoral program. Students should consult with their advisors as to the individual program policy on the timing and content of the administration. It may assess overall knowledge upon entry into the program or prior to entering the dissertation phase. The results of this examination should be used, in part, to plan the student's academic program. To be eligible to take this examination, the student must be fully admitted to the College of Graduate Studies and to the graduate program. Programs may have additional requirements or assess students by different means. The student should contact the individual program to determine qualifying examination requirements.

**Preliminary Examination:** The Ph.D student must also pass an additional or subsequent written and/or oral examination. This examination is referred to as the Preliminary Examination. The student must be in good academic standing and must have at least a 3.25 grade point average in all graduate work at the time the Intent to Schedule the Preliminary Examination form is filed. The preliminary examination is intended to assess whether a candidate is qualified to continue in a doctoral program, advance to candidacy, and pursue dissertation work.

All written examinations are given at least one month before the close of the Fall, Spring, and/or Summer semesters. Permission for the Ph.D. student to schedule the preliminary examination requires the approval of the student's advisory committee. Applications may be obtained from the department. The student should contact the individual program to determine the deadlines for submitting these applications.

A satisfactory or passing performance on the written and/or oral examinations means that the candidate is qualified to continue the program as planned.

## Written Preliminary Examination

1. The purpose of the written examination is to evaluate the candidate's overall knowledge of the field, integrative skills, ability to organize material, and competency in written expression. The maximum time limit for the written examination is eight hours.
2. The written examination is administered by the major department (i.e., the graduate program).
3. The graded written examinations are maintained in the department and are available to the student upon request.

## Oral Preliminary Examination

The oral examination is administered by the student's advisory committee and covers the candidate's area of specialization and general knowledge. The committee evaluates the candidate's breadth of knowledge of the field(s), integration and problem-solving skills, competency in oral expression, and potential for conducting independent research.

## Advancement to Candidacy

After having successfully completed the preliminary examination, the student must file an Advancement to Candidacy application with the dean of the College of Graduate Studies. At this time the dissertation committee is formally constituted and usually has the same membership as the pre-dissertation advisory committee, although this is not mandatory. For example, should the student's research area change, it may be relevant to replace one or more of the original advisory committee members with faculty better qualified to provide research mentoring in the new area of inquiry. The Advancement to Candidacy Form certifies that the student has successfully completed the preliminary examination and lists the proposed chair and members of the dissertation committee. Upon approval, the College of Graduate Studies will notify the applicant of advancement to candidacy.

Before an applicant is officially admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree, the student must have satisfied the following requirements:

1. Advancement to Candidacy and Intent to Graduate forms must be filed by the deadlines published in the Graduate Catalog, the registration guide, and posted on department bulletin boards on campus. Normally, there are few extension exceptions granted if these forms are not submitted by the listed deadlines. The Advancement to Candidacy Form may not be filed in the same semester in which the student is to be graduated.
2. The student must have at least a 3.25 grade point average on all coursework listed on the candidacy forms as well as any other graduate work undertaken at Middle Tennessee State University within the specified time limit (ten years). Grades of D or F are not accepted for any graduate degree credit and no more than seven (7) hours of C grade may count toward Ph.D. degree requirements. However, all C, D, and F grades will be included in the student's GPA computation.

3. The student's entire program, including the dissertation, must be acceptable to the dissertation committee, department chair and/or director of graduate studies, and the dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

## Defense of Dissertation

Upon submission of the completed dissertation, the doctoral candidate who has successfully completed all requirements for the degree will be scheduled by the chair of her/his dissertation committee, in consultation with the other committee members, to defend the dissertation. The College of Graduate Studies will publish the dissertation title, date, time, and location of the defense at least two weeks prior to the defense. The defense is open to all members of the University community who wish to attend. The dissertation defense is administered by the dissertation committee according to program guidelines. Successful defense of the dissertation must be attested to in writing by all members of the dissertation committee.

## Residency

Residency requirements will be established by each program, pending Graduate Council approval.

## Time Limit

There is a ten-year limit for completing all Ph.D. degree requirements. Thus, all coursework offered toward the doctoral degree as well as the dissertation must be completed within ten years after matriculation (i.e., the first semester of enrollment). All graduate level coursework considered for transfer credit into the Ph.D. program must be degree-applicable and have been completed within seven (7) years prior to the first enrollment in the Ph.D. program.

## Transfer Credits

Only coursework completed at an accredited institution that would count toward the doctorate there will be considered for approval as transfer credit toward the Doctor of Philosophy coursework requirement at MTSU. Additional information on transfer credit may be found in the section on academic regulations.

