

ECE PhD Final Dissertation and Defense

The final dissertation and defense are a written report and oral examination scheduled by a student after the main research of the dissertation. It is the final step before the completion of the PhD degree.

Final Dissertation and Defense Timeline Timelines MUST be observed and followed. The PhD degree will not be completed if the timelines are not met.	
Final dissertation and defense	Should be completed within 4 years of Preliminary Exam Extensions must receive both DGS and Graduate School Dean approval.
Final PhD program of study	In the semester before you plan to schedule your final defense It's important to make sure your coursework meets all departmental requirements at least one semester before you plan to graduate so that you can use your final semester to correct any insufficiencies in your program of study.
Apply to graduate	At the beginning of the semester in which you plan to schedule your final defense There is no penalty for applying to graduate and not completing the requirement, so if there is a chance you may graduate within a given semester, you should apply to graduate. However, the application to graduate expires at the end of the semester, and you must complete it again in any subsequent semester.
Final defense announcement	At least three weeks before your scheduled defense Submit an Exam Details Form online (in Sakai) at least three weeks before your final defense; from this Angela will create and send your defense announcement to the Graduate School.
Dissertation submission and format check	At least two weeks before your scheduled defense Once you've submitted your dissertation electronically to ProQuest, you will receive an email from ProQuest informing you of any formatting problems and providing you a link to request an optional format check meeting with your assigned ETD administrator.

✓Schedule the Final Dissertation and Defense

Final PhD program of study	<p>Before you schedule your defense, ensure that you have completed all your coursework and have a signed final PhD Program of Study on file</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Form can be found in Sakai<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Choose the tab that corresponds with your matriculation information• Review the form with your advisor and obtain a signature• Submit the form to Kevyn for review and DGS approval• Kevyn will then send you a copy of the signed form• Remember also to check to be sure your EIS requirements are completed (if applicable)• Remember to check that all RCR requirements have been completed
Application for graduation	<p>You must be registered (at a minimum, for the CTN course) during the term that you take the final exam and graduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply to graduate at the beginning of your final semester (and at least 1 month before the final exam)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If you don't complete the graduation application, you can't graduate that semester<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Deadlines can be found at https://gradschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/graduation_deadlines.pdf▪ Typical deadline for MAY GRADUATION – Late January▪ Typical deadline for SEPTEMBER GRADUATION – Mid-June▪ Typical deadline for DECEMBER GRADUATION – Mid-October• Use the apply to graduate function in DukeHub
Committee confirmation	<p>The committee for your Final Exam is normally the same committee you had for your Prelim Exam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check your DukeHub account to review your Preliminary Exam committee members listed in the "Advisors" section<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If your Dissertation Committee remains the same as your Preliminary Exam Committee, email gradacademics@duke.edu to request that they change your Preliminary Exam Committee to be the Dissertation Committee (copy Angela)○ If any substitutions have been or will be made to the committee before your Final Defense, submit a new Committee Approval Form to Angela

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Committee Approval Form is located in Sakai▪ Submit the form to Angela at least three weeks prior to your defense▪ See the Complete Guidelines for the Preliminary Examination document for specific requirements of the committee
Scheduling the defense	<p>Complete the Exam Details form at least 3 weeks prior to your exam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open HERE• Complete the form entirely• Submit the form at least 3 weeks prior to your exam• Angela will cc: you on the official Final Defense Announcement sent to the Graduate School <p>Considerations when scheduling your exam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use 25Live or contact the Kevyn for assistance with scheduling a location• Make sure that your room arrangement includes necessary technology for your planned presentation, and contact Pratt IT (help@pratt.duke.edu) if you need assistance• You might want to use one of the following scheduling tools to coordinate responses from committee members: When2Meet or Doodle <p>Arrange for Catering (optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the Exam Catering Form (located in Sakai) and either email Angela or upload into the Exam Details form online (there is a spot for this- preferred option)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Twinnies catering only○ ECE will supply refreshments for up to six people○ For over six people a student must make arrangements with and payments to Twinnies• Bring the approved Exam Catering Form to Twinnies at least 2 business days prior to the exam

✓ Complete the Final Dissertation and Defense

A student does not graduate with a Ph.D. degree until the final dissertation and defense has been passed

The research process will culminate with

- A written dissertation describing your research project and your work
- An oral defense of your dissertation

Prepare your written document

Format

- Because your work will be published by the Graduate School, the formatting requirements are very strict
 - Use ONLY the graduate school's dissertation templates, and read all requirements with care
 - <http://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations>

Content

- Background, description of completed research, and description of your contributions to the body of scientific knowledge
- Put your research into context
 - How does it fit into the broader field of study?
 - What contribution does it make to the broader field of study?
 - What is unique about your research?

Submission and distribution

- Before you submit your document and distribute it to your committee members
 - Use other graduate students or writing center opportunities to help you proofread before distributing your document
 - Gain advisor approval
 - The graduate school requires a letter sent from your advisor to gradacademics@duke.edu that states your dissertation is complete and ready to defend
 - Please draft the letter and send the draft to your advisor
 - A sample letter can be found in the appendix of the Graduate School's Guide for Electronic Submission of Thesis and Dissertation
- Submit your dissertation electronically to ProQuest via the Graduate School website at least 2 week before your dissertation
 - <http://www.etsadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteid=17>
- Email your written document to your committee at least two weeks prior to your exam date

<p>Prepare your oral dissertation defense</p>	<p>The Final Exam is an oral presentation and defense of your dissertation research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for your presentation to last about 90-120 minutes (60-75 presentation- remaining time for questions) • Content is typically the same as the dissertation, with emphasis on topics not presented at the preliminary exam • Have your advisor approve your slides prior to the exam • Practice your presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice with your advisor if possible ○ A good technical audience includes other graduate students in your lab and related labs • Be prepared to answer questions about your research as well as on fundamentals in the major field of study and related work • Be prepared to describe how your research relates to the broader field of research and what your contributions are
<p>Take the exam</p>	<p>Other Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hard-copy exam card has been replaced by an Electronic Milestone Exam Certificate that will be pre-populated for each graduating student by Graduate School staff and emailed directly from The Graduate School to each dissertation or thesis committee Chair and Angela. No physical signatures are required (instructions for Chair are included in email). • Students will not submit signed title pages or abstract title pages. • A PhD Final Exam Evaluation Rubric will be emailed to each member of your committee on the day of the exam. <p>Exam format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exam is open to the public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defend proudly! Invite lab mates, friends, family to celebrate your hard work ○ Remember to choose a room that suits your audience size • Remote, in-person, and hybrid options are all acceptable currently • Angela will post an open reminder of the exam to all members of the department a week before and the day before the exam <p>Exam components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the exam, the student gives an oral presentation of his or her dissertation research and the faculty ask questions to determine if the student has earned the PhD • Be prepared to answer questions about your research as well as on fundamentals in the major field of study and related work

	<p>After the exam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student leaves the room, and the faculty discuss the student's performance <p>Possible Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requires at least four affirmative votes ○ Requires an affirmative vote from the Chair of the committee ○ The student has earned the PhD! • Fail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the examination committee is composed of four (4) members, one negative vote fails the candidate ○ If the committee is composed of five (5) or more members, a single negative vote does not fail the candidate. Two or more negative votes always fail the candidate. ○ A negative vote from the Chair of the committee fails the candidate ○ If a student fails the exam, the committee may allow the student to re-take the exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A second attempt is NOT guaranteed ▪ If a second attempt is allowed, a failure of the second attempt results in dismissal from the ECE PhD program
<p>Make revisions and submit final exam materials</p>	<p>Revisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case that minor revisions are needed, committee members may give affirmative votes for the exam card but still require the student to make revisions to the dissertation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In this case, the advisor will hold the exam card until the revisions are satisfactorily completed ○ Only the advisor will review and approve the revisions • In the case that major revisions are needed, the committee may withhold affirmative votes from the exam card <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In this case, the committee may ask to review and approve revisions before signing providing affirmative votes <p>Exam Card Submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Chair/s should provide the completed exam card electronically to the DGS and Angela for approval and submission to the Grad School

**Writing
assistance
opportunities**

Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of speaking, presenting, and writing support

- Graduate Communications and Intercultural Programs
 - <https://pratt.duke.edu/grad/students/comms-intercultural-programs>
 - Domestic and International students can utilize this resource!