Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
Student Guidelines

[1] SEAS Online Programs Ph.D. Student Guidelines 01/01/2022
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Doctor of Philosophy Program Overview

The online and off-campus Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programs consist of a minimum of 54 credit hours divided into 2 stages. The first stage comprises a classroom experience of 8 graduate-level, 3-credit-hour courses. The second stage comprises a qualifying exam and an independent research effort of at least 30 semester hours of dissertation research culminating in the dissertation defense. The original dissertation is written in the field of systems engineering, which focuses on innovation in the theories that govern the structure, operation, and management of technical and scientific organizations.

The program’s 4 milestone accomplishments must be completed by specific deadlines in keeping with the accelerated nature of the program. After completing the coursework with a minimum Grade-Point Average (GPA) of 3.4 (Milestone 1), and passing a qualifying oral examination before a faculty panel (Milestone 2), the student writes a journal article that must be accepted for publication in an approved journal (Milestone 3), after which the dissertation may be defended (Milestone 4).

The objectives of the doctor of philosophy program in systems engineering are to ensure that graduates:

- Demonstrate, orally and in writing, mastery of broad-based knowledge in systems engineering, and of a specific area of knowledge relevant to their own research interests, including theories and methodologies, along with mastery of a research methodology.
- Demonstrate mastery of the methods, tools, and ethics of conducting primary research, and mastery of discovering and effectively evaluating appropriate secondary research sources, to support an original idea of their own.
- Develop and present an original study to the scholarly community that is based on research in primary sources and makes a significant contribution to the field, and that demonstrates the ability to engage in a productive research career.

1. Registration

The student must maintain continuous enrollment throughout the SEAS Online Program doctoral program. Semester enrollment information is distributed by the SEAS Online Programs Office by email before the start of each semester, and registration is processed directly by the office on the date listed in that email, assuming that the students have honored their academic and financial obligations to the university.

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Registration holds are placed on student accounts with outstanding balances. Our office cannot process registration when there is a registration hold on the account. For this reason, students must make payment on time each semester. Late payment of tuition is possible grounds for removal from the doctoral cohort. Additional details and policies can be found at https://emse.offcampus.gwu.edu/about-us/policies-procedures-doctoral/.

Leaves of absence: Doctoral curricula are determined by the faculty, and course information is provided to students by email from the SEAS Online Programs office before the start of each semester. Students are registered as members of a cohort. This means that all courses are taken in lock-step throughout the program. Leaves of absence are generally not permitted. A Ph.D. student who finds it necessary to interrupt active pursuit of the degree may petition the SEAS Online Programs office for a leave of absence by emailing a full explanation and attaching a completed LOA form and any supporting documentation to seasdoc@gwu.edu. Petitions are usually answered within two work weeks. Leaves of absence may be granted for family emergency (up to 6 months), physical or mental health treatment (up to 6 months), or deployment to active military duty (up to one year).

Transfer credit: Transfer of credit is not permitted in doctoral programs.

2. The Classroom Stage

To complete the classroom stage Ph.D. students must satisfactorily complete the required curriculum of 24 credit hours, complete each course with a grade of B- or better, and achieve a minimum GPA of 3.4 (Milestone 1).

Grading and Scholarship: GW uses the following grading system for graduate students: A, B, C, F; other grades that may be assigned are A-, B+, B-, C+, C-. Individual course grades are based on a standard curve relative to the class average.

Students who receive I grade below B- are barred from further enrollment in graduate courses and will not be readmitted as a degree candidate.

3. The Research Stage

Following successful completion of the classroom stage (Milestone 1), the student is admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. and is enrolled in EMSE 8999 Dissertation Research to conduct the research to be developed into the program milestone accomplishments.

Research stage requirements:

A. enroll in a minimum 30 credit hours of EMSE 8999
B. pass a qualifying oral examination before a faculty panel
C. write an original research article and have it accepted for publication by an approved academic journal
D. write and defend a dissertation.

No fewer than 30 credit hours of EMSE 8999 will satisfy the requirements for the Ph.D. Students are registered for a minimum of 6 credit hours in each Fall and Spring semester and 3 credit hours in Summer. Extensions may be granted on a case by case basis depending on the candidate’s satisfactory progress toward the program milestones. During approved extension semesters, students are registered for 3 credit hours each summer and 6 credit hours each fall and spring semester at the tuition rate in effect at that time.

The average minimum amount of out-of-class or independent learning you should expect to perform each semester in the research course is greater than it is for a classroom course. Depending on the number of credit hours you are registered for, you can expect:

*for 3-Credit-Hour EMSE 8999 (Summer and extension semesters):*
**Average Amount of Out-of-Class or Independent Learning Expected.** For this 3-credit-hour, independent-study course, the student is expected to spend a minimum of 112.5 hours for the semester researching and producing the research milestone documents for the degree, and meeting with the research advisors for review of progress as needed.

*for 6-Credit-Hour EMSE 8999 (Spring and Fall):*
**Average Amount of Out-of-Class or Independent Learning Expected.** For this 6-credit-hour, independent-study course, the student is expected to spend a minimum of 225 hours for the semester researching and producing the research milestone documents for the degree, and meeting with the research advisors for review of progress as needed.

See GW’s credit hour policy at provost.gwu.edu/policies-forms and https://provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Resources/Assignment-of-Credit-Hours_Final_Oct-2016.pdf.

**3.1 Doctoral Research Advisors**

The program faculty assign doctoral research advisors to the Ph.D. candidates as they enter the research phase. Candidates work with their assigned advisor team for the remainder of the program.
3.2 Research Meetings and Feedback

The advisors schedule monthly research meetings with the advisees, who are required to attend. Meetings are announced by email in advance. Candidates are responsible for submitting slides covering research progress to the advisors by the deadline provided in the meeting announcement. Slides must be submitted for all meetings, even if the student will be absent.

Advisor teams directly manage the research course EMSE 8999. Slide submission deadlines are set by the advisor team and communicated to the students by email.

Students receive written feedback from the advisors after each advising meeting, and a Semester Summary Report at the end of each semester. Progress is noted as:

- **Green** – Student is making sufficient progress toward milestone completion
- **Yellow** – Student is making some progress but is in danger of not meeting milestone timelines
- **Red** – Student is making insufficient progress, and should do significant revision/rewrite

If the advisors determine that the student makes insufficient progress (Red) in a semester, a NC (No Credit) grade is assigned for the course on the transcript and the candidate’s program and research toward the Ph.D. is terminated. A one-time courtesy option to convert in the current semester to a post-master’s professional degree (Engineer or Applied Scientist) is offered.

3.3 Research Submissions

All abstracts, and journal articles must be forwarded to the research advisors for review and approval before they are submitted to an approved journal. The SEAS Online Programs office must be copied (at seasdoc@email.gwu.edu) on all submissions and on all other correspondence with journal publications, or related entities. All final advisor-approved papers must be sent to seasdoc@gwu.edu for academic integrity review prior to submission. See “4.6 A Note on Academic Integrity” below.

4. The Program Milestones

Ph.D. candidates (students in the research stage) who are registered for EMSE 8999 complete Milestones 2, 3, and 4, described below.

4.1 Milestone 1—Grade-Point Average

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Students must complete the required Ph.D. classroom courses with a final GPA of 3.4/4.0 or better. They can have no grades below B-.

4.2 Milestone 2—Qualifying Oral Examination

At the end of the first semester of research, the candidate must attempt and pass the qualifying oral examination before a faculty panel. Candidates present approximately fifteen slides about their selected research topic. The examination will focus on background knowledge, literature search information, and as well as try to determine if the projected research will be sufficient, will produce work that will make a significant contribution to the field, and will be able to be completed in the allotted time frame.

Candidates who fail to pass may attempt the exam again the following semester. If a candidate does not pass the qualifying exam after the second attempt, their studies will be terminated and they will have the option to have their work transferred to a professional degree program.

4.3 Milestone 3—Journal Article

The candidate must submit an approved research article embodying the results of an extended original study to a SEAS Online Program-approved, refereed scholarly journal (list at Appendix) no later than 30 months after the start of the Ph.D. program. Credit must be given in the publication to the fact that the material is abstracted, summarized, or developed from a dissertation submitted to the George Washington University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D., and the dissertation advisors must be listed as co-authors. Students who have not submitted a journal article within 30 months of the start of the program, or whose article is not accepted for publication by the five year time limit are subject to removal from the program.

If revisions are requested from the publication, candidates must send back the revised article, approved by the advisors, within 30 days. Failure to do so results in an automatic red for the semester. Reviewer comments should be forwarded within 48 hours of receipt to the advisors and to the SEAS Online Programs office at seasdoc@gwu.edu. Rejection of two journal articles may be cause for dismissal from the program. Before the candidate defends the dissertation, the article must be accepted for publication.

4.4 Milestone 4—Dissertation and Final Examination

Upon successful completion of all prior requirements, the candidate submits the final dissertation, approved by their advisors, to SEAS Online Programs at seasdoc@gwu.edu. Below are guidelines and instructions for the dissertation defense (final examination).
• Refer to https://library.gwu.edu/seas for dissertation format guidelines.
• Once the advisor approves the final version of the dissertation, you forward it to seasdoc@gwu.edu requesting an Academic Integrity Review (AIR).
• Upon receiving your final dissertation from you, SEAS Online Programs submits it for AIR. If it does not pass, we notify you asking that any problems be fixed.
• When the dissertation meets AIR requirements, the final examination is scheduled and details are announced by email. At that time, all graduation paperwork and committee information is provided.
• Membership on the committee of examiners is determined by SEAS Online Programs.
• You can submit the dissertation to the committee members by email or in print, based on committee member preference. If hard copies of the dissertation are requested, they should be printed double-sided.
• When the final examination committee is convinced of the quality and originality of the candidate’s contribution to knowledge as well as his or her mastery of the scholarship and research techniques in the field, the committee recommends the candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
• Dissertation submission and graduation deadlines (no later than the dates shown) for the final paper to be ready for defense, after AIR approval, are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Completion Deadline*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>March 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>December 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Deadline to have the final paper ready for defense, including academic integrity review, in order to defend/graduate in the semester listed.

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After a successful dissertation defense, students must submit the advisor-approved final version to GW’s ETD system. Before submitting, dissertations must properly formatted, following the GW ETD Formatting and Submission guidelines, found here:

4.5 A Note on Time to Completion
The SEAS Online Program Doctor of Philosophy degree program is designed for the student to complete all milestones in under 4 years. Candidates who do not successfully complete the requirements within five years will have the option to have their work transferred to a professional degree program.

4.6 A Note on Academic Integrity
All student papers (journal articles, dissertations and praxes) must pass AIR before being submitted outside the university. It is the responsibility of the student to submit these items to the SEAS Online Programs Office at seasdoc@gwu.edu for AIR before submitting them to an approved journal. Papers should be approved by the advisors before the student submits them to the SEAS Online Programs for AIR. Once the advisors approve the final version of a paper, the item should be forwarded to seasdoc@gwu.edu with a request for AIR evaluation. An email confirmation is sent once the item has passed and is approved for submission.

All papers are expected to use proper citation and pass the AIR without issue. If a paper fails the AIR, the SEAS Online Programs Office provides a courtesy report to the student so that appropriate updates can be made. Submissions with academic integrity concerns that do not pass the review on the 3rd attempt may be forwarded to the GW Academic Integrity Council for additional evaluation. The GW Code of Academic Integrity may be viewed at http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/.

In researching the dissertation, and in any published and public results, the candidate must follow GW policies on research conduct and the use of copyrighted material.

See http://my.gwu.edu/files/policies/ResearchMisconductPolicy.pdf and

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5. Graduation Clearance

After a successful dissertation defense the SEAS Online Programs Office assembles all necessary documentation for graduation clearance.

Degrees are conferred in January, May, and August. To be recommended by the faculty for graduation, a student must have met the admission requirements of the school in which registered; completed satisfactorily the scholarship, curriculum, and other requirements for the degree; filed an application for graduation by the date requested by SEAS Online Programs; and be free from all indebtedness to the university. Enrollment is required in the semester at the close of which the degree is to be conferred, and all degree requirements must be completed by the last day of final examinations for that semester.

Diplomas are mailed 12-14 weeks following the date of degree conferral, barring unforeseen circumstances. Diplomas are mailed to the Diploma Address in the record. The candidate is responsible to enter this address in the GWeb information system and make any updates. See the following link for graduation application instructions: https://registrar.gwu.edu/online-graduation-application-instructions. The Diploma Address must be entered before the application for graduation is submitted.

If you do not receive the diploma by 12-14 weeks after your graduation date, check the online transcript to see if the degree was conferred. If it was conferred, the missing diploma must be reported to the Registrar’s Graduation Services Office within 6 months. After that time a fee is charged for a replacement diploma. Also check to see if there are any financial holds on the account. A diploma is only sent if the balance owed is less than $500. If the degree was not conferred, check with the SEAS Online Programs Office.

6. Commencement

Participation in the annual Commencement ceremonies in May is open to students who have applied to graduate in the current spring semester or who graduated the preceding fall or summer semester.

Doctoral candidates who have not successfully defended their dissertations and completed their ETD Approval form by 1 April may not participate in either the May University Commencement or the SEAS graduation ceremony.

Students who apply to graduate after the published deadlines are not guaranteed Commencement materials and may not be listed in the Commencement program. Find
more information about University Commencement at https://commencement.gwu.edu/.

7. Administration

The SEAS Online Programs staff is responsible for monitoring and tracking student progress. For this reason, all communication related to the online Ph.D. programs must involve SEAS Online Programs (seasdoc@gwu.edu). Relevant communications comprise advisor/student interaction, and journal, journal reviews and comments on your article, research inquiries, and all other program-related information. Additionally, students are expected to keep the SEAS Online Programs Office informed of their current contact information, such as email address, home address, and telephone numbers, including cell phone number.

Find the university policies and regulations in the George Washington University Bulletin at http://www.gwu.edu/~bulletin/.

The University reserves the right to change courses, programs, fees, and the academic calendar, or to make other changes deemed necessary or desirable, giving advance notice of change when possible.
Appendix: Approved Refereed Professional Journals for Ph.D. Student Publication

Listed below are the journals in which Ph.D. candidates in systems engineering may seek publication. Journal titles are followed by the name of the publisher (in parentheses), and then by the journal’s impact factor. The list was developed and is reviewed regularly by the SEAS Online Programs faculty, and your research must be appropriate for publication in one of these journals. Submission to a journal not on this list is prohibited.

1. ACM Transactions on Information Systems (Association for Computing Machinery) - 0.977
2. ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology - 2.614
3. ACM Transactions on Modeling and Computer Simulation - 0.556
4. ACM Transactions on Privacy and Security (Association for Computing Machinery) - 0.759
5. ASCE Journal of Management in Engineering (American Society of Civil Engineers) - 1.840
   ASCE Engineering Management Journal (Taylor & Francis) - 0.456
6. Business & Information Systems Engineering (Springer) - 2.059
7. Complex Systems (Springer) - 1.988
8. Computers & Security (Elsevier) - 1.840
10. Expert Systems with Applications (Elsevier) - 2.991
11. Formal Methods in System Design (Springer) - 1.132
12. IEEE Engineering Management Review Journal (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) - 3.38
13. Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence - 0.902
15. IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management - 1.454
18. Information and Software Technology (Elsevier) - 1.569
20. Information Systems Research (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) - 2.047
21. International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications (Taylor & Francis) - 0.930
22. International Journal of Project Management (Elsevier) - 2.005
23. Journal of Engineering and Technology Management (Elsevier) - 1.474
24. Journal of Engineering Design (Taylor & Francis) - 1.946
25. Journal of Enterprise Transformation (Taylor & Francis) - 1.639
26. Journal of Risk and Uncertainty (Springer) - 1.426
27. Journal of Systems and Software (Elsevier) - 1.4
28. Journal of Technology Transfer (Springer) - 2.213
29. Journal of the Operational Research Society (Springer) - 1.225
30. Knowledge Management Research and Practice (Springer) - 1.01
31. Military Operations Research (Military Operations Research Society) - 0.312
32. MIS Quarterly (Mgt Info Syst Res Ctr, Carlson Sch of Mgt, Univ of Minnesota) - 5.86
33. Quality and Reliability Engineering International Journal (Wiley) - 1.457
34. Project Management Journal (PMI) - 1.765
35. Reliability Engineering & System Safety (Elsevier) - 2.489
36. Requirements Engineering (Springer) - 1.105
37. Risk Analysis (Wiley) - 2.225
38. Risk Management Journal (Springer) - 0.458
39. SIAM Journal on Applied Mathematics (Society for Industrial & Applied Math) - 1.510
40. Software and Systems Modeling (Springer) - 0.990
41. Strategic Management Journal (Wiley) - 3.380
42. Systems Engineering (Wiley) - 0.956

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