Ph.D. program structure:

The Ph.D. program has six components:

1. Required Coursework
2. Qualifying Exam
3. Proposal Defense and Candidacy Exam
4. Dissertation Research
5. Dissertation Writing
6. Final Defense

Dissertation committee:

The dissertation committee, including the major professor, is appointed on the recommendation of the department or school by the Dean of Graduate School. The major professor must be a member of the Graduate Faculty who holds Dissertation Advisor Status. Three other committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty, one of whom must be outside the department or school, but within FIU. Additional members may be appointed. If they are not FIU Graduate Faculty, a CV for each member must be attached to Form D-1, Appointment of Dissertation Committee.

Transfer of graduate credits from other institutions:

Doctoral programs may accept a maximum of 6 semester hours of graduate credit earned from another institution beyond a bachelor’s degree. An exception is made for courses contained within an earned master’s or doctoral degree. For such courses, the maximum is one fewer than half of the total credits required for the program.

Example 1: If a Ph.D. program requires 75 credits, a student may transfer a maximum of 37 credit hours (31 credits of coursework plus 6 credits of thesis).

Example 2: If a Ph.D. program requires 90 credits, a student may transfer a maximum of 44 credit hours (38 credits of coursework plus 6 credits of thesis).
Due to the diverse nature of graduate courses, direct equivalency of transferred and existing courses at FIU will not be sought. Instead, transfer of graduate credits is initially (1) proposed by the student by providing documentation on the previous courses taken and grades received, (2) student’s proposal is reviewed and a recommendation is proposed by the dissertation committee, and (3) approved by the graduate program director. The graduate program director will issue a memo explaining the decision and inform the student and dissertation committee. A copy of the memo will be added to the student’s folder.

Qualifying exam:

Each department determines the scope and structure of the qualifying exam which is usually given in a written exam format.

Scheduling of qualifying exam:

The qualifying exam is offered by each department in fall and spring semesters.

Students entering the Ph.D. program with M.S. degrees:

A Ph.D. student entering the program with a recognized M.S. degree will take the qualifying exam in the second major semester.

If the student fails the exam in the first attempt, a second chance will be provided in the third major semester.

Students entering the Ph.D. program with B.S. degrees:

A Ph.D. student entering the program with a B.S. degree will take the qualifying exam in the fourth major semester.

If the student fails the exam in the first attempt, a second chance will be provided in the fifth major semester.

Exceptional case for the qualifying exam:

Students may file a petition with the departmental dissertation committee for a deferral of the qualifying exam by one major semester at a time.

Proposal defense and candidacy exam:

The student must submit a proposal to his or her dissertation committee for approval. The proposal should be prepared in a scholarly style appropriate to the discipline. The length of the proposal is up to the unit and committee, but the student will be required to submit to the University Graduate School a proposal of no more than five pages.
The dissertation committee will meet with the student for an oral defense of the proposal. In the defense of the proposal, the committee members may ask general questions on the research topic area. The oral defense of the dissertation proposal constitutes the candidacy examination.

After the defense of the dissertation proposal, the proposal must be submitted to the University Graduate School for approval. The dissertation proposal must be accepted by the University Graduate School at least one year prior to graduation.

A unit may choose to schedule the candidacy exam and proposal defense as two separate events. In such cases, a separate candidacy exam will be offered which should be taken after all coursework has been completed. Format of the candidacy exam will be determined by the individual unit.

**Dissertation credit registration:**

Students must register for a minimum of 24 dissertation credits. In order to register for dissertation credits, students must:

1. Pass the qualifying exam.
2. Successfully complete all courses required for the degree program. The minimum number of credits beyond the BS degree is 30 credit hours in academic courses which are part of the doctoral program. Each individual program may require a higher number of credit hours than 30. However, the student must complete all the required coursework to become eligible for dissertation hours.
3. Pass the candidacy exam (required) and proposal defense (a unit may require).

Once a student has reached candidacy, the student must be registered for not less than 3 hours of dissertation credits in every semester, including summer semester. The candidate must be enrolled for dissertation credits during the semester in which the doctoral degree is awarded.

**Exceptional case in dissertation credit registration:**

In the exceptional case, when students have almost completed all their coursework, they may register for dissertation hours in a given semester provided that in the same semester (1) they complete all coursework required for the degree, and (2) they pass the proposal defense candidacy examination. Failure to pass any of the courses taken or the proposal defense candidacy examination will require the dissertation hours taken in the same semester to be changed to supervised research.

For students who have completed combined BS/MS programs in the same field as the Ph.D. program, all academic courses required beyond those for the BS degree may be included in the doctoral program.
Dissertation committee report of annual dissertation progress conference:

Once a student passes the proposal defense, the student must meet with the full dissertation committee at least annually to report progress and submit form D-4 to the University Graduate School.

Final defense: Application for defense of dissertation:

One copy of the dissertation, certified as complete and provisionally acceptable to the committee, and one copy of the Dissertation Defense Announcement must be submitted with Form D-5 to the University Graduate School at least three weeks before the proposed date of the defense or by the UGS catalog deadline, whichever is earlier. Refer to the Regulations for Thesis and Dissertations Preparation Manual for the format.

The announcement will include at least the following information for each defense:

- Student’s name
- Committee chairperson’s name
- Dissertation title
- Dissertation abstract
- School or college, and department
- Date, time, and place of the defense

This announcement is an invitation to members of the University community to observe the defense.

Dissertation and thesis approval process:

Following the successful defense, as determined by a majority vote of the student’s dissertation committee, the dissertation is forwarded to the School or College Dean and to the Dean of the University Graduate School for their approval.

Dissertation forms:

It is the student’s responsibility to submit the following forms before the deadlines announced by the University Graduate School:

Form D-1: Appointment of Dissertation Committee
Form D-1r: Appointment of Revised Dissertation Committee
Form D-2: Program for Doctoral Degree and Application for Candidacy
Form D-3: Doctoral Dissertation Proposal
Form D-4: Dissertation Committee Report of Annual Dissertation Progress Conference
Form D-5: Preliminary Approval of Dissertation and Request for Oral Defense

Form D-6: Dissertation Defense Report

Form D-7: Final Approval of Dissertation

Note:

Students must comply with all the additional requirements of the University Graduate School not contained in this document.