

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
INTERDISCIPLINARY PH.D. PROGRAM GUIDELINES
Revised – January 29th, 2015

OVERVIEW

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program allows qualified individuals to pursue doctoral study in areas that the University offers no formal degree program but has significant resources and expertise. Students pursue the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. under the direction of a five-member Academic Advisory Committee. Four committee members are Graduate Faculty of the University of Maine, two of whom must hold Full Graduate Faculty status (inclusive of the chair). The four University of Maine Graduate Faculty should represent multiple distinct disciplines or interdisciplinary academic areas reflective of the program of study. The fifth committee member holds an appointment as an External Graduate Faculty Member of the University of Maine. The student may designate a particular field as the major field of study.

In pursuing the degree, students follow a Program of Study approved by the Academic Advisory Committee. The Program includes coursework, applicable language and/or methodological requirements as determined by the committee, a comprehensive examination, a dissertation, and a final oral examination. All requirements must be completed within the time limits specified for University of Maine Doctor of Philosophy degree programs in the Graduate School catalogue at the time of admission.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Prior to submitting an application for the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program, each prospective candidate must meet with a representative of the Graduate School to discuss his/her educational goals.

In order to be considered for admission to the program, applicants will normally hold a master's degree in a relevant discipline from an accredited institution of higher learning.

Program of Study

An applicant, together with the chair and members of the proposed Academic Advisory Committee, develops a Program of Study. Each member of the Academic Advisory Committee must sign each component of the Program of Study to signify their agreement with the content. The Program of Study includes:

- (a) a four to five page proposal that contains:
- a statement of the focus of the proposed dissertation work
 - a literature review of the current status of the field
 - a statement addressing how the proposed dissertation work will add to the current field of knowledge
 - a statement of the methodology/ies to be employed in performance of the dissertation work
 - a statement of what data/product will be obtained and the means and methods by which it will be analyzed/interpreted

- (b) a one page or less justification of the interdisciplinary nature of the proposed dissertation work that specifies the multiple disciplines or areas of inquiry involved, and defines why the work does not fall under the purview of a single discipline or area of inquiry. The justification must also detail any relevant graduate programs at the University of Maine and state why the proposed dissertation work may not be completed in the programs identified.
- (c) a document that presents and discusses the members of the proposed Academic Advisory Committee, their faculty appointments, their University of Maine Graduate Faculty status, and the relevance of each member's academic background to the topic of the dissertation.
- (d) a list of proposed courses (including prerequisite courses, language requirements, and any courses to be taken on an audit basis) and a statement outlining the importance of the proposed coursework in light of prior academic and/or professional training and future professional plans. The statement should describe the interdisciplinary nature of the coursework. Courses should be presented in the multiple disciplines or areas of inquiry involved, (at least 2). In addition courses that bridge the disciplinary areas or areas of inquiry should be presented; such courses may include research methodology or analysis courses. The program of study must include at least 6 dissertation credits.
Normally, 30 to 60 hours of graduate credit excluding transfer credit is expected to be included in the applicant's Program of Study. No more than 6 credits may be taken at the 400-level. Up to 12 credits from the University of Maine earned after a master's degree may be applied toward the proposed Program of Study.
- (e) a brief description of topics to be covered in the comprehensive examination and the names of the faculty Academic Advisory Committee members responsible for each topic of the comprehensive examination;

Admission Materials

The proposed Program of Study, after approval of all components by the Academic Advisory Committee and any necessary approvals within the department or program representing a major field, is forwarded to the Graduate School.

The Program of Study form is accompanied by:

- * a completed Graduate School application which includes transcripts of prior undergraduate and graduate work, scores from the Graduate Record Exam and letters of recommendation;
- * a résumé of the applicant;
- * résumés of members of the proposed Academic Advisory Committee if they do not currently hold University of Maine graduate faculty appointments; and
- * in the case of international students, appropriate financial statements and scores from an English language proficiency examination (eg TOEFL), if applicable

Admission Procedure

The Graduate School forwards completed applications to the IPh.D. Policy, Procedures and Admissions Committee. The composition of the IPh.D. Policy, Procedures and Admissions Committee is broadly inclusive of University of Maine academic colleges, interdisciplinary research centers and interdisciplinary academic programs, and *ex-officio* appointees of the Graduate School administration. The IPh.D. Policy, Procedures and Admissions Committee meets with the applicant, accompanied by the Chair, and members as available, of the proposed Academic Advisory Committee. The purpose of the meeting is to review each component of the Program of Study and to evaluate its adherence to the guidelines of the IPh.D. program, and to the current policies and standards of the Graduate School. The applicant presents an overview of the proposed Program of Study and answers any questions the committee may have regarding the application. The committee makes an admission recommendation, including any recommendations for modifications to the proposed plan and/or application, to the Graduate School. Final approval of the application, admission to the IPh.D. and the appointment of the Academic Advisory Committee is made by the Graduate School.

Completed applications must be received by the Graduate School by **April 1** for admission in the Fall and Summer semesters and **November 1** for the Spring semester.

COMPOSITION OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Academic Advisory Committee consists of at least five members, four of whom are members of the faculty of the University of Maine. All committee members, including the external member, must be members of the Graduate Faculty of the University of Maine before formal appointment to the committee will be made by the Graduate School. Those who are not members of the Graduate Faculty should submit a *Record of Qualifications For Proposed Participants in Graduate Education* form before or with the submission of the application to the Graduate School. Appointments to the Graduate Faculty are made by the Dean of the Graduate School, or his/her designee.

It is expected that the applicant's Academic Advisory Committee will undertake the responsibility of assisting the student in the development of the dissertation proposal. Therefore, it is essential that the areas of expertise of the faculty on the Academic Advisory Committee closely match the applicant's proposed focus of study. In making its decisions, the IPh.D. Policy, Procedures and Admissions Committee will place a great deal of weight on the composition of the student's Academic Advisory Committee and on the adherence of the Program of Study to the guidelines of the IPh.D. program. At any time during the degree program, changes in Academic Advisory Committee composition, proposed dissertation work, or the program of study must be approved by the IPh.D. Policy, Procedure and Admissions Committee. Minor changes in the program of study may potentially be approved by the Chair of the IPh.D. Policy, Procedures and Admissions Committee without referral to the full committee.

Committee Chair

The chair must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty at the University of Maine. Since the chair normally directs the dissertation research, he or she must have demonstrated expertise in the major research area of the student. Prior experience in supervising a doctoral dissertation is strongly preferred.

University of Maine Committee Members

The three additional University of Maine committee members should be chosen on the basis of substantive expertise in multiple areas of study or expertise in methodological areas selected by the student.

External Member

The fifth member of the committee must be from another institution, and shall be selected on the basis of his or her demonstrated expertise in the topic of the dissertation research. The external member must be identified prior to the student's admission and meet the IPh.D. criteria for appointment as an External Graduate Faculty member of the University of Maine.

Additional Requirements

Ideally, the Academic Advisory Committee Chair and at least one additional committee member should have prior experience in directing and supervising doctoral-level research. A summary of this experience (e.g., a list of past doctoral committees) must be submitted to the Graduate School when the application is submitted.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE DEGREE

The Program of Study developed by the student in conjunction with the Academic Advisory Committee in the application is the Program that is followed in completing the degree. This committee is responsible for directing the degree and ensuring that satisfactory progress is made towards completing all degree requirements (coursework, comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, dissertation research and final oral examination). The chair of the committee has primary responsibility for coordinating the degree program. All requirements must be completed within time limits specified in the Graduate School catalogue at the time of admission.

The Academic Advisory Committee must meet at least annually with the Ph.D. student to review progress toward degree completion. As a result of the annual Academic Advisory Committee meeting the Chair of the Committee must submit a one page or less report summarizing the student's progress toward degree completion and a plan for the following year to the Chair of the IPh.D. Policy, Procedure and Admissions Committee.

Coursework

The Academic Advisory Committee monitors progress being made towards the degree to ensure that coursework outlined in the Program of Study is satisfactorily completed. Minor changes in specific courses (e.g., substituting a particular course in one department with a similar course from another department) require the approval of the Academic Advisory Committee, while significant changes in the scope of coursework (including the number of credits in specific areas or *in toto*) require prior approval of the IPh.D. Policy, Procedure and Admissions Committee.

Comprehensive Exam

The content and administration of the comprehensive exam is the responsibility of the Academic Advisory Committee and must follow the format proposed in the Program of Study. Normally the comprehensive exam is taken at the end of the coursework, although in appropriate cases a committee may wish to make alternative arrangements based on individual circumstances.

Admission To Candidacy

When the Academic Advisory Committee certifies to the Graduate School that the comprehensive exam has been passed and all other requirements set out in the Program of Study (except the dissertation) have been satisfactorily completed, the Graduate School admits the student to candidacy. Guidelines for admission to candidacy may be found in the Graduate School Catalogue.

Dissertation

The dissertation must be completed and defended within the time limits specified by the Graduate School at the time of admission. The student is responsible for acquiring the approval of appropriate human subject or other review boards before beginning research. Guidelines for formatting may be found in the Graduate School Catalogue.

Final Oral Examination

The final oral examination for the Ph.D. is administered and evaluated by the Academic Advisory Committee. Final oral examinations are open to the University community.