

**REHABILITATION SCIENCES DOCTORAL STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**College of Allied Health Sciences**

**East Carolina University**

**Health Sciences Building**

**Greenville, NC 27834**

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## PREFACE

This Handbook is written to assist the student and faculty in their journey through the doctoral program in Rehabilitation Sciences. We also encourage students to refer to the [Graduate School Program Directors & Coordinators Handbook](#). The procedures within this document are guidelines and policy of the department and the university. We urge you to refer to this as you progress through the program. Please remember, however, that some parts of the doctoral program are established, or newly established, and that all parts are constantly evolving. As such, the Doctoral Education Committee may modify this handbook as needed.

It is important as students that you keep abreast of all changes. If you have any questions concerning the program, please feel free to communicate your questions or concerns to us.

Good luck with your studies and remember to take the time to enjoy the experience.

Heather Harris Wright, PhD  
Program Coordinator

Jamie Perry, PhD  
Communication Sciences and Disorders Concentration Director

John Willson, PhD  
Movement Sciences Concentration Director

## THE FACULTY

### Communication Sciences and Disorders Concentration

The full-time faculty in Communication Sciences and Disorders includes individuals representing a wide range of professional interests and educational backgrounds including audiology, hearing science, experimental psychology, physiology, psychoacoustics, neurolinguistics, neurophysiology, speech language pathology, and speech science.

- Patrick Briley, PhD, Assistant Professor, East Carolina University, stuttering, population health
- Deirdre Larsen, PhD, Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University, dysphagia assessment and treatment, voice disorders
- Jamie L. Perry, PhD, Professor; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, craniofacial development & disorders, anatomy, genetics
- Kathrin Rothermich, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Potsdam, neurolinguistics, neurogenic communication disorders, multilingualism, pragmatics
- Matthew Walenski, PhD, Associate Professor, University of California San Diego, language, memory, and brain; neurogenics
- Heather Harris Wright, PhD, Professor, University of Georgia, discourse processes, aging, aphasia, adult neurogenic disorders

## **Movement Sciences Concentration**

Full-time faculty participating in the Movement Sciences and Disorders concentration have professional interest and expertise in the following areas: locomotion biomechanics and energetics, balance and postural control, computer modeling and simulation, bone and joint health, motor control, neurodevelopment, muscle physiology, and neuroscience.

- Ted Graber, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota; aging skeletal muscle physiology/biology
- Amy Gross McMillan, PT, PhD, Professor, University of Delaware; neuromotor development, pediatric obesity
- Chia-Cheng (James) Lin, PT, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh; aging and vestibular disorders, posture and balance
- Stacey Meardon, PT, PhD, Associate Professor, Iowa State University; bone health, physical activity injury mechanisms
- Swati Surkar, PT, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska Medical Center; pediatric rehabilitation, motor control and motor learning
- Erzsebet Szatmari, PhD, Associate Professor, Babes-Bolyai University, neurobiology, Alzheimer disease
- Susanne van der Veen, PhD, Assistant Professor, Salford University, balance, falls risk, executive functioning
- Ryan Wedge, PT, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts, energetics, computer modeling and simulation, limb loss
- John Willson, PT, PhD, Associate Professor, Movement Sciences Concentration Director, University of Delaware; gait analysis, musculoskeletal pathomechanics

## DOCTORAL STUDIES IN REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Our doctoral program is designed for advanced scholars with interest in rehabilitation science with a concentration in communication sciences and disorders (speech-language pathology or audiology) or movement sciences and disorders. Students may enroll in one of two concentration areas. Those enrolled in the concentration area of communication sciences and disorders may choose of two tracks—speech-language pathology or audiology.

The doctorate prepares you to teach in a college or university and to carry out research in rehabilitation science, in the areas of communication sciences and disorders (speech-language pathology or audiology) or movement sciences and disorders. All students are required to complete a dissertation project prior to being awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

The doctoral program emphasizes training for research. It is best described as an "apprenticeship" program in which students work closely with a faculty member who has agreed to supervise the student's research. We place less emphasis on course work with a greater emphasis on the development of research, scholarship, and independent thinking skills.

Students are involved in research from the outset, and are expected to conduct research leading to empirical, methodological, and/or theoretical advances in their field of study. Following completion of didactic and preliminary research requirements, students are expected to conduct research that will be included in their dissertation and defended publicly. Students are expected to publish their ongoing research throughout the training program and gain experience and training in writing and submitting grants to support research projects.

## ADMISSION

The Admissions Committee will make a holistic judgment of applicant qualifications. Admission to study at the doctoral level requires acceptance by the Graduate School and the department. The application for admission to the Graduate School and official transcripts from each college or university attended must be sent to the Graduate School.

Applicants seeking admission to the Communication Sciences and Disorders concentration in the Rehabilitation Sciences doctoral program should have completed a well-integrated program of study that includes course work in biological/physical sciences and mathematics, behavioral and/or social sciences, and human communication sciences and disorders.

Applicants seeking admission to the Movement Sciences and Disorders concentration in the Rehabilitation Sciences doctoral program should have completed a well-integrated program of study relating to biological/physical sciences, mathematics, physical therapy, athletic training, or engineering.

All applicants are strongly encouraged to identify a major professor as part of the application process to assist with identification of student funding sources and faculty availability for mentoring.

### Specific Admissions Requirements

#### Communication Sciences and Disorders concentration applicants:

Bachelor's or master's degree or its equivalent from an accredited institution in speech-language pathology, audiology, communication sciences or related area, with a minimum overall grade point average of 3.5 (on a scale of A=4.0). A current Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score (taken within the last five years). Students who have scores older than 5 years but are not yet 10 years old may submit documentation to the program to request a waiver of the GRE. If approved, the program will notify the applicant and the Graduate School.

Note: Recent applicants have had mean GRE scores of 150 for verbal, 150 for quantitative, and 4.5 for analytic writing. The GRE is waived as an entrance requirement for EC Scholars at East Carolina University if other criteria are met.

#### Movement Sciences and Disorders concentration applicants:

Master's degree or its equivalent from an accredited institution in physical therapy, athletic training, engineering, biomechanics, movement sciences or related area, with a minimum overall grade point average of 3.5 (on a scale of A=4.0). GRE entrance examination waivers are considered. Applicants interested in exploring the possibility of a GRE waiver should submit their request to the Movement Sciences and Disorders concentration for more information.

#### All applicants:

1. Three (3) letters of recommendation, at least two from faculty of the college(s) or university(s) previously attended.
2. A sample of scholarly writing which may be a thesis, a published or unpublished reprint, or term paper.
3. For international students, please refer to [Graduate School website](#) for additional admission requirements.
4. A statement that summarizes reasons for pursuing doctoral study and doctoral research objectives in as much detail as possible.
5. Telephone or face-to-face interview. During the interview a writing sample may be requested.

## DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The program requires a minimum 53 s.h. of didactic and research experiences beyond the master's degree or 95 s.h. beyond the bachelor's degree. All students in the degree program will complete the rehabilitation sciences general core curriculum. Each student will also complete their chosen concentration requirements that include a science core curriculum, a support core taken across disciplines, a statistics core (statistics and research design), research internships, and dissertation. The student and Major Professor in consultation with the Doctoral Program Committee will select and design an area of major concentration that includes 12 s.h. of course work. Except for credits accepted by transfer, all graduate work, including the dissertation, be completed in residence. The course of study ordinarily requires four years of full-time study.

### Rehabilitation Sciences General Curriculum (8 s.h.)

- HUMS 7004 Ethics and Research: Humanities and Basic Medical Sciences  
PSYC 6430 - Statistics and Research Design or BIOS 7021 Biostatistics for Health Professionals I
- CSDI 8030 Doctoral Colloquium (3 s.h.) or  
PTHE 8030 Doctoral Colloquium in movement disorders (3 s.h.)

### Communication Sciences and Disorders Concentration Curriculum: Post-Bachelor's Admissions Pathway

#### A. Statistics curriculum (6 s.h. minimum)

Preparation in statistics expertise. Examples of courses below:

- BIOS 7021 Biostatistics for Health Professionals I
- BIOS 7022 Biostatistics for Health Professionals II
- BIOS 7501 Experimental Design
- BIOS 7550 Applied Multivariate Analysis
- BIOS 7560 Nonparametric Statistical Analysis
- PSYC 6327 - Methods in Human Measurement
- PSYC 6430 - Statistics and Research Design
- PSYC 7431 - Advanced Research Design
- PSYC 7433 - Multivariate Statistical Analysis
- PSYC 7505 - Structural Equation and Hierarchical Linear modeling
- Other courses as approved by the student program committee

#### B. Science curriculum (12 s.h. minimum)

Preparation in content expertise. Examples of courses below:

- BIOL 7480 Cell Biology
- CSDI 6100 - Language Disorders
- CSDI 6104 - Seminar in Voice Disorders
- CSDI 6106 - Stuttering and Other Fluency Disorders
- CSDI 6108 - Seminar in Speech Sound Disorders
- CSDI 6109 - Motor Speech Disorders
- CSDI 6110 - Brain, Language, and Aphasia
- CSDI 6112 - Seminar in Cranio-Facial Anomalies
- CSDI 6113 - Linguistic/Cognitive Impairments in Brain-Injured Adults
- CSDI 6114 - Dysphagia
- CSDI 6200 - Multicultural Communication Disorders
- NEUR 6901 Behavioral and Integrative Neuroscience
- PATH 8800 Principles of Pathology

- PHL 7730 Medical Neuroscience
- PHL 7733 Sensory Systems Neurophysiology
- PSYC 6815 Seminar in Behavioral Neuroscience
- PSYC 8468 Health Psychology: Psychotherapy Methods and Interventions
- CSDI 8001 Anatomy and Physiology of the Vestibular System
- CSDI 8004 Embryology, Genetics, and the Auditory System
- CSDI 8006 Auditory Processing
- CSDI 8009 Psychoacoustics
- CSDI 8012 Physiological Phonetics
- CSDI 8016 Auditory Physiology
- CSDI 8020 Advanced Seminar in Communication Sciences
- CSDI 8022 Advanced Seminar in Audiology
- CSDI 8023 Advanced Seminar in Speech-Language Pathology
- CSDI 8028 Auditory Pathologies
- CSDI 8071 Research Internship: Communication Sciences
- CSDI 8081 Research Internship: Audiology
- CSDI 8091 Research Internship: Speech-Language-Pathology
- *Other courses as approved by the student program committee*

**C. Support curriculum (6 s.h. minimum)**

- CSDI 8030 Doctoral Colloquium
- CSDI 8072, 8073 Research Internship: Communication Sciences
- CSDI 8082, 8083 Research Internship: Audiology
- CSDI 8092, 8093 Research Internship: Speech-Language-Pathology
- CSDI 8150 Audiology Licensure, Certification and Related Issues
- *Other courses as approved by the student program committee*

**D. Dissertation (3 s.h. minimum)**

- CSDI 8999 Predoctoral Independent Study
- CSDI 9000 Dissertation
- CSDI 9001 Dissertation: Summer Research

**Communication Sciences and Disorders Concentration Curriculum: Post-Master's Admissions Pathway**

**A. Statistics curriculum (6 s.h. minimum)**

Preparation in statistics expertise. Examples of courses below:

- BIOS 7021 Biostatistics for Health Professionals I
- BIOS 7022 Biostatistics for Health Professionals II
- BIOS 7501 Experimental Design
- BIOS 7550 Applied Multivariate Analysis
- BIOS 7560 Nonparametric Statistical Analysis
- PSYC 6327 - Methods in Human Measurement
- PSYC 6430 - Statistics and Research Design
- PSYC 7431 - Advanced Research Design
- PSYC 7433 - Multivariate Statistical Analysis
- PSYC 7505 - Structural Equation and Hierarchical Linear modeling
- Other courses as approved by the student program committee

**B. Science curriculum (12 s.h. minimum)**

Preparation in content expertise. Examples of courses below:

- BIOL 7480 Cell Biology
- NEUR 6901 Behavioral and Integrative Neuroscience
- PATH 8800 Principles of Pathology
- PHLY 7730 Medical Neuroscience
- PHLY 7733 Sensory Systems Neurophysiology
- PSYC 6815 Seminar in Behavioral Neuroscience
- PSYC 8468 Health Psychology: Psychotherapy Methods and Interventions
- CSDI 8001 Anatomy and Physiology of the Vestibular System
- CSDI 8004 Embryology, Genetics, and the Auditory System
- CSDI 8006 Auditory Processing
- CSDI 8009 Psychoacoustics
- CSDI 8012 Physiological Phonetics
- CSDI 8016 Auditory Physiology
- CSDI 8020 Advanced Seminar in Communication Sciences
- CSDI 8022 Advanced Seminar in Audiology
- CSDI 8023 Advanced Seminar in Speech-Language Pathology
- CSDI 8028 Auditory Pathologies
- CSDI 8071 Research Internship: Communication Sciences
- CSDI 8081 Research Internship: Audiology
- CSDI 8091 Research Internship: Speech-Language-Pathology
- *Other courses as approved by the student program committee*

**C. Support curriculum (6 s.h. minimum)**

- CSDI 8030 Doctoral Colloquium
- CSDI 8072, 8073 Research Internship: Communication Sciences
- CSDI 8082, 8083 Research Internship: Audiology
- CSDI 8092, 8093 Research Internship: Speech-Language-Pathology
- CSDI 8150 Audiology Licensure, Certification and Related Issues
- *Other courses as approved by the student program committee*

**D. Dissertation (3 s.h. minimum)**

- CSDI 8999 Predoctoral Independent Study
- CSDI 9000 Dissertation
- CSDI 9001 Dissertation: Summer Research

## **Movement Sciences and Disorders concentration (45 s.h.)**

### **A. Statistics curriculum (6 s.h. minimum)**

Statistics and research design. Choose from the courses below.

- BIOS 7021 Biostatistics for Health Professionals I
- BIOS 7022 Biostatistics for Health Professionals II
- BIOS 7501 Experimental Design
- BIOS 7550 Applied Multivariate Analysis
- MPH 6011 Introduction to Epidemiology
- PSYC 6327 Methods in Human Measurement
- PSYC 6430 Statistics and Research Design
- PSYC 7431 Advanced Research Design
- PSYC 7433 Multivariate Statistical Analysis
- PSYC 7505 Structural Equation and Hierarchical Linear Modeling
- Other courses as approved by the student program committee

### **B. Science curriculum (12 s.h. minimum)**

Preparation in content expertise. Choose from the courses below.

- KINE 7200 Biomechanics
- KINE 7203 Neuromotor Control
- KINE 7204 Techniques of Biomechanical Assessment
- PHLY 7703 Graduate Neuroscience
- PTHE 8020 Advanced Seminar in Movement Sciences and Disorders
- PTHE 8075 Musculoskeletal Pathomechanics
- PTHE 8080 Research Internship: Movement Sciences and Disorders
- PTHE 8200 Clinical Biomechanics
- PTHE 8301 Motor Control and Movement Disorders
- PTHE 8913 Measurement and Analysis of Human Movement
- *Other courses as approved by the student program committee*

### **C. Support curriculum (6 s.h. minimum)**

Electives across disciplines. Choose from the courses below.

- ANAT 7215 Medical Neuroscience
- BIME 6200 Biomedical Instrumentation and Measurements
- BIME 6250 Biomedical Signal Processing
- BIME 6500 Introduction to Tissue Engineering
- KINE 6803 Special Topics in Kinesiology
- MCBI 7400 Medical Microbiology and Immunology I
- PHAR 7640 Pharmacology of the Central Nervous System
- PHAR 7777 Practical Problems in Biometry
- PHLY 7733 Sensory Systems Neurophysiology
- PHYS 6715 Biomedical Physics
- PHYS 6720 Physics of Medical Imaging
- PTHE 8030 Doctoral Colloquium in movement disorders
- PTHE 8501 Prosthetics
- PTHE 8502 Muscle Physiology
- PTHE 8900 Advanced Concepts in Sports Physical Therapy
- PTHE 8902 Advances in Lower Extremity Evaluation
- PTHE 8912 Pain Mechanisms and Treatment
- PTHE 8915 Pathomechanical Approach to Treatment of the Injured Runner

- *Other courses as approved by the student program committee*

**D. Dissertation (3 s.h. minimum)**

- PTHE 8999 Predoctoral Independent Study
- PTHE 9000 Dissertation
- PTHE 9001 Dissertation: Summer Research

**Recommended Statistics Core**

**Graduate Certificate in Quantitative Methods for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (15 hrs)**

The objective of the Graduate Certificate in Quantitative Methods for the Social and Behavioral Sciences ([GC-QMSBS](#)) is to train individuals in the interpretation, application, and design of advanced statistical methods and their applications in behavioral and social sciences. The Graduate Certificate in Quantitative Methods is offered in the Department of Psychology.

**Required Courses**

- PSYC 6327 - Methods in Human Measurement
- PSYC 6430 - Statistics and Research Design
- PSYC 7431 - Advanced Research Design
- PSYC 7433 - Multivariate Statistical Analysis
- PSYC 7505 - Structural Equation and Hierarchical Linear Modeling

**Note:** As other programs within the university offer similar courses, students will be allowed to substitute up to two of the required courses with other statistics courses offered by the university following approval by the certificate coordinator. Students must also follow certificate program guidelines related to minimum grade requirement. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in the certificate program as well as the PhD program.

**Transfer Credits Toward Degree Requirements**

Credit will be accepted for transfer at the discretion of the Rehabilitation Sciences Program Coordinator in consultation with concentration area directors and the Dean of the Graduate School. A maximum of 9 s.h. of doctoral credit (course work taken beyond the master's degree) may be applied toward the support and/or statistics cores

## **DOCTORAL COMMITTEES:**

The following committees are created and evolve during the program and are designed to support the student's success in the program.

### **Doctoral Program Committee**

Before entering the program, a Major Professor will be identified and should be noted by the student within the application process. Prospective students who do not have an identified Major Professor will be encouraged to meet with faculty before submitting an application. During the admissions process, Major Professors identified by students should express a professional interest and commitment to the student's success in the program and have the availability of resources and time to support the student. The Major Professor will monitor the student's academic and research progress closely. The student and his/her Major Professor will establish a Doctoral Program Committee. This also will be accomplished during the first semester of study. The Doctoral Program Committee must consist of a minimum of three ECU faculty members who have been involved in the student's training, e.g., course instructor, research collaborator, Major Professor, etc. Two of the three ECU faculty must have full graduate faculty status. Additional individuals (beyond the minimum three required) are able to be involved in this committee (e.g., Clinical Faculty, outside ECU faculty, etc.). The Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee oversee the student's completion of the first-year research project and comprehensive examinations. A change in Major Professor may be made after consultation with the involved faculty, Director of Doctoral Education, and the Departmental Chairperson.

### **Dissertation Committee**

After passing the comprehensive examination, the candidate must establish a Dissertation Committee and initiate the development of an appropriate dissertation research project. The dissertation must reflect original and independent, scholarly research that will contribute significant new knowledge to the candidate's area of major concentration. The student will choose the Dissertation Committee with assistance from his/her Major Professor.

Faculty chairing (Major Professor) must have Full graduate faculty status as defined in the East Carolina University Faculty Manual and a terminal degree as determined by their research discipline. The committee must consist of a minimum of three graduate faculty members who are research-track faculty.

## **PROGRAM OF STUDY**

Once the Doctoral Program Committee is established, a Tentative Program of Study will be completed with the Major Professor in consultation with the Doctoral Program Committee. This is to be accomplished by the end of the student's first year of study. This document is to plan for the student's upcoming course enrollment. This document will serve as a guide for the student and the Doctoral Program Committee and should be updated annually.

## **PROGRAM ENRICHMENT**

In addition to course requirements, each student may be assigned various preceptorships, involving mentored classroom and clinical instruction and administration to assist the student in gaining perspective and experience in university teaching, clinical supervision, and management. Students will be encouraged to participate in university-wide seminars. This enrichment may include being required to take a didactic course on teaching if the student is assigned to teach courses as a part of an assistantship or other contract.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### First Year Research Project

Each student is required to complete a research project by the end of first year under the direction of his/her Major Professor. Successful completion of the research project requires (1) the student giving a formal presentation of the work at an open forum that includes students, faculty, and staff and (2) approval of the written document by his/her Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee which should be submitted for publication before the end of the first year in the program. The student's Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee may have additional requirements the student needs to meet to successfully complete the first-year project. The Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee will issue a grade of "satisfactory", "unsatisfactory with stipulations", or "fail". The first-year project form should be completed and signed by all members of the committee. Feedback is provided through this form, particularly related to any rating of "unsatisfactory" or "fail," which serves to guide the student on what aspects of the research project were considered deficient. The recommendation of the committee is sent to the Director of Doctoral Education.

- **Satisfactory** indicates the student has successfully completed and defended the first-year project.
- **Unsatisfactory with stipulations** indicates the student showed some weaknesses in one or more areas (written paper, oral presentation) and the Doctoral Program Committee determines a remediation plan and timeline for completing required activities.
- **Fail** indicates the student's performance on the written and oral presentation was unsatisfactory. The Major Professor will summarize the committee's evaluation of the student's performance, recommend dismissal from the program, and submit it to Rehabilitation Sciences Concentration Director and the Program Coordinator.

### Doctoral Candidacy Requirements

Following completion of most course work and prior to admission to candidacy for the PhD, students must pass a comprehensive examination intended to test fundamental knowledge in both the major and support fields. The candidate will undergo written and oral examinations. The student's Doctoral Program Committee is responsible for the administration and evaluation of the comprehensive examination. The candidacy recommendation of the committee is sent to the Program Coordinator who forwards it to the Dean of the Graduate School.

### Comprehensive Examinations

Students must pass an examination intended to test fundamental knowledge in both the major and support fields prior to being admitted formally to candidacy for the PhD. The comprehensive examination includes two parts: (1) written examination and (2) oral defense.

### Policy for Completion of Comprehensive Exams

The Rehabilitation Science program committee has established this policy. All doctoral students will complete their comprehensive examinations via this policy.

### Written Examination

The purpose of the written examination is to determine the student's ability to integrate, analyze, and synthesize information in his/her area(s) of expertise in a written format. The student's Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee will determine the composition of the written examination. Successful completion of the written examination (including any portions of the exam that are unsatisfactory and require a retake) must be completed within one semester and failure to do so are grounds for dismissal from the program. The written examination may include (but is not limited to):

- Field-based questions
- Integrative paper
- In-house questions
- Grant proposal
- A combination of these or other written formats deemed appropriate by the Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee

The Doctoral Program Committee members reviewing the written responses will notify the Major Professor of their rating/evaluation of the responses within one week of the examination. The Major Professor will notify the Concentration Director in writing of all feedback from the Doctoral Program Committee. The Committee member(s) submitting a particular question will evaluate that question only but may also read the student's other written responses.

Committee members will rate the responses as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If the student receives unsatisfactory for any part of the written examination, the student must meet with the committee member to discuss areas of weakness prior to retaking those portion(s) of the exam. The student must re-write the unsatisfactory portion(s) of the comprehensive examination no less than one-month and not more than two months following the delivery of the unsatisfactory review. Failure to do so will result in termination of the student from the program.

The Committee member(s) who developed the question(s) will review the rewrite. Failure of the written examination question(s) a second time will result in termination of the student from the program. Upon successful completion of the written examination, the oral defense will be scheduled.

### **Oral Defense**

The purpose of the oral defense is to determine the student's mastery and integration of all materials tested. The Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee in consultation with the student will determine the projected date of the oral defense based on when the written portions of the comprehensive examinations are successfully completed. This date will be no sooner than two weeks and not more than four months following successful completion of the written examination. The Major Professor will notify the Concentration Director of the oral defense date, time, and location. There will be no specified time minimum or limit for the oral defense of comprehensives. Previous experience has shown that typical defenses last from approximately 1.5-2.5 hours.

The Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee members will judge the oral defense as satisfactory, satisfactory with deficiencies, or unsatisfactory. Receiving more than one unsatisfactory vote at the oral defense of the comprehensive examination will be considered a fail. If the student is judged as Satisfactory with Deficiencies, then these deficiencies shall be described for the student and the processes for removing the deficiencies explained by the Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee at the conclusion of the defense.

Students judged as not passing may submit to another oral defense. The Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee will determine an appropriate remediation process for the student to complete prior to the second oral defense and will inform the Director of Doctoral Education of the remediation plan. The second oral defense will be scheduled not less than one month and not more than four months following the first oral defense.

Failure of the oral defense the second time will result in termination of the student's program. The Program Coordinator will forward the results of the oral examination to the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **Doctoral Dissertation**

After passing the comprehensive examination, the candidate must initiate the development of an appropriate dissertation research project with the guidance of the Major Professor and a Dissertation Committee, formed by the student and Major Professor. The dissertation must reflect independent, scholarly research that will contribute significant new knowledge to the candidate's area of concentration.

### **Dissertation Prospectus**

Prior to initiating the dissertation research, the candidate's Dissertation Committee must approve a written prospectus and oral presentation of the proposed dissertation. The candidate formally presents the prospectus to the dissertation committee. The Dissertation Committee must agree that the research proposal is satisfactory, with no more than one dissenting vote allowed. Upon completion of the Prospectus Presentation, the [Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy Form](#) is also completed and routed to the Major Professor, committee members, Program Coordinator and then forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School.

The prospectus of the proposed dissertation should contain the following:

1. A review of the pertinent literature,
2. A statement of the nature of the problem and the objectives of the proposed investigation,
3. A complete methodology, based on preliminary pilot investigations, which include a description and number of participants to be studied, a discussion of the dependent and independent variables that will be manipulated, and a detailed description of the experimental procedures to be employed, including all experimental instrumentation,
4. A detailed outline and justification of the statistical analysis of the data that will be obtained.

The approved prospectus becomes a contract between the candidate and the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee must agree that the research proposal is satisfactory, with no more than one dissenting vote allowed. Dissertation data collection cannot occur prior to approval of the prospectus by the Dissertation Committee.

### **Dissertation Defense**

The candidate will present his/her dissertation research in an open forum. Refer to [ECU Graduate Catalog](#) for university requirements. This will be followed by a closed defense of the candidate's research with the Doctoral Program Committee. The Dissertation Committee will recommend to the Rehabilitation Sciences Program Coordinator and the concentration area director to award or not award the degree with stated specifications. The Program Coordinator will forward this recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Public announcement of the Dissertation Defense must be made to the university community through appropriate college and university email distribution lists. Students must comply with submission deadlines in order for the announcement of the defense to appear at least two weeks prior to the defense. Public defense of the dissertation cannot occur without published announcements of the title, date, place, time and name of the defender.

Following successful oral defense of the dissertation, the Dissertation Committee will make a formal written outline of the required changes to the dissertation within one week of the dissertation defense as to what revisions are required and when these required changes must be completed. The student and Dissertation Committee will sign this document as an agreement acknowledging the required changes and deadline date. The revision deadline must be within six months of the defense date. The student is required to submit the revised dissertation to the Dissertation Committee by the agreed upon deadline. Failure to do so will result in the termination of the student's program. The student may petition the Doctoral Education Committee for an extension of the revision deadline. Students are referred to the Graduate School website for dissertation formatting and electronic submission.

The guidelines for completion of the doctoral dissertation described herein are in accordance with of the regulations of the Rehabilitation Sciences program and the general requirements of the Graduate School found in the East Carolina University Graduate School Bulletin.

There are two dates for Commencement (in May and December). Please consult the University Calendar for the last date to submit copies of the dissertation to the Graduate School for completion of the degree in the spring, fall, or summer term.

## **EVALUATION OF PROGRESS TOWARD DEGREE COMPLETION**

### **Annual Review**

After the completion of each year of study, several review documents are to be completed. The student will update the *Program of Study Form* and complete the *Annual Review Form*. This document is a review of the courses and research completed during the past year. To accomplish this review, several areas are evaluated: course work, research, and assistantship (if applicable) activity. Faculty involved with the supervision of a student will be asked to evaluate the student's performance in these areas during the Annual Doctoral Student Review meeting conducted by the Rehabilitation Science program director. The Concentration Director will complete a synopsis of the annual program review. The Major Professor, Concentration Director, and the student will meet, examine the review, and sign the synopsis upon completion of this meeting. This document is to be distributed to the student's Doctoral Program Committee, Concentration Director, and Program Coordinator by June 30, with a copy placed in the student's departmental file.

### **Time Limits for Completion of Degree Requirements**

A doctoral degree program must be completed before the end of the twelfth semester, excluding summers, following initial enrollment. With endorsement of the student's Major Professor and Doctoral Program Committee and also the Program Coordinator, a student may request one extension of not more than two semesters, summers included.

### **Termination or Continuance of Graduate Study**

Failure to meet the requirements of the program as outlined by the [Graduate School](#) will result in termination of graduate study. Graduate School regulations for most academic issues are utilized and can be found in the [Academic Regulations](#) section of this catalog. For the purposes of retention in the PhD program, the program has developed and adopted stricter standards than the Graduate School.

The ECU Graduate School requires a 3.0 GPA for retention and graduation. In addition, the program requires that students earn no less than a grade of "B" in more than 1 course during their degree program. This includes all departmental courses including didactic, clinical, or research taught by any delivery method.

Upon receipt of the second grade of less than a “B,” a review of the student’s academic and clinical progress will be conducted by the student’s advisor, the Concentration Director, and the Program Coordinator. Recommendations for continuance or termination will be made to the doctoral education committee for consideration. If the decision of the Doctoral Program Committee is for termination, this will be communicated by the Concentration Director to the student and the Graduate School. If the decision is for continuation, this will be communicated to the student.

Upon the 3rd course with lower than a “B” grade, the director of doctoral education shall notify in writing the student and the Graduate School that the student’s degree program is terminated. The student can appeal this termination by writing a letter to the Rehabilitation Sciences Program Coordinator and asking the Doctoral Program committee for reinstatement. The concentration coordinator will convey the decision of the committee to the student and the Graduate School. If allowed to continue in the program, the student may not earn any additional credit hours of less than a “B” grade. If terminated at this point the student may appeal the decision through the ECU school appeals procedure (Rev. September 2011).

Students who have received stipends are expected to complete required hours per their agreed-upon and signed contract initiated by the unit. If a student fails to complete these hours or does not provide satisfactory completion of the work, this contract may be terminated at the discretion of the Major Professor.

If a student is demonstrating poor progress toward degree completion in any area—academic performance, development of research skills, transition to independent thinking skills for research, scholarship, or teaching performance, the Major Professor will meet with the student to notify in writing the area of deficiency and a proposed plan with timeline for achieving these competencies. If a student fails to meet this proposed plan/timeline and continues to be deficient in his/her/they growth/development and performance in the program, the Major Professor will notify the student in writing and then initiate a meeting with the Concentration Director and Program Coordinator to discuss the concerns related to the student’s performance and to determine if the student should be terminated from the program. If a decision is made to terminate the student from the program, the student will be notified in writing by the Concentration Director to the student and the Graduate School. If the decision is for continuation, this will be communicated to the student.

## **APPLICATION TO GRADUATE**

Following successful completion of the requirements of the doctorate degree as determined by the Major Professor, students must make a [formal application for graduation](#).

The [formal application for graduation](#) must be made and submitted to the Office of the Registrar at least one semester prior to completing the requirements of the degree as stated by the Graduate Catalog. Submit the completed and printed form to the Graduation Services office in the Office of the Registrar. Graduate summaries will no longer be accepted by Graduation Services as part of the degree and graduate certificate graduation process.

## **FACILITIES**

The College of Allied Health Sciences has established numerous research laboratories within its’ departmental space located in the Allied Health and Nursing Building. These labs are to enhance the research and creative activity of the faculty and the graduate students. Information about the labs can be found on the College of Allied Health Sciences’ [Office of Research website](#).

Updated August 12, 2024 – added CSDI post-bachelor’s pathway; updated program faculty; checked links

Updated July 25, 2025 & August 7, 2025– added research areas to program faculty; updated program faculty rank; removed departing faculty; checked links