The Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The PhD degree is awarded by the University of California as the mark of highest achievement in preparation for active scholarship and research in an academic discipline. A holder of the PhD degree possesses knowledge of a broad field of learning and has presented a dissertation containing an original contribution to the chosen field of study.

Academic Residence
A total of six quarters in residence are required for the PhD degree. In addition, a student must register for a minimum of three quarters after advancement to candidacy.

Foreign Language Requirement
Departments and graduate programs may establish conditions concerning a language requirement appropriate to the field of study. In a program where there is a language requirement, it must be satisfied prior to advancement to candidacy.

Qualifying Examination
The purpose of the qualifying examination is to demonstrate that the student has adequate knowledge of the field and specialty, knows how to use academic resources, and is capable of conducting independent research for the dissertation.

For additional information on the student learning outcomes for this process, please see Qualifying Exams and Dissertation Student Learning Outcomes [1].

Application for the Qualifying Examination
- Students must be registered at the time the examination is given. This includes summer session.
- Students must apply for admission to the qualifying examination at least one week before the date of the exam.
- To be eligible for the examination, a student must have completed at least one quarter in residence and have a grade point average of at least 3.00 in all courses taken in graduate standing.
- The examination may be oral or written (or both) and may be given in several parts or one session, at the discretion of the committee.

Download the required application [2].

Qualifying Examination Committee
The student proposes a committee of four faculty who are members of the UCSF Academic Senate. If the student wishes to nominate one or more members who are not on the UCSF Academic Senate, the student must secure approval from the Program Director in the form of a signature. At least one member of the committee must be from outside the student's major department or graduate program.

The student submits the committee proposal to the Graduate Division (In person at the Mission Bay campus? Mission Hall, 550 16th St, Room 1300, Campus Box 1227; OR by email to ellen.levitan@ucsf.edu). The Graduate Division approves the proposal and appoints a committee to administer the exam. Once the application for qualifying exam is approved, the Graduate Division will notify the student and program administrator via email.

The chair of the student's qualifying examination committee may not chair the dissertation committee. In some programs, it is not permitted for any member of the qualifying examination committee to chair the dissertation committee (check with your program).

At least one meeting of the whole committee must be held to discuss the results of the exam before a report is made to the dean of the Graduate Division.

In the case of a divided vote, individual members of the committee must state the reasons they voted the way they did. The matter is then referred to the Graduate Council for a final decision.

If a student fails the examination, the committee must make a recommendation for or against a second examination. If a second examination is allowed, the members of the reviewing committee must be the same as for the original exam. If the student failed in all areas, the re-examination must be on all subjects involved. A partial failure, in which the student passes some fields, but not others, also counts as a first examination. However, re-examination after partial failure may be restricted to those areas in which the original performance was unsatisfactory. A third examination is not permitted.

Report on Qualifying Examination

The chair of the qualifying exam committee will complete a report on the qualifying exam.

Advancement to Candidacy

A student may be advanced to candidacy after successful completion of the qualifying examination, provided there are no other deficiencies, e.g. incomplete grades. At least three quarters in registered student status must elapse between advancement to candidacy and conferral of the degree.

The application for candidacy, indicating the subject of investigation for the dissertation, and proposed committee to guide the research and pass on the merits of the dissertation, must be filed with the dean of the Graduate Division.

A $90 fee is charged for advancement to candidacy.

For students paying the advancement to candidacy fee directly (i.e. whose fees are not covered by their programs or PI):

Students should pay this fee via the student portal in the fees area? in the same way they pay quarterly fees? and may pay by credit card or electronic check. The Graduate Division cannot accept cash or physical check payments for this fee.
For students whose programs or PI pay their fees:
The Graduate Division will send the student's program administrator a copy of the "Notice of Advancement to Candidacy," together with information on the fund source to be used for the fee and the name of the person who authorized the expenditure. The program will offset the fees, as they do for the student's quarterly fees.

Applications for candidacy submitted after the first day of the quarter will be approved for the following quarter. Download the application to advance to candidacy.

Dissertation Committee
The student proposes a committee of a minimum of three faculty who are members of the UCSF Academic Senate (completing the form Application to Advance to Candidacy). If the student wishes to nominate one or more members who are not on the UCSF Academic Senate, the student must secure approval from the Program Director in the form of a signature. The dissertation chair may not be the same person as the chair who served on the qualifying examination.

The student submits the committee proposal to the Graduate Division (In person at the Mission Bay campus ? Mission Hall, 550 16th St, Room 1300, Campus Box 1227; OR by email to ellen.levitan@ucsf.edu). To be valid for a particular quarter, applications for advancement to candidacy must be received by the first day of that quarter. The Graduate Division approves the proposal. Once the proposed dissertation committee is approved, the Graduate Division will notify the student and program administrator via email.

Candidacy for the doctoral degree is considered "lapsed" when a student has not completed requirements for the degree within four years after advancement to candidacy. Leaves of absence count against this time. Upon lapse of candidacy, a petition for reinstatement must be submitted, together with a recommendation (from a faculty member in the student's degree program) to require or not require a new qualifying examination. Once a student has advanced to candidacy for a doctoral degree, he or she is considered a full-time student for the rest of his/her time as a graduate student, unless he or she is on an approved leave of absence. A maximum of three quarters leave is permitted.

The Dissertation
The dissertation is the final and most important step in a doctoral degree program. The dissertation should be a work of independent research that makes an original contribution to knowledge in the student's academic discipline, and should be of sufficient depth and quality to be published. The content and style of the dissertation is entirely at the discretion of the student's degree program and dissertation committee. The Graduate Division is concerned only with the form of the final manuscript. See the Guidelines for Completing the PhD Dissertation, MS Thesis, or DPTSc Manuscript.

The Graduate Division does not require an oral defense of the dissertation, although a defense is a requirement of some degree programs. When a student submits a copy of the dissertation to the Graduate Division that has been signed by all members of the committee, it is assumed that all requirements for the degree program have been met and that the degree may be conferred.

See also Qualifying Exams and Dissertation Student Learning Outcomes.

The Candidate in Philosophy (C Phil)
The degree of candidate in philosophy (C Phil) may be awarded to any student who has passed the qualifying examination and has advanced to candidacy for the PhD degree. It is awarded only rarely and in particular circumstances, such as a student's need to obtain a community college teaching credential. The C Phil is not a terminal degree and presumes that the student is in good standing and qualified to progress to the PhD. When conferral of the candidate in philosophy degree is considered for a particular student, the graduate advisor should consult with the Graduate Division before making a formal recommendation.

See the full list of PhD and other programs [7] offered by the Graduate Division.