THE AUBURN UNIVERSITY

PH.D. PROGRAM

IN

MANAGEMENT

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Approved by the Management faculty October 26, 2002 for immediate implementation
Revisions will be made and announced as needed)

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Residency Requirements

The Ph.D. program is a full-time, on-campus program. As a result, fulfilling the Ph.D. program stipulates that all students fulfill the doctoral residency-year requirement as outlined by the Auburn University Graduate School. The residency-year requirement is satisfied by completing a minimum of 18 semester hours (nine of which must be graded) of graduate on-campus coursework during two consecutive semesters. Interruption of this two semester sequence by not taking courses during the summer semester does not constitute a break in continuity.

Contact Information

It is the student’s responsibility to provide an up-to-date email (if other than AU email) address, postal address, and phone number to the Department of Management’s Graduate Officer’s office and your chair (curriculum or dissertation) throughout your Ph.D. experience. Email is the official form of communication for Auburn University; however, we also need up-to-date telephone numbers and home addresses.

On-Campus Presence

A large part of the doctoral education experience is the interaction with peers and faculty members. This is a time to gain those relationships that will be beneficial in the years to come. It is strongly encouraged that students take advantage of these opportunities by keeping a presence on campus. Likewise, it is expected that doctoral students be present and participate in departmental research seminars and other departmental activities, including dissertation defenses, guest speakers, colloquia, and other activities.

Transfer of Credit/Course Waivers

No more than nine credit hours may be transferred into the Auburn Ph.D. program. All hours transferred must be approved in advance by the student’s Plan of Study Committee and must be included on the Plan of Study.

Incomplete Coursework

A grade of incomplete in a graduate level class must be resolved per the directions of the instructor but no later than six months from the end of the semester in which the course was taken. This applies regardless of the student's enrollment status. A student not enrolled during the semester following the incomplete is not exempt from this rule. Pending removal or recording as an F, an incomplete is counted as a C in determining eligibility for continued enrollment. Failure to resolve an incomplete by the deadline established by the instructor or the six-month period, whichever is sooner, will result in assigning a grade of F and automatic dismissal from the program.
Graduate Teaching and Research Assistantships

Typically, all qualified full-time Ph.D. students will be provided renewable financial support for four years through Graduate Teaching Assistantships (or research assistantships or scholarships when available). To be eligible to solely teach a course as a GTA, the student must have at least 18 hours of graduate coursework in the area. This means that individuals entering the Ph.D. program without prior graduate work will not be eligible to teach a course by themselves or independently grade assignments until the beginning of their second year in the program. However, such students may be eligible to serve as a lab instructor.

In addition to earning a monthly stipend for the Fall and Spring semesters, GTAs also have their tuition waived as long as they are teaching. Continuation of support will be based upon each student’s acceptable performance and progress in the program. This will be determined at the time of the annual evaluation. Students must seek permission from the department head to add other paid assignments to their Departmental GTA assignment. No cumulative total award can exceed 50%. Summer support is not guaranteed. AU does not waive your tuition for summer unless you are on payroll. However, if it was waived for the previous two semesters, you are eligible to have your summer tuition be at in-state levels (you must request this from the Graduate School). We are committed to do everything possible to provide summer support for those semesters that you are required to take classes.

An orientation and teaching skills seminar is held the week prior to the beginning of Fall semester. Graduate teaching assistants must attend the teaching skills seminar before qualifying for their teaching assignments. All graduate students are encouraged to take advantage of the programs offered in the Biggio Teaching Center located in Haley Center. We would like to see our students enroll in at the very minimum two Biggio Center classes during their Ph.D. experience. If a student receives low teaching evaluations, that student may be required to take additional Biggio classes.

Ph.D. Program Structure

The program is a four year, full-time program. The bulk of coursework is completed in the first two years. The third year is devoted to completing comprehensive exams and research projects. The fourth year is dedicated to dissertation research. Students are permitted some flexibility in choosing their courses when designing their program of study with the approval of their Plan of Study Committee.

Statistics and Research Methodology Requirements

Management Ph.D. Statistics and Research Methodology competencies are demonstrated through the successful completion of six methods/design courses:

- PSYC/STAT 7000 Foundations of Statistics or Equivalent
- MNGT 8400 Advanced Quantitative Methods I
- MNGT 8030 Research Design/Methods in Management
Two of the following three courses:

- PSYC 7270 Experiential Methods (ANOVA)
- ERMA 8340 SEM (or PSYC SEM/HLM equivalent)
- HDFS 8060/61 Multi-Level Methods

Statistics Elective (approved by Ph.D. Coordinator or Management Department Chair)

- STAT 7010 Experimental Statistics II

Students are expected to obtain a grade of B or higher in these courses or may be required to repeat the class by the program committee. In addition to the six statistics classes, the Management concentration includes the following core classes (plus one potential elective class):

- MNGT 8310 Seminar in Advanced Organizational Behavior (Foundations of OB)
- MNGT 8330 Advanced Topics in Strategic Management (Foundations of Strategic Management)
- MNGT 7970 Special Topics in Organization Behavior
- MNGT 8320 Seminar in Strategic Management (Special topics in Strategy)
- MNGT 7970 Special Topics in Leadership
- MNGT 7970 Special Topics in Entrepreneurship

**Plan of Study**

Students are encouraged to create a Plan of Study Committee as soon as they identify their research interests and complete the plan of study form. The Plan of Study must be filed with the Graduate School as soon as possible but no later than one semester prior to the semester of graduation. The Plan of Study Form, Form XV, and revisions forms are available on the Graduate School web page.

**Dissertation Committee**

Selection of a dissertation committee is a natural evolution of the program. It is not intended that the Plan of Study chair ultimately has to serve as a student’s Dissertation Advisor. However, at the point in which a student selects his/her dissertation committee, a revised plan of study must be filed with the Graduate School. The doctoral dissertation chair (or co-chair) must be a member of the Management Department, be Graduate Faculty Level 2, and meet the criteria established by the department. In addition to the chair, the committee must be composed of at least three other members of the Graduate Faculty. At most, only one non-AU faculty member can serve on the committee.

**Annual Evaluations of Student Progress**

The Department of Management’s goal is for all students to successfully complete the Ph.D. program in a timely manner and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to assure their future success. Therefore, it is departmental policy to evaluate student performance in the Spring semester of each year. Student evaluations will include performance in coursework,
teaching and research activities, meeting program deadlines, other scholarly activities, and citizenship. The evaluation procedure is as follows. Students complete the department’s Annual Progress and Activity Report form and deliver it to their Doctoral Advisor with a copy for your file in the Graduate Programs office by the first day in May of each year.

A meeting of the core faculty in each concentration will be held to review all Ph.D. students. Faculty Advisors will lead the discussion of their students’ progress and performance. Other faculty, such as statistics faculty, may attend the meetings and provide input. The status of each student’s progress will be determined and communicated in writing to the student. A copy of this progress report will be placed in the student’s permanent file, along with an email or signed statement from the student indicating that they have received this progress report. When students are not meeting Ph.D. program requirements, recommendations for specific actions will be communicated to students, which will specify criteria for maintaining departmental support and program involvement.

The student’s major professor, in coordination with the area coordinators, and the Department Chair, will be responsible for individual feedback to Ph.D. students in both written and oral forms within a month of evaluation completion.

Comprehensive Doctoral Examination Policy

1. Objective

The primary objective of the Comprehensive Exam (“Comps”) is to determine if Ph.D. students have adequate mastery of the subject matter in the Management field. The policy stated in this document follows the official guidelines for the required General Doctoral Examination Policy, established by the Graduate School (see Auburn University Graduate School Bulletin).

2. Pre-Comps Conditions

To become eligible to take comprehensive exams, doctoral students must meet two qualifying conditions. First, they must complete both their Management Department and overall coursework listed in their Plan of Study with a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA. Second, each student must complete a second-year pre-comps empirical, qualifying paper. This study is structured to have the paper front end and research design developed and approved during the first year Spring semester Research Design seminar (MNGT 8030). The second year pre-comp empirical study would then be completed during the student’s second year of coursework (and could be completed as part of a second-year seminar paper requirement). The paper would then be read, evaluated, and signed off on by a primary and secondary departmental faculty member of the student’s choice before the student is allowed to proceed to taking their comprehensive exams. This paper should represent a study design and execution of “publishable quality”, although the paper is not required to meet this standard to complete the qualifying requirement.
3. Written Exam Content and Format

The written exam is constructed by the members of the Management faculty under the leadership of the Ph.D. coordinator. A new exam is developed for each administration. Three major content areas are assessed on the written exam - Strategic Management, Organizational Behavior, and Research Methods.

To aid preparation for the exam, faculty will provide a reading list which contains a representative, but not exhaustive, sample of key books and research articles in each major content area (course reading lists may be substituted for comprehensive list). Students should also obtain the most recent syllabi and associated reading lists of the pertinent doctoral seminars and review recent issues of the major journals in the field. Students should be mindful that this exam is comprehensive and thus is not designed to cover only material that has been specifically covered in their graduate courses.

The exam uses an essay format to be completed using a computer (i.e., not hand written). The written exam is given over two consecutive days. Each day consists of two four-hour blocks (typically 8:00 am-12:00 pm and 1:00 pm-5:00 pm). In each four-hour block, students will be required to answer one or two questions. Students might be given multiple questions to choose from, but this is not guaranteed. The exam is closed book (i.e., no external materials are allowed). Day 1 includes one block devoted to Strategic Management and one to Organizational Behavior. Day 2 includes one block devoted to Research Methods and one to the student’s self-identified main area of study (dissertation topic or area) (Strategic Management or Organizational Behavior). The student must specify their primary area of study at a minimum of six weeks before the scheduled comprehensive exam date.

4. Administration of Written Exam

The doctoral coordinator will manage the scheduling and administration of the written exam each year. The written exam may be offered twice each academic year: Once in late June/July (preferred) and once in January (secondary). The exam days will not overlap with the regular academic semester. All candidates will be required to take the exam on the specified dates. Students will be dismissed from the program if they have not completed comps by May 15 of their third year in the program.

Students become eligible to take the exam after they have completed (a) all required course work and (b) a pre-comps empirical qualifying paper (see Section 2). If at all possible, comps will be administered at a reasonable and common time to a cohort successfully meeting these eligibility standards. Students must declare to the doctoral coordinator their intent to take the exam 6 weeks in advance of the scheduled exam date. Once students sit for the exam on the first day, any section not completed will be recorded as failed. If a serious crisis emerges for a student during this two-day period, the student may petition the faculty to take sections missed at a different date. Such events must be thoroughly documented and meet the Auburn University criteria for an excused absence (https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyonClassAttendance.pdf). If a
postponement is allowed, the new date should fall within two weeks of the absence. The makeup exam may consist of different questions than those taken by others during the regular examination period.

5. Grading of Written Exam

The grading process is run by the doctoral coordinator. All faculty with Graduate Faculty 1 status may be invited to grade questions that fall within their area(s) of expertise. Faculty who currently teach seminars and/or work with doctoral students are expected to grade questions that they feel competent to grade. The doctoral coordinator works toward ensuring that each question is graded by a minimum of three professors. Faculty evaluators will be blind to the name of the student(s) taking the examination. The grading scale for each question is as follows:

5 = Exemplary. Very complete, comprehensive, and well-integrated answer. Consistently uses the appropriate professional terminology. Integrates and cites supporting literature through answer. Approaches questions and problems critically.

4 = Good. Displays very few gaps in knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles. Integrates and cites supporting literature in parts of answer.

3 = Adequate. Displays a few gaps in knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles. Missing a few key concepts and/or literature.


1 = Poor. Displays large gaps in knowledge. Demonstrates very limited, no knowledge, or erroneous knowledge of content area. Shows limited understanding of concepts and principles. Makes major and fatal critical errors; does not cite, mention, or integrate supporting literature. Does not make use of professional terminology.

A minimum overall score of 3.75 is required to pass any of the three sections of the exam. If a student passes all three sections, the student proceeds to oral comps and work on their dissertation proposal.

Any student who scores between 3.0 and 3.74 on a section is asked questions about his/her written exam answers for that section during his/her oral comprehensive exam in an effort to gather more data on his/her mastery of the content. Based on this data, a committee consisting of the doctoral coordinator and the faculty who graded the exam either decide that this portion of the written exam has now been passed or they assign additional remediation based on their professional judgment as Ph.D.-holding educators.

Any student who scores between 2.0 and 2.99 on a section will rewrite his/her answers to the relevant questions. This provides the faculty with more data on his/her mastery of the content. Such a rewrite will typically be an untimed write-up in the topic area over a two or three day
period (two or three days from when the question is given to the student to when their reply is submitted) be conducted by the doctoral coordinator and student major professor (if applicable). This rewrite would be open books and notes. Based on this data, a committee consisting of the doctoral coordinator and the faculty who graded the exam either decide that this portion of the written exam has now been passed or they assign additional remediation based on their professional judgment as Ph.D.-holding educators (no remediation or discussion during oral comps).

Any student who scores below a **2.0** on a section is considered to have failed that section and must retake that section within one month in the same format as the original exam. The retake is scored using the same system as the initial administration of the exam, except that

(a) A student who scores between **2.99 or below** on a retaken section has just one opportunity to rewrite his/her answers. Based on the rewrites, a committee consisting of the doctoral coordinator and the faculty who graded the exam either decides that this portion of the written exam has now been passed or that it has been failed. This latter scenario means that the student has failed a section of the exam twice. Students who cannot pass one or more sections of the written comprehensive exam after two attempts are removed from the doctoral program.

(b) No additional remediation is available if a student again scores **2.99 or below** on a section of the exam. Students who cannot pass one or more sections of the written comprehensive exam after two attempts are removed from the doctoral program.

6. Oral Exam Format and Administration

When students successfully complete the written exam, an oral exam is administered. The faculty expects that the oral exam will be administered within 4 weeks of receiving feedback of the written exam. Thus students are strongly encouraged to schedule the oral exam as soon as possible after the announcement of the written exam results. The oral exam is required by the Graduate School as part of the General Doctoral Examination Policy to complete the doctoral degree. Please note that the administration of the oral exam is contingent on successful performance on the written exam. Students are provided with their written test results as soon as the grading has been completed, typically within 3 weeks. The purpose of the oral exam is to provide members of faculty an opportunity to assess a student’s mastery of the three content areas by asking additional questions about those areas and to help the student plan his/her dissertation (assuming the oral exam is passed). Grading of oral exam performance is on a Pass/Fail basis. If the student passes their written comps without stipulation (3.75 or above scores on all 4 sections), then the oral comps are designed to aid development by providing feedback on dissertation proposal ideas and design.

**Research Involving Human Subjects**

All graduate students undertaking research involving human subjects must arrange for the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Use of Human Subjects in Research to review and approve the research. As part of this process you will be required to take an on-line certification exam. To obtain approval, the student must complete the form “Protocol for
Research Involving Human Subjects” which can be obtained from the Office of the Provost in Samford Hall. Students cannot proceed with the research experience or proposal until this approval is obtained. This is a university requirement.

**Entering Ph.D. Candidacy**

Successful completion of the Plan of Study and passing the qualifying paper/comps process allows Ph.D. students to begin the development of their Dissertation Proposal. A Dissertation is intended to be original research, which contributes to the body on knowledge in the field of study. This process includes the following:

By the time the student completes the required Ph.D. coursework, he/she should be focused on the intended dissertation topic. In cooperation with his/her Doctoral Advisor, the student should assemble a Dissertation Committee of at least four members of the graduate faculty of which three are from the Management Department. The chairperson of the Dissertation Committee must meet the departmental criteria for chairing a dissertation. This information can be obtained from the Department Chair. The dissertation chair is especially important in guiding the student through the Dissertation process.

The Dissertation Proposal typically requires the student to complete the first three chapters of a dissertation (introduction, literature review and methodology chapters). It includes a statement of justification for the research, explaining the need and importance of the research topic. It includes an extensive literature review, which provides the conceptual understanding and focus for the research. Finally, it includes a description of the research methodology to be used to carry out the research. In most cases, students will have developed a “proof of concept” for the research by having conducted a pilot research project as part of their manuscript development process. Having sample data and preliminary analysis of the concept allows the student to show the viability of the research project. Formal review of the Dissertation Proposal is considered the Comprehensive Oral Examination.

After the Dissertation Proposal is completed, the student must present and defend his/her proposal to the Dissertation Committee and the Management Department. Successful completion of the Proposal Defense allows the student to be accepted for candidacy by the Graduate School. **Dissertation Proposal:** A formal dissertation proposal, consisting of introduction, literature review and methodology chapter must be successfully defended and the appropriate paperwork submitted to the Graduate School no later than August 15th of the fourth year in the Ph.D. program. At this point, the student is considered to be ABD and a “candidate.”

**Dissertation and Final Examination**

The dissertation in a time-consuming process. It is imperative that every student communicate on a regular basis with members of the dissertation committee. These individuals are dedicating a great deal of time and effort to assuring your success.

Completion of the Dissertation and its defense is the final hurdle for completion of the Ph.D. degree in Management. Ph.D. students are required to complete and successfully defend their Dissertation in a formal Dissertation Defense within four years of entering Candidacy. **The Guide**
to Preparation and Submission of a Dissertation, available in University or local bookstores, can be of help in this process.

All students must take 10 semester hours of MNGT 8990: Research and Dissertation. These hours are not included in the Plan of Study and no grade is assigned for the hours. The number of MNGT 8990 hours during any one semester will range from a minimum of one hour to a maximum of 10 hours, depending on the amount of time being spent on the dissertation. After the final draft of the dissertation is completed and approved by the student's Dissertation Committee, it is submitted to the Graduate School for review. An outside reader is appointed by the Graduate School to review and critique the quality of the Dissertation. The Dissertation Committee’s Chair may provide a list of potential names for outside reader to the Graduate School at any time prior to the completion of the first draft of the dissertation. When the Graduate School has approved the dissertation, the student may apply to the Graduate School for his/her final Dissertation Defense (known as the Final Examination). The application must be filed with the Graduate School at least ten working days prior to the final defense to allow time to advertise the defense. Dissertation defenses must be advertised.

The student’s Dissertation Committee conducts the final defense. Successful completion requires unanimous support of the committee (the outside reader will attend but does not vote). All faculty and Ph.D. students are permitted and encouraged to attend the defense. Final copies of the dissertation (two) must be submitted to the Graduate School by the deadline established for the semester of graduation. All dissertations must be microfilmed by University Microfilms International of Ann Arbor, Michigan, which publishes the abstract in Dissertation Abstracts. The student is required to pay for these services.

Dissertation: The dissertation must be successfully defended and the appropriate paperwork submitted to the Graduate School no later than August 15th of the sixth year in the Ph.D. program. It is important that all students familiarize themselves with the Graduate School procedures for the completion of the dissertation and graduation. The summary of graduation procedures and the graduation check lists is available in the Graduate School and on the website for the Graduate School.

It is the student's responsibility to meet the Graduate School’s requirements for graduation, which includes clearance for graduation one semester prior to completion, properly formatting the dissertation, meeting the specified dates for submission of drafts for Graduate School review, and submission of the final dissertation to meet graduation deadlines. There are many forms that must be completed prior to the defense. Please become aware of the necessary procedures and consult with the Graduate School (http://www.grad.auburn.edu/) in Hargis Hall. This is imperative to timely completion and graduation.

Program Dismissal Policies

Students may be dismissed from the Ph.D. programs in the Management Department for the following reasons:
1. **Academic Dishonesty.** The Department of Management follows the policies on academic dishonesty as established in the AU Academic Dishonesty Policy (https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AcademicHonestyCode.pdf). If a student is found guilty of academic dishonesty after following the procedure outlined in the Academic Dishonesty Policy, he/she will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

2. **Deficient GPA.** If a student’s department and/or cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation. If the cumulative graduate GPA remains below 3.0 after the next 9 credit hours (one semester) of graduate enrollment (graded and upgraded), the student will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

3. **Class failure.** If a student earns an F in any course taken as part of their Auburn coursework toward the graduate degree, they will be dismissed from the program. A grade of incomplete in a class must be removed within six months or it will be automatically converted to an F. The six-month limit applies regardless of whether or not the student is enrolled.

4. **Violation of Professional Ethical Standards.** Graduate students are expected to hold and display the highest levels of professional standards of behavior. Violations of professional standards leading to dismissal from the program include, but are not limited to, the following:

   a. **Abuses of teaching responsibilities/authority.** Graduate students with teaching assignments are expected to conduct themselves in ways, which correspond to accepted standards of teaching. Abuses include inappropriate behaviors, such as sexual harassment, discrimination based on sex, religion, age, race, color, national origin, or disability, grade “selling,” excessive class cancellations, and general neglect and dereliction of teaching duties.

   b. **Violations of Confidentiality Arrangements.** Most graduate students will engage in some form of research. Oftentimes this research requires the use of human subjects and arrangements of confidentiality. Violations of the researcher/research subject trust are serious professional offenses and reflect badly on the profession and Auburn University. Violation of agreements with, or abuse of, research subjects are grounds for dismissal from the program.

   c. **Scholarly misconduct.** Plagiarism, data fabrication, data stealing, or authorship misconduct (e.g., omitting a rightful author or claiming another’s work as your own) with regard to scholarly materials are serious professional offenses and are grounds for dismissal from the program. Falsification of information or misrepresentation of credentials including resumes.

5. **Failure to Satisfy the Deadlines, Criteria, or Other Requirements for Continuation as specified in this document and by the Faculty.** If it is judged by the Faculty that a student is not making adequate progress or that his/her ability to complete the program in a timely fashion is in doubt, they can formally communicate to the student their concerns and communicate deadlines, criteria, or other requirements that must be met in order to continue in the program. Typically, such requirements would be part of the student’s annual
performance review. However, the department can change program requirements as needed at any time during the student’s program.

6. Lack of Program Progress. Based on a student’s annual Faculty review, inadequate progress can cause a student’s dismissal from the program.

7. Qualifying Paper/Comps Failure. A Ph.D. student cannot enter candidacy and will be terminated from the program if he/she fails to complete the second year qualifying paper and their comprehensive exams by the end of their third year. The qualifying paper must meet the requirements specified under the Manuscript Development Policy listed below.

Manuscript Development Policy

Any deviation from the policies outlined below must be based on the Management Department Ph.D. Program Steering Committee’s approval of a student-generated appeal.

a. Students must pass the manuscript components as outlined below. Failure to complete the manuscript components in the specified time will result in program dismissal.

b. The student must form a manuscript committee prior to beginning the qualifying manuscript. The committee for the manuscript consists of at least two Management Department full-time graduate faculty members, one member serving as chair.

c. The student must submit a formal project/manuscript proposal to the qualifying manuscript committee for approval. The proposal should include the topic being addressed, the approach and schedule planned to complete the project, the targeted audience, and the journal targeted for the paper.

d. Manuscript topics must be compatible with the student’s area of concentration. Manuscript topics can build from papers completed for course requirements. It is encouraged that topics relate to the student’s anticipated dissertation (e.g., based on extensive review of the literature, conceptual develop, field research, or a pilot research study).

e. Since the qualifying manuscript is intended to build the student’s knowledge base and expertise in their field of concentration, manuscripts should be independent work, with supervision and advice from the manuscript committee’s members.

f. The manuscript should be written in a fashion consistent with the targeted journal’s publication standards (e.g., content, length, structure, style, and methods).

g. After the manuscript is submitted to the committee for review, the committee will evaluate the manuscript relative to its quality based on the adequacy of its theory, hypotheses, literature review, methods, analyses, conclusions, implications, and presentation. As with journal submissions, the manuscript committee is expected to request a “revision and resubmission” of the manuscript based on their editorial review
h. After the manuscript committee formally signs off that a paper is completed, the completion form must be placed in the student’s permanent file. After the manuscript is accepted, the student may present the paper to a management colloquium for further feedback. The completed manuscript should be submitted to a professional meeting for presentation, and/or to the targeted journal for publication.


Appeal Policies

Students can appeal faculty decisions as follows: The student should submit, in writing, the request for appeal and justifications for such request to the Department of Management Chair. An ad hoc Ph.D. Review Committee, appointed by the Department Chair, will review and rule on appealed decisions. The committee will include at least one faculty member outside the student’s area of concentration. The committee will have full authority of the department in reviewing and deciding the case.

Four-Year Ph.D. Program

While it is hoped that all Ph.D. students can complete their coursework and dissertation within a four-year period of time, please be advised that office space and stipend support is guaranteed only for four years.