Dissertation Committee
An approved dissertation, unless otherwise stated by the degree program, is required of all candidates for the award of a doctorate degree. Its purpose is to demonstrate the candidate’s ability to conduct significant original research of a type appropriate to the academic discipline, to analyze the information obtained from the research, and to present the results in a form acceptable to the dissertation committee. A dissertation must be written in a form appropriate to the discipline.

When the student is admitted to candidacy and the Dissertation Committee Chair is satisfied with the completed dissertation, he/she will inform the candidate that the dissertation is ready to be read by all members of the Dissertation Committee. Per the preference of the Dissertation Committee, the student will then distribute dissertation copies in electronic file or hard copy format to the committee members. The candidate must provide a copy of the dissertation to each member of the final examining committee at least two weeks (in some programs three weeks) before the scheduled defense. The candidate, in consultation with the Committee Chair (Major Professor) and committee members, will then schedule the dissertation defense. The dissertation defense must be scheduled by the semester deadline stated in the university academic calendar to conduct the defense. The dissertation defense will be held in a forum open to the public.

The chairperson also has the right and the responsibility to evaluate the candidate’s performance and to cast a vote. The Dissertation Committee has a variety of responsibilities in the final defense process.

- The chair (and/or the committee) informs the student they are ready to schedule the dissertation defense. Agreeing to the dissertation defense scheduling does not imply that the dissertation is approved.
- Once the defense is scheduled, the committee will thoroughly review the candidates dissertation to make an assessment of the total dissertation as to presentation, methodology, and reporting. It is best practice in the time between the confirmation of the defense date and the defense date, that committee members not engage in discussion around matters pertaining to the dissertation document. Questions about the students work should be saved for the oral defense so that the student can defend their work in this designated forum.
- The committee also agrees to hold a public, oral dissertation defense, after the dissertation is deemed acceptable in form, at which the candidate presents and defends the dissertation.
- All members of the examining committee (or substitutes appointed by the College of Graduate Studies) are expected to be present throughout the examination. At the conclusion of the dissertation defense, there can only be one dissenting vote of the examining committee including substitutes appointed by the College of Graduate Studies before the candidate is deemed to have passed. A refusal to vote by the chairperson or any other member of the examining committee shall be recorded as a negative vote. With the permission of the majority of the committee, a failed defense may be retaken only one time and scheduled no earlier than three months from the date of the failure. The defense must be given on the Statesboro campus.
- Following the defense, the committee will report the results (for both failed and passed) of this examination to the College of Graduate Studies.
- When the dissertation has been approved, the dissertation defense passed, and all other requirements have been met, the candidate is recommended to be awarded the degree by the College of Graduate Studies.

Dissertation Continuous Enrollment Requirement
The College of Graduate Studies Continuous Enrollment policy states that: “All thesis or dissertation students who have registered at least once for courses titled thesis or dissertation must be continuously enrolled every semester thereafter, including the semester of graduation. Summer registration is not required unless summer is the graduation semester.” Check with your major advisor to see if your college has a different, or additional, continuous enrollment requirement(s) that apply.

- A grade of “IP” will be recorded for all dissertation credit hour work in progress, and will automatically be recorded each semester the student is enrolled.
- The grade of “S” or “U” must be recorded for all dissertation credit hour when completed.
- The advisor and/or major professor will report a final dissertation grade of “S” or “U”. Any reported grade other than “S” or “U” will be changed to an “S” or “U” grade according to the following: REPORTED GRADE OF “A”, “B”, “C” = “S”, “D”, “F” = “U”
- Upon completion of the dissertation requirements, final grades for preceding semester(s) will be changed to the appropriate grade.

Should a student not register each semester as required by the continuous enrollment policy, the student will be required to register in thesis or dissertation credit and pay tuition and fees for the missed registration semesters at the beginning of the semester the student resumes his/her study providing the student is eligible to return and resume registration.

A student who has been approved for a medical or a non-medical leave of absence is not required to be registered while under the approved leave period.

Following admission to a doctoral program, the student confers with an advisor, or “major professor,” from among the graduate faculty who have permission from their department chair to direct dissertations and who are willing to assume the responsibility. Dissertation committees must be formulated by doctoral students in doctoral programs requiring dissertations. The dissertation committee must consist of a minimum of three members of the Graduate faculty, including the student’s major professor, who will serve as Chair of the committee.

Only faculty holding Member (Full) Graduate Faculty status may serve as the Dissertation Committee Chair. The committee may include not more than one voting non-Georgia Southern University faculty. This individual must hold Affiliate Graduate Faculty status at Georgia Southern University, be appointed to the graduate faculty, and be approved by the College of Graduate Studies.

The student must submit the completed Dissertation Committee Membership Approval Form (http://cogs.georgiasouthern.edu/student/forms) to the College of Graduate Studies for committee approval and have the non-Georgia Southern committee member complete the online process (https://w3.georgiasouthern.edu/cogs/externalcommitteeMembers). The College of Graduate Studies gives final approval for non-Georgia Southern committee members. Changes in the Committee membership must be submitted on the Committee Member Change form and be approved by the graduate dean.

All members of a student’s dissertation committee participate as peers and have the responsibility for planning the program of study, advising the student, and ensuring that the student’s doctoral program is of high quality.