This Doctoral Program Handbook presents the policies of the School of Public Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha regarding the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration degree program. The policies presented here are in addition to general policies set forth in the Graduate Catalog of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Students and prospective students should consult the Graduate Catalog as well as this Handbook.

Interested parties should pay particular attention to all of the policies and procedures presented here, especially the "Program Objectives." They establish expectations for doctoral education that exceed expectations for Masters degree-level education. The Master of Public Administration is a terminal degree, appropriate for the professional practice of public administration. The Ph.D. in Public Administration is the terminal degree for research and theory development. While this definition of the doctoral degree does not preclude people who wish to further their education while remaining in professional public management careers, it should communicate that the doctorate in public administration focuses upon developing a student's ability to conduct research and engage in theoretical reflection.

Provisions of the Handbook will change as a function of modifications of policies, procedures or requirements made by either the public administration graduate faculty or the University Graduate Council. As such changes occur, new editions of the Handbook will be posted on the web page. Handbook curriculum policies in effect in a student's first semester of doctoral work following admission, relating to the courses and credit hours required for the core, specialization, and research portions of the program, continue to apply to the student through graduation. In some circumstances, students may be allowed to switch from an older curriculum model to one recently adopted. All other current handbook policies apply equally to all students in the program regardless of date of entry into the program.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Ph.D. program in Public Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha is a research degree in public management. The focus is on public sector management in a democratic and diverse society. The program offers advanced education in the foundations of public administration, knowledge frameworks in the study of public administration, the relationship between public organizations and other institutions and organizations in society, and the history of management reform in the public sector.

Because the doctoral program seeks to provide students with the competencies necessary to achieve distinction in higher education or leadership positions in public management, the faculty expects students to exhibit a serious and well thought out commitment to the profession of public service in a democratic and diverse society. The doctoral program assists students in their individual development toward a professional
sense of personal responsibility and public accountability, providing a foundation for a successful career in academia or in public administration.

**Progress Toward the Degree**

Doctoral students in their first year of study must complete any masters-level course pre-requisites before progressing to the core seminars. The curriculum and course schedule are designed to enable full-time students to complete their degree within four years. The first year consists of the doctoral core seminars and/or the first two research seminars. (See link to The Doctoral Program of Study) The second year consists of the first two research seminars and courses in the area of concentration. The third year consists of completing course work in the area of concentration, as well as the seminar in advanced research design. By the third year full-time students take their field exam and defend their dissertation proposals. The fourth year consists of completing and defending the dissertation.

**Year One.** All doctoral students, whether full-time or part-time, must complete 24 credit hours within 24 months in order to meet the residency requirement of the University. The residency requirement insures that progress toward the degree occurs within a reasonably compact time frame, enabling the doctoral student to integrate his or her course work with the dissertation. *Once doctoral students begin their program, they may not stop out for one or more semesters without an approved leave of absence from the Doctoral Program Committee.*

The student's Supervisory Committee must be formed while the student is enrolled in the first semester of doctoral course work. Initially, the student will be assisted in forming the committee by the Chair of the Doctoral Program Committee, who will recommend a committee to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean has final responsibility for appointing the Supervisory Committee. After the Dean signs the "Appointment of Advisory Committee for the Doctoral Program" form a copy is sent to each committee member, the Dean of the College of Public Affairs and Administration, the Chair of the Doctoral Program Committee, and the student. The original is kept in the student's file. A student wishing to change the membership of his/her supervisory committee must petition the Doctoral Program Committee in the form of a letter offering reasons for the request, and also submit a change of Committee form to the Dean of Graduate Studies with the Chair of the Doctoral Program Committee’s signature.

In the process of forming the Supervisory Committee the student and the committee members develop the student's Program of Study. The Program of Study serves to guide the student through his or her doctoral education. It must be filed with the Dean of Graduate Studies within three weeks of the appointment of a student's Supervisory Committee. Following approval of the Program of Study by the Dean of Graduate Studies, a student wishing to change any courses on the Program must petition the Supervisory Committee and submit a change of program of study form with the Chair of the Supervisory Committee’s signature.
The Doctoral Program Committee will conduct a review of student progress each year. The Committee will make such recommendations as may be appropriate to Supervisory Committees. All students are required to submit a summary of their annual progress by March 1. (See link to Procedures for the Degree)

**Years Two and Three.** Following completion of all course work doctoral students take the field examination, covering course work in the areas of concentration and related research methods. The field exam testing periods are September 1 through November 15 in the fall semester and February 1 through April 15 in the spring semester. The field exam is given in closed-book format in an eight-hour period which can be divided into two four-hour sessions. The exam is designed and graded by the student's Supervisory Committee.

Students must seek permission from the Chair of their Supervisory Committees to take the field exam. The request will be made in writing to the Supervisory Committee chair with a copy to the chair of the Doctoral Program Committee, at least 45 days before the first exam session, and will suggest the dates of exam sessions. Upon successful completion of field exams, students apply for Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree. (See link to Procedures for the Degree) Students who fail the field examination may, with the approval of their Supervisory Committee, repeat the examination the next time it is offered. A student who fails the examination a second time will immediately be dropped from the program.

**Years Three and Four.** The dissertation is the culmination of a student's formal academic education in public administration, research competencies, and area of concentration. The faculty expects the dissertation to be an original contribution to knowledge in the field of public administration. Students must work closely with their Supervisory Committee in the selection of a topic for research, the choice of appropriate research methods and techniques, and a time line for completion.

Students will complete a Dissertation Proposal and defend it before their Supervisory Committee. The proposal should consist of a statement of the topic to be addressed, an explanation of why the topic is important, a review of the relevant literature, and an appropriate research design. The Supervisory Committee will assist the student in the development of the proposal. Defense of the proposal will be before a majority of the members of the Supervisory Committee and the Chair of the Doctoral Program Committee no earlier than two weeks after they have received the proposal.

The Dissertation Defense will be scheduled only when the Chair of the Supervisory Committee indicates that it is ready for the defense. The oral examination will be conducted by the Supervisory Committee and the Chair of the Doctoral Program Committee. The defense will be open to all university faculty members. An oral review for the Dissertation Defense must be scheduled by the student with the Supervisory Committee whose members must sign off on the application for final oral examination based on that oral review before the student submits the application and dissertation to
the Office of Graduate Studies. *Members of the Supervisory Committee will have one month to read and evaluate the dissertation prior to the review.*

**GOVERNANCE OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM**

The Doctoral Program Committee and the student’s Supervisory Committee play important roles in administering the doctoral program and in monitoring students’ progress through the program.

**The Doctoral Program Committee.** The Doctoral Program Committee administers the degree program. The Committee takes primary responsibility for supervision of the program, including admissions, interpretation of policy and socialization of doctoral students into the community of scholars. The Committee also conducts an annual review of the academic progress of each doctoral student. The full-time tenure-track faculty members of the School of Public Administration nominate members of the Committee to the Dean for Graduate Studies, who makes the appointments. Committee members recommend one member to the Dean to serve as Chair for a three-year term with a possible two-year reappointment.

**The Supervisory Committee.** The Supervisory Committee guides the student through the entire program of study. There needs to be a minimum of three members, including the chair, who are faculty members in the School. (See link to The Doctoral Program of Study) The outside member must also be a faculty member from a different graduate program in the University of Nebraska system. (See link to Procedures for the Degree)

**Responsibilities of the Supervisory Committee.** The Committee advises first year students on the Program of Study. The Committee designs and evaluates the field exam; evaluates and hears the defense of the dissertation proposal; evaluates the dissertation; hears the oral review for the final oral defense of the dissertation; hears the final oral defense of the dissertation; and recommends approval of the dissertation to the Dean for Graduate Studies. Two members of the Committee serve as readers of the dissertation who provide in-depth review and feedback at key stages of the process: 1) prior to the proposal defense; 2) upon completion of the literature review and research design; 3) upon completion of the data analysis; 4) prior to the oral review for the final defense. *Committee members and students need to be aware of their mutual responsibilities to consult with one another at each stage of the dissertation process.*

**Responsibilities of the Supervisory Committee Chair.** The Chair of the Supervisory Committee is the student’s primary advisor throughout the doctoral program. The Chair recommends to the Dean for Graduate Studies approval of the student’s Program of Study following a meeting between the student and the members of the Committee. The Chair assumes the primary responsibility for supervising the Advanced Research Design seminar which is the last course prior to development of the dissertation proposal. The Chair coordinates the field exam process by consulting with other members of the Committee about the design and evaluation of the exam questions.
The Chair also presides at the oral defense of the dissertation proposal, the oral review for the final oral defense of the dissertation; and the final oral defense of the dissertation.

**QUALITY OF WORK STANDARDS**

Doctoral students are expected to do work of high caliber. Failure to maintain quality of work standards will result in automatic dismissal from the program:

- Failure to maintain a 3.35 average for all course work
- A grade of C+ or below in more than one course
- Failure to maintain continuous enrollment

A student who has been dismissed for failure to meet the one or more of the Quality of Work standards may petition the Doctoral Program Committee for reinstatement. The Doctoral Program Committee will forward its recommendation to Dean for Graduate Studies. The Dean may grant reinstatement according to one of the following options:

- Unconditional reinstatement to the degree program
- Reinstatement with Unclassified status in order to retake specific courses, with possible readmission to the degree program

**RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT AND REASONABLE PROGRESS**

A residency requirement is established by the Graduate College of the University of Nebraska for the purpose of insuring that the doctoral program of study is reasonably compact, continuous and coherent. In addition, the residency requirement insures that a substantial portion of the program is done at and under the close supervision of the Supervisory Committee. The requirement is that students who are beginning their doctoral program of study complete at least 24 credit hours within a 24 month period. Students are expected to maintain reasonable progress toward the degree, as measured by timely completion of their Programs of Study. Students may “stop the clock” by petitioning the Doctoral Program Committee for a leave of absence for a stated period of time, not to exceed one year. A leave of absence must be approved in advance by the Dean for Graduate Studies on the recommendation of the Doctoral Program Committee.

**COMPLETION DEADLINE**

The time limit is eight years from the date of the filing of the Program of Study. On rare occasions this deadline may be extended for one or more semesters at the discretion of the Dean for Graduate Studies on the recommendation of the Doctoral Program Committee.