WVU Geography Ph.D. Degree Requirements

The Doctoral Program in Geography at West Virginia University provides students with cutting edge training in the history and theory of geography, experience with advanced geographic research methodologies and specialized mentoring from faculty experts across three sub-disciplinary fields (Human Geography; Environmental Geography; Geographic Information Science). To earn a Ph.D. in Geography at WVU students must complete 28 credit hours of graduate courses (based upon the curriculum described below), form a committee of graduate faculty to supervise their study, pass a comprehensive exam, write and defend a dissertation research proposal, and finally, write and defend a dissertation.

- **Credit Hours**: Students are required to complete a minimum number of 28 graduate credit hours in Geography at the 400 level or above. No more than 6 credit hours of 400-level courses may be counted towards the degree.

- **Grade Point Average**: Students must earn a minimum GPA of 3.0 overall, and of 3.0 in coursework applied to their graduate program.

- **Comprehensive Examinations**: Students should take the written and oral comprehensive exam no later than the end of the fourth semester of their studies, and after completing core geography and methods electives. The student will be examined in two specialty areas and a third area closely related to the proposed dissertation research topic. The exams are based on extensive bibliographies for each of the three areas. Students will work with their advisor and committee members to determine topic areas and bibliographies. It is expected that the student should be able to conceptually situate the three areas in the context of the history and philosophy of geography. The written exam has three parts, covering each of the areas chosen. The exams are open-book and each part will be no more than one day in length. Normally all three exams take place within one week. The number of questions for each of the parts of the exam is determined by the committee. The chair of the committee has final responsibility for disseminating the questions.

  The oral exam normally takes place in the week after the end of the written exam, and is a follow-up and response to the written exam. Under exceptional circumstances, the oral exam may be held up to two weeks after the written exam. It is expected that the entire doctoral committee be present for the oral exam. However, the presence of committee members who are not based in Morgantown is not required and teleconferencing may be used.

  It must be the consensus of the doctoral committee that the student has passed the examination, although the committee may have one dissenting vote. In the event of a conditional pass, a single portion of the examination may be repeated at the discretion of the committee. If two or more of the members are dissatisfied, the entire examination must be repeated. The student may only re-take the exam one additional time.
• **Dissertation Proposal:** Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, a student must present and defend a research proposal no later than the end of the fifth semester of full-time study in the program. It is recommended that the proposal be presented within three months of the comprehensive exam. The proposal presentation must be advertised in the Department two weeks prior to the presentation. At least four of the committee members must approve the proposal. Dissertation proposals are not normally held between June 15 and August 15. After passing the dissertation proposal, the student becomes a candidate for the doctoral degree. Doctoral candidates are allowed five years under University regulations in which to complete the remaining degree requirements.

The PhD proposal will include a plan of completion of the dissertation, indicating whether it will take the form of a monograph or a compilation of journal articles. This should be determined in consultation with the advisor and the committee. The plan of completion should include an outline for the dissertation (i.e. chapters in case of a monograph, articles and target journals in case of a compilation).

• **Dissertation Defense:** A copy of the dissertation must be made available to the committee at least two weeks prior to the defense. The dissertation defense must be advertised in the Department two weeks prior to the presentation. At least 4 of the committee members must approve the dissertation defense for the student to pass. Dissertation defenses are normally not held between June 15 and August 15. Only one member of the committee may participate virtually and the student must obtain permission from the ECAS dean or their designee prior to the defense. In accordance with College requirements, original signatures are required on the shuttle sheet form specifying the outcome of the defense. A copy of the dissertation must also be placed in the Departmental administrative offices for public access.

• **Doctoral Committee:** In year one, each student must form a doctoral committee of a minimum of five graduate faculty. The committee are as follows.
  o The chair must be a faculty member of the WVU Geography program and a regular member of the WVU graduate faculty.
  o In addition to the chair, two of the committee members must be regular faculty members of the WVU Geography Program, though one of these may be from Geology or adjunct to Geography.
  o At least one committee member must be from outside the Department of Geology and Geography.
  o All committee members must have a Ph.D.
  o Students may change advisor or committee members after consultation with the advisor and the Graduate Committee. To ensure progress toward completion of the degree it is recommended that doctoral committees should meet at least once per year. If necessary, this meeting can be done by telecommunication, or by circulating a summary statement of progress by the student.
• **Annual Review**: The academic progress of every doctoral student is reviewed each year. Students must submit a self-evaluation signed by their advisor by January 15. The Graduate Committee will conduct its annual review of students in February and communicate with students in March.

• **Waivers**: Waivers to the PhD deadlines, timing requirements, and other rules may be requested from the Graduate Coordinator. Waivers are only given under extraordinary circumstances. A limited number of the required courses may be waived up to 9 credit hours if the student has already completed an equivalent course and can demonstrate proficiency with the material. They should work with their advisor and the Graduate Committee to request a waiver. Students requesting course waivers must make their request prior to submitting their formal Plan of Study in their first semester.

• **Required Deadlines:**

  First year: Course work
  - Fall semester: File plan of study
  - Spring semester: Form committee

  Second year: Course work
  - Fall semester: Form committee, if not yet completed
  - Spring semester: Oral and Written comprehensive exams

  Third year: Defend proposal/Field work/Data collection
  - Fall semester: Defend dissertation proposal by the end of semester
  - Fall and Spring semesters: Collect data/conduct fieldwork as necessary

  Fourth year: Dissertation writing

• **Time Limits**: The university requires students to complete all graduation requirements within five years of doctoral candidacy. In the Geography PhD, candidacy is earned upon the completion of a successful proposal defense. The candidacy clock begins with the next full semester, and all graduation requirements must be complete before the start of the same regular semester in five years’ time. Refer to the WVU Graduate Catalog section on time limits for more information.
• Curriculum Requirements

GEOG 601  Geographic Traditions  3

Geographic Methods Course (select one of the following)  3
GEOG 603  Qualitative Research in Geography
GEOG 701  Quantitative Spatial Analysis

Geography Colloquium (1 credit per semester):  4
GEOG 600  Geography Research Colloquium (repeated)

Geography Core Courses (GEOG 500+)
Methods Electives  3
Seminar Course  3
General Electives  6

Total Hours  28

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