

School of Industrial Engineering and Management

PhD Degree Program

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is designed for the student who desires to participate at the leading edge of knowledge in the profession of industrial engineering and management. The degree requires the completion of at least 60 credit hours beyond the master's degree or the bachelor's degree. A master's degree is not a pre-requisite for the PhD degree.

Major Milestones & Timeline

1. Chair and Advisor Selection (First semester)
2. Formation of Advisory Committee (End of first year—start of second year)
3. Plan of Study Meeting (End of first year—start of second year)
4. Qualifying Exam (Third year)
5. Dissertation Proposal and Admission to Doctoral Candidacy (Third or fourth year)
6. Doctoral Candidacy Presentation (Within one semester after admission to candidacy)
7. Dissertation Review Workshop/Webinar (Within one semester after admission to candidacy)
8. Dissertation Defense (Fourth or fifth year)
9. Submission of Dissertation to Graduate College (Soon after successful defense)

Chair and Advisor Selection

Typically, the School of IEM matches incoming PhD students based on their stated interest with a “faculty champion” whom we expect will serve both as the research Advisor and committee Chair. Note that these roles could be filled by different faculty members. If the need arises for a change in the Advisor or Chair at any point in time during the period of study, the doctoral student must work closely with the current Advisor/Chair, the Head, and the Graduate Program Director to manage the change.

Selection of the Advisory Committee

The selection of the potential Advisory Committee members should be a collaborative activity between the student and his or her Advisor and Committee Chair. Although the student has the ultimate responsibility for recommending the Advisory Committee membership, his or her Advisor (and Chair, if different) can be a valuable resource with insights that will help the student make informed decisions. The student should meet with potential Advisory Committee members prior to recommending them to better understand their experience, availability, mentoring style, and willingness to serve as an Advisory Committee member. Doctoral students should consult the members of the Advisory Committee frequently and keep them informed on the progress of their work. The requirements an IEM Advisory Committee must meet can be found at the link¹ provided.

Plan of Study

The Plan of Study (POS) must include a minimum of 60 graduate credit hours with at least 30 hours of graduate coursework. Courses for graduate credit are selected by the student with the approval of the advisory committee. The Plan of Study must include at least 18 credit hours of dissertation research (IEM 6000). The specific number of credit hours allocated to courses and research, and their timing, is determined by the committee and depends on the student's background and needs to successfully accomplish the research objectives. The post-candidacy reduced enrollment requirements may be leveraged in determining the timing and number of research credits.

Academic Qualifying Exam

The qualifying exam comprises three components: academic performance in coursework, a written examination, and oral examination. This written and oral exam are designed to assess the student's ability to conduct research within their chosen focus area and is typically taken during the fourth regular semester. Further details on the qualifying exam can be found on-line at the link² provided.

¹ <https://ceat.okstate.edu/iem/current-students/committee-composition.pdf>

² <https://ceat.okstate.edu/iem/current-students/qualifying-examination.pdf>

Dissertation Proposal

The student's development of the dissertation topic and proposal should be an ongoing process following the completion of the Plan of Study meeting. The student submits the dissertation proposal to the advisory committee after the successful completion of the academic qualifying examination. This is followed by an oral defense of the proposal. After successful completion of the proposal defense, the student applies to the Graduate College for admission to candidacy. Further details on the proposal can be found online at the link³ provided.

Public Presentation

The student must give a presentation to IEM graduate students and faculty on the topic(s) of their dissertation research as outlined in their research proposal. This presentation must be completed no later than the first regular semester (Fall/Spring) following the student's admission to candidacy.

Final Defense

The final oral defense will normally occur no sooner than two weeks after each advisory committee member has received a copy of the student's completed dissertation. The student will give a presentation summarizing the dissertation results in an open session (open to all interested faculty and students) followed by a question and answer session with the advisory committee in a closed session. After successful completion of the dissertation defense, the student prepares the dissertation document for submission to the graduate college. Further details regarding the dissertation draft submission, scheduling of the defense, advisory committee expectations, and defense outcomes can be found online at the link⁴ provided.

Internship/practicum Credits

The POS may include "IEM 5020 Graduate Engineering Practicum" for graduate-level internship/practicum in the field closely related to the student's dissertation topic.

- Students must take IEM 5020 in each semester doing an internship/practicum.
- A doctoral student may participate in internships in Fall/Spring semesters only after obtaining candidacy and with approval from the advisor, the IEM Graduate Program Director, and the Department Head.
- A doctoral student may participate in internships for maximum three semesters.
- The POS may include up to 6 credit hours total of IEM 5020.
- The IEM 5020 hours cannot be counted towards the minimum 30 credit hours coursework requirement or the minimum 18 credit hours research requirement.
- The student is responsible for meeting full-time enrollment requirements during any semester in which they participate in an internship/practicum.⁵
- International students need to keep their full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) under twelve months. Otherwise, they will lose the Optional Practical Training (OPT) option.

Visit: <https://ceat.okstate.edu/iem/current-students/phd-iem-program-information.html> for all IEM Graduate Program Documents.

³ <https://ceat.okstate.edu/iem/current-students/dissertation-proposal.pdf>

⁴ <https://ceat.okstate.edu/iem/current-students/dissertation-draft-and-defense.pdf>

⁵ International students are expected to consult with the Office of International Students and Scholars to find out current full-time enrollment requirements.

Last updated: Sept. 2025; Based on OSU Graduate College Best Practices Guide,

<https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/best-practices-documents.html>