

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business



Ph.D. Handbook

**Adopted Feb 29, 2012
(Revised 8/1/15; 9/21/16; 3/22/17;
4/8/2024)**

NOTE:

This Handbook collects and summarizes information about the process of obtaining a Ph.D. in Business at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). It is designed to help a student navigate this process.

The VCU *Graduate Bulletin 2023-2024* states:

“The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the Graduate Bulletin as well as the academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites; however, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on this Graduate Bulletin website and on the Graduate School website, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.”

SOURCE: <https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/welcome-graduate-dean/>

Questions and concerns about any of the Handbook’s contents should be directed to, and will be resolved by, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research and/or the School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee.

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1. OVERVIEW

The Ph.D. in Business program at Virginia Commonwealth University is designed to train individuals to fill positions at academic institutions that emphasize quality research and teaching. The program size (fewer than 40 students) allows for extensive one-to-one interaction between students and faculty. Three areas of concentration are offered: Accounting, Information Systems, and Management.

A basic tenet of our program is that the classic trilogy of teaching, research and service typically invoked in university mission statements is synergistic. We strive to develop graduates who share this perspective and aspire to well-rounded individual roles within universities, colleges, and other learning organizations. For this reason, our program provides instruction in research and teaching.

Instruction in research is a cornerstone of our program. To fulfill the requirements for the degree, students must demonstrate successful completion of prerequisite and advanced courses, a comprehensive examination in their concentration area, and defense of a dissertation. Doctoral seminars and methods courses provide coverage in basic theories, methodologies, and techniques needed to conduct research. The dissertation demonstrates a student's competence in conducting independent research.

The program also offers students mentoring and teaching opportunities. Formal instruction designed to augment student teaching skills is also available. Mentoring involves teaming a student with a faculty member to augment student self-awareness and self-confidence in the classroom. Classroom exposure and experience is required to insure that our Ph.D. graduate enters the job market with certifiable teaching experience.

2. General Program Requirements

A. Courses and Credits

1. Each student's level of knowledge in the area of concentration is considered prior to admission. Based on a review by the doctoral program advisor in the concentration area, additional course prerequisites and/or co-requisites might be required for individuals based on past academic and/or work experience.
2. Departments that offer concentration areas in the Ph.D. in Business determine whether students will complete the program as part-time or full-time students. Currently, the Accounting Department and the Management Department require all students to complete required courses for the degree on a full-time basis. The Department of Information Systems allows students to complete the program on a part-time or full-time basis.
3. Full-time students are required to take a minimum of nine credit hours of study during the fall and spring semesters, and a minimum of three credit hours of study during the summer term. Part-time status is between 1 – 8 credit hours of study each semester.
4. Because the Ph.D. in Business is a 12-month program, students are expected to enroll in summer school courses to advance their understanding of research methods or to engage in research with faculty in their area of concentration that may be submitted to conferences or academic journals.
5. Students must complete at least 12 credit hours of dissertation credit in order to be eligible to graduate.
6. All appeals relating to student status in the Ph.D. in Business will be heard by the School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee.

B. Program Completion Time Limits

1. The current School of Business expected time limit for completing all course work for the doctoral degree, successfully passing comprehensive examinations, and presenting an acceptable dissertation proposal is five years. The current University-established time limit for a doctoral degree is eight years. Each student's time limit begins with the first semester in which he/she enrolls for course work after being admitted to the program.
2. The time limit of eight years includes any leave-of-absence time granted a student.

C. Assignment to Program Concentration

The doctoral program advisor in each area of concentration is responsible for advising doctoral students until the student has an approved dissertation chair. Students should meet with their Advisor on a regular basis to discuss the student's

area of interest and to help plan timely completion of course work.

D. Program Planning

1. A student who desires to transfer from one concentration to another must make the request in writing to the doctoral program advisor of his/her concentration area, the doctoral program advisor of his/her intended concentration area, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. Upon receipt of the written request to transfer, the two program advisors, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research will meet to review the request. If the request for transfer is approved, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research will implement the transfer and the student will be notified of the approved change in concentration. If the request for transfer is denied, the student will be notified of the decision and no change will take place. A change of concentration may require the student to take additional course work. The original eight year limit to complete the doctoral program remains in effect following a transfer of concentration.
2. Each student is responsible for meeting with his/her doctoral program advisor to complete an **Approved Program Form** (copy in Appendix) before completion of 18 credit hours of coursework in the doctoral program. The student and the doctoral program advisor must sign the Approved Program Form before submitting it to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research.
3. If revision of the **Approved Program Form** is required, a revised copy of the originally approved form must be submitted to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. The revised copy should include the course changes, initialed and dated by the appropriate doctoral program advisor and student. Once submitted, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research will review the changes and provide final approval.

E. Transfer Credits

1. The policy concerning credits is found below and also in the current edition of the *VCU Graduate Bulletin*: "Acceptance of transfer credit is made at the school level and reviewed and approved by the Graduate School. Individual schools/programs may have more stringent requirements." The *Bulletin* should always be reviewed for any additional or more recent details.
2. A maximum of six graduate credit hours earned in a degree program at an AACSB or equivalently accredited institution may be transferred and applied toward the graduate degree. However, in exceptional circumstances, more than six credit hours, but limited to the maximum allowed by the Graduate School, may be transferred. Credit transfers are not automatic but will be reviewed and granted on a case-by-case basis. Acceptance of transfer credits is made at the discretion of the Doctoral Program Committee in the concentration area, subject to approval by the School PhD Program Committee and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research.
3. All transfer work must be "A" or "B" grade level. Students must be in good standing at the institution from which the credits were earned. Additionally, students must have had full admission during the time these credits were earned at that college or

university. Transfer credits shall not be older than eight years at the time the degree is awarded.

4. To transfer credits earned at other institutions after acceptance into the VCU graduate program, approval must be obtained in advance from the Doctoral Program Committee in the concentration area and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. Such work is approved only under unusual circumstances.
5. Credits earned toward another degree cannot be applied to this degree program.

F. Appeals to School or University Policies or Procedures

1. Students who wish to appeal academic procedures and actions regarding their status in the program, including but not limited to extensions of time limit, requests for approval of dissertation committee membership, requests for retroactive withdrawals, and additional transfer credits must do so by submitting the appropriate written request to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. This handbook includes forms for specific actions. Other requested appeals may be submitted in the form of a written letter.
2. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research has the responsibility and authority to require supporting evidence of student requests as deemed appropriate to the circumstances surrounding the student's request. For example, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research may require medical documentation, legal documentation and/or faculty input, among other possible materials before submitting the student's appeal to the School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee for their review.
3. Once complete, the student's written request for appeal, including all supporting documents, will be provided to the School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee for its review and recommendation of action. If the recommended action calls for an exception to university policies or procedures, the Ph.D. Program Committee recommendation will be forwarded to the Dean of the VCU Graduate School who makes the final decision.

G. Financial Assistance

1. The School of Business provides a limited number of graduate teaching assistantships to Ph.D. students. Assistantships cover tuition and fees for the fall and spring semesters, as well as three credit hours of tuition for the summer term. In addition, students on assistantship receive a monthly stipend and are required to work 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters.
2. Work assignments vary as a student progresses through the program. Specific assignments may include research assistance, teaching assistance, and/or other responsibilities that are deemed appropriate. Offers of graduate teaching assistantships are typically made soon after the admission process. Separate letters of

award are mailed to the newly admitted students identified by the department as graduate teaching assistantship recipients.

3. Additional information regarding university-sponsored financial assistance is available from the VCU Financial Aid Office. Students may reach this office via e-mail at faidmail@vcu.edu, via the Internet at www.enrollment.vcu.edu/finaid/, or by telephone at (804) 828-6669.

H. Leave of Absence

1. According to university policy, an admitted student may apply for a leave of absence at any time after having been enrolled for course work. The request must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research and must include the reason for the leave as well as the length of time requested. A leave of absence can be for no more than one calendar year. If the request is granted, and the student takes the approved leave, he/she must still complete all program requirements, including successfully defending the dissertation within the original eight year time frame.
2. The VCU *Graduate School Bulletin* states: “Graduate students may request leaves of absence from their programs through written appeals to their advisers. The graduate advisers/program directors will forward the requests to the appropriate school dean/dean designee who, following departmental governance procedures, will forward their recommendations and any supporting documentation to the dean of the Graduate School who will respond for the university. Students who are out of compliance with continuous enrollment policies and who have not been granted approved leaves of absence by the graduate dean must reapply for admission to VCU and to their graduate degree programs. Graduate students with approved leaves of absence are exempted from continuous enrollment requirements for the LOA period. Students should note that while leaves of absence temporarily suspend continuous enrollment requirements, they do not extend time limits for completion of degrees.”

I. Readmission Policy

1. After a student leaves the program, whether voluntarily or because of failure to meet one or more of the program requirements, he/she may seek readmission. Readmission must be sought through the regular admission process, adhering to all deadline dates and admission criteria. In addition to admission material regularly requested, a candidate for readmission must provide a cover letter explaining the rationale for readmission, including a statement of the factors that have changed the applicant's situation and increased the expectation of success for the candidate.
2. The departmental Ph.D. committee will review the entire readmission packet at the regularly scheduled admission committee meeting. At the time readmission is considered, the appropriate Ph.D. committee will determine whether courses previously taken will be used to satisfy current requirements of the doctoral program.

If readmitted, the candidate will be expected to meet all other program requirements, including continuous enrollment, grades, program requirements, and the eight-year time limit for completion of the program.

3. Program Administration

A. Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research

1. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research is primarily concerned with issues of graduate programs to which the PhD in Business belongs.
2. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research is responsible for the administration of the Ph.D. program, including matters related to the management of the program, budgetary matters, correspondence, record keeping, articulation of the program to prospective and current students, tracking graduate teaching assistantships, and other duties as assigned.

B. School Ph.D. Program Committee

1. The School Ph.D. Program Committee is a standing committee of the School of Business, and the members include one faculty representative from each of the six academic departments within the School of Business. The purpose of the Ph. D. Program Committee is to ensure the integrity and quality of the Ph.D. In Business.
2. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research serves as a non-voting member.
3. The School Ph.D. Program Committee is responsible for approving all changes regarding Ph.D. in Business curriculum, approving dissertation committees, as well as hearing appeals related to student status in the doctoral program.

C. Departmental Ph.D. Committees

1. Departments that offer a concentration in the Ph.D. in Business follow departmental by-laws or procedures to name a committee of faculty from the respective department to guide and design the curriculum, make admission decisions, and advise students studying in the concentration.
2. Departmental Ph.D. committees send proposed curriculum changes, program changes, and other policy related issues to the School Ph.D. Program Committee for formal adoption and approval.

4. Curriculum

A. Foundation/Prerequisites

1. The purpose of this component of doctoral study is to ensure that all students have attained a basic competency level in general business disciplines. Students who have already completed a master's degree in business will likely have met all foundation/prerequisite requirements. For example, a student in the Information Systems concentration who has a Master of Science in Information Systems or its equivalent will most likely have sufficient preparation to begin doctoral studies.
2. Students who enter the Ph.D. in Business without an education in business will be expected to meet the foundation requirements for the intended concentration area of study.

B. Program Requirements

1. The Ph.D. in Business program requires each student to take a minimum of 41-47 credit hours of course work. For full-time students, the normal course load is nine credit hours in the fall and spring semesters, and three credit hours in the summer term for the first two years.
2. Each student must also take GRAD 602, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.
3. Full-time students may be required under condition of their assistantship to take three credit hours during the first two summers. This can be a course or it can be an independent study. The **Request for Independent Study** form is in the Appendix.

C. Research Courses

1. The research component is required of all Ph.D. in Business students and emphasizes the skills necessary to design, conduct, and interpret research. Students learn the research, statistical, and computer skills necessary to produce publishable research. Students are required to complete at least four methods courses, as assigned by their doctoral program advisor. All such courses must be listed on the Approved Program Form, which must be approved by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research.
2. There are many courses across the university that may be considered for the research core. In the Appendix is a list of possible options for students (and their doctoral program advisors) to consider for this component. The list is not exhaustive. Students and their doctoral program advisors may discover additional courses that may also be suitable

D. Concentration Area:

1. Accounting Concentration Courses:
 - ACCT 790 Research Methods Seminar
 - ACCT 791 Managerial Accounting Seminar
 - ACCT 792 Financial Accounting Seminar
 - ACCT 793 International Accounting Seminar
 - ACCT 794 Behavioral Research Seminar
 - ACCT 795 Auditing Seminar

2. Information Systems Concentration Courses:
 - INFO 710 Database Systems
 - INFO 720 Analysis and Design of Systems
 - INFO 730 Information Systems Strategy
 - INFO 740 Decision Support and Intelligent Systems
 - INFO 750 Information Systems Security
 - INFO 760 Knowledge Management
 - INFO 790 Special Topics in Information Systems Research

3. Management Concentration Courses:
 - Human Resource Management Seminars
 - MGMT 737 Seminar in Human Resources
 - MGMT 747 Seminar in Human Resources: Macro Foundations
 - MGMT 738 Special Topics in Human Resource Management

 - Organizational Behavior Seminars
 - MGMT 743 Organizing Systems
 - MGMT 746 Cognitive and Emotional Processes in Organizations
 - MGMT 750 Attitudes and Motivation in Organizations

 - Optional Electives
 - MGMT 745 Advanced Operations Research
 - MGMT 757 Corporate Strategy
 - MGMT 749 History of Management Thought

E. Dissertation

1. Students will complete at least 12 credit hours of dissertation course work. Students must enroll in variable hours of dissertation credit each semester until the dissertation is completed. Students select the course listing appropriate for their concentration:
 - ACCT 898 Dissertation Research
 - INFO 898 Dissertation Research
 - MGMT 898 Dissertation Research

2. Students are required to consult with their dissertation chair each semester prior to registering for dissertation research hours. The dissertation chair will submit a grade

for dissertation research at the end of each semester. The grade for dissertation credits is Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, or Fail.

3. According to university policy, a student who receives a “U” grade or an “F” grade in dissertation research faces termination from the program. The VCU *Graduate Bulletin* states: “All thesis and dissertation credits are to be graded each semester as satisfactory (S), unsatisfactory (U) or fail (F). There is no limit to the number of these credits a student may take while pursuing completion of the degree. Receipt of the grade of U is formal notification to the student of unsatisfactory progress. A student who receives a final grade of F in the thesis or dissertation will be terminated from the graduate program. A grade of S or U is not included in the calculation of the GPA. A grade of incomplete (I) may not be assigned for a course approved for satisfactory, unsatisfactory or fail grading.”

E. Teaching Portfolio

Students are required to complete a teaching portfolio. The criteria for the contents of the teaching portfolio, as well as the criteria that will be used to assess the quality of each student’s portfolio will be determined by the doctoral program advisor in each of the concentration areas.

F. CITI Certificate

Students must provide their doctoral program advisor with a valid CITI certificate when they submit a request to schedule their final dissertation defense.

5. Student Assessment

A. VCU Honor System

1. The VCU Honor System rules and procedures are found in each current edition of the *VCU Resource Guide* (a publication of the Division of Student Affairs) and is also currently located at http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf
2. Each student is required to be familiar with the VCU Honor System rules. Ignorance of these rules will not prevent a finding of “violation” and imposition of penalty. The instructor for each class determines what will and what will not constitute a violation of the VCU Honor System rules, although students are responsible for understanding what types of conduct are deemed unacceptable and, therefore, prohibited.
3. We will uphold the VCU Honor System for the doctoral program at VCU.

B. Grades

1. Students will earn a grade for each course they attempt throughout the doctoral program. All courses are graded with a letter grade. Dissertation credit hours are graded as progress grades and do not calculate as part of the cumulative grade point average. Students in the doctoral program are expected to maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average throughout their program. Any grade of less than "C" will be cause for review and possible termination from the Ph.D. program. Please use the following grade table to determine the weight of grades in the doctoral program:

| Letter Grade | Grade Point/Credit Hour |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| A | 4.0 |
| B | 3.0 |
| C | 2.0 |
| D | 1.0 |
| F | 0.0 |

2. Students who are graduate assistants can be dropped from the assistantship award with any grade less than "B."
3. For the most current information on grades, refer to the most recent *VCU Graduate Bulletin*.
4. Students who would like to audit a course that is not required must register to audit the course during the add/drop period. Once the add/drop period has ended, students are not eligible to change a “for credit” course to “audit”.

C. Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress

1. In addition to the general academic regulations stated in the *VCU Graduate Bulletin* and other regulations for all students in graduate programs administered by the School of Business, Ph.D. students in the School are subject to the following requirements:
 - Students whose cumulative grade point average is below 3.0 will have one semester to make up that deficiency. Failure to maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 constitutes unsatisfactory academic progress.
 - Students who have earned one grade of "C" cannot count that course towards the degree requirements. The department will require that the student re-take the same class or take an alternative course. The "C" grade will appear on the official graduate transcript and be included as part of the cumulative grade point average.
 - Students earning any grade less than "C" or who have received two grades of "C" will be terminated from the program. A "C" grade on any course attempt will be counted towards the two grades of "C" even if the course were retaken.
 - Full-time students must register each semester (including summer sessions) for continuation in the program. Students who fail to register each semester will be dropped automatically from the program and must apply for reinstatement.
 - Part-time students must register each semester (excluding summer sessions) for continuation in the program. Students who fail to register each semester will be dropped automatically from the program and must apply for reinstatement.
2. At least once per academic year, each doctoral student will be formally evaluated by the doctoral program advisor and committee so that the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research can determine whether he/she will be continued in the program.
3. The maximum time to complete all the requirements for the degree is eight calendar years from the date of entry into the program. The maximum time to complete course work, pass the comprehensive examination, and present an acceptable dissertation proposal is five years from the date of entry.
4. Doctoral study involves a devotion to independent study outside the classroom and students are expected to interact with faculty and other students in the concentration area.

D. Comprehensive Examination

A written examination is required in the concentration area upon completion of course work. Doctoral students will be permitted to take written comprehensive examinations in their concentration area only after completion of program foundation

and prerequisite courses, research courses, and required seminars for the concentration area. Doctoral-level faculty in the concentration area are responsible for the philosophy, content, structure, and grading of comprehensive examinations in their respective areas. Concentrations' procedures regarding their comprehensive examination are publicly available.

1. Application to take the Comprehensive Examination

- Students must submit an **Application to Take Comprehensive Examination** form (copy in Appendix) to their doctoral program advisor.
- Procedures for offering comprehensive examinations are determined by the respective concentration area departments. Students must consult with their doctoral program advisor for details regarding the administration of their comprehensive examination.

2. Evaluation Procedures

- The doctoral program advisor, in conjunction with the graduate faculty of the concentration area, will prepare, administer, and grade the examination. The examination must be graded in a timely manner. The responsibility for grading the comprehensive written examination rests solely with the doctoral program advisor and graduate faculty in the concentration area. Any additional readers would be acting solely in an advisory capacity.
- The doctoral program advisor will inform the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research of the outcomes for each student on the comprehensive examination. In addition, the doctoral program advisor will notify each student in writing of his or her examination outcome. If the examination is administered at least 30 days prior to the end of a fall or spring semester, notification will be given no later than 30 days after the administration of the exam. Otherwise, notification must be given within 30 days of the start of the next semester. Special rules about when the comprehensive exam will be administered may apply to students with VCU assistantships.
- The doctoral program advisor will inform the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research of the outcomes for each student on the comprehensive examination. In addition, the doctoral program advisor will notify each student in writing of his or her examination outcome. Special rules about when the comprehensive exam will be administered may apply to students with VCU assistantships.
- If the student does not feel that the outcome for part of the (or the entire) comprehensive examination was a fair and proper one he/she may request a review of his/her examination with the doctoral program advisor in his/her area within one week after the notification of the exam outcome. The doctoral program advisor will provide the review within two weeks of the request. If requested, the Associate Dean will mediate between the doctoral program advisor and the students.

Any student who fails part or the entire comprehensive examination has the following options depending on the situation:

- a. Student fails whole or part in the first attempt. A student has the right to request to the doctoral program advisor of his concentration area, in writing, to retake the exam within five weeks of the notification of the outcome. If the student does not request to retake the exam, termination action proceeds according to the Graduate School's rules, after which the student can appeal the Graduate School's termination notice according to the applicable procedures (see item c below).
- b. Student fails whole or part in the second attempt. Termination action proceeds according to the Graduate School's rules, after which the student can appeal the Graduate School's termination notice according to the applicable procedures (see item c below).
- c. If a PhD student appeals termination from the Graduate School due to failure to pass the whole or a part of the comprehensive exam, the Dean for the Graduate School will require the School of Business to handle the case according to the PhD program's process. This process is detailed in a separate, publicly available, document.

6. The Dissertation

A. Forming a Dissertation Committee

1. After the student has successfully completed concentration area requirements, including the comprehensive examination, he/she may begin the formal process of selecting a dissertation committee. Dissertation committees in the School of Business must have at least four currently research-active members, including the chair. One of the members may serve as co-chair. Steps for forming a dissertation committee follow:
 - Throughout the time a student is taking course work, he/she should constantly be considering the type of research that is of greatest interest and which faculty member(s) might be most helpful in the pursuit of that type/topic of research.
 - As early as a student can discern the type/topic of research that is of interest for dissertation work, he/she should discuss this interest with the faculty members who the student believes may be most appropriate to serve on his/her committee. The doctoral program advisor in the concentration area may also be helpful in guiding a student towards faculty who may be appropriate to chair the dissertation.
 - Once the student has identified a faculty member to chair the dissertation and the faculty member is in agreement, that faculty member will advise the student regarding the remaining members who would be helpful to serve on the committee.
 - The dissertation committee chair should be designated not later than the end of the semester following the successful completion of the comprehensive examination.
2. The chair and the co-chair, if there is a co-chair, must be 700-level designated to be qualified to chair the committee.
3. The dissertation chair will be a faculty member in the candidate's discipline who has previously served on at least one dissertation committee through its successful completion.
 - The committee must be comprised of at least four faculty members.
 - In addition to the dissertation chair, at least one additional member of the committee must be 700-level designated and in the candidate's concentration area.
 - At least one member of the committee will be a research-active faculty member from **another discipline** who holds a terminal degree. This member should be from another department in the School of Business or another school at VCU.

- The chair and at least two other committee members must hold VCU graduate faculty status.
 - Each member of the committee must hold a graduate faculty or affiliate graduate faculty appointment as per the Graduate School policy.
4. The student contacts those nominees to determine their interest and willingness to serve. If any person declines, the student and the dissertation chair select a replacement. This procedure is followed until a committee has been selected.
 5. The student then submits a **Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee** form (copy in Appendix) to his/her doctoral program advisor and department chair. The department chair in the concentration area is responsible for ensuring that faculty member's qualifications satisfy the guidelines set by the School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee (and included in this Handbook).
 6. After the doctoral program advisor and department chair sign the form, the department chair submits the form to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research for approval at the next scheduled School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research will notify the student of the school committee's decision.
 7. Normally, members of the dissertation committee continue to serve until the candidate's research is completed and approved. However, in rare cases it is necessary to make changes to the committee. If a dissertation committee member is unable to continue to serve, the dissertation committee chair, or if that is who changes, then the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research, is notified and works with the student to identify a replacement. The replacement's name and credentials are presented to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research for discussion at the next scheduled School of Business Ph.D. Program Committee meeting. Changes in the dissertation committee require approval by the PhD Program Committee.

B. Selecting a Dissertation Topic

1. The student should develop areas for research and consult with his/her advisor and other faculty members about possible dissertation topics while taking courses. Thus, it is possible that much of the literature review and idea generation can be completed by the time the student has completed the comprehensive examination.
2. After the dissertation committee is formed, students should meet frequently with the dissertation chair to develop a specific and detailed research plan. When all committee members have agreed that the proposed topic is suitable, the student should then prepare the formal defense of the dissertation proposal, and during this time the student will meet as frequently as necessary with all members of the committee so that the full committee is satisfied with the progress of the proposal.

C. Dissertation Proposal

1. The candidate will be required to give a successful oral defense of the dissertation proposal on the academic campus, in person. The dissertation proposal is a plan that the candidate develops to serve as a guide in his or her dissertation research. The dissertation proposal should include the significance of the research (i.e., the motivation for the research), a comprehensive literature review of the research topic, a full explanation of the research method(s) that will be used to study the topic, and a proposed schedule for conducting the study.
2. The candidate and the dissertation chair will schedule the dissertation proposal defense at a time that is convenient for the members of the dissertation committee and the student. The proposal defense may be on any day that the University is in session, excluding weekends and final examination dates.
3. The dissertation proposal defense is open to all members of the academic community. The dissertation chair must advise the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research of the date, time, and dissertation title at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled proposal defense. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research will send an announcement of the date, time, room, and dissertation title to the faculty of the School of Business and other individuals involved in graduate education at Virginia Commonwealth University.
4. The candidate is responsible for sending electronic copies of the proposal to each committee member, as well as a copy to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research at least two weeks prior to the defense date.
5. The student should refer to the School of Graduate Studies Thesis and Dissertation Manual for details regarding format and page specifications of the dissertation. According to the Graduate Bulletin: “The VCU Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation website, as developed by the University Graduate Council and VCU Libraries, serves as a guide for the preparation of electronic graduate theses and dissertations for graduate students in all programs within the university. Information and a video tutorial are available online at <http://graduate.vcu.edu/student/thesis.html>.
6. Following the student's presentation of the dissertation proposal, the dissertation committee will discuss the acceptability of the proposal in closed door session. The committee will decide to accept the proposal, accept the proposal with specific revisions, or reject the proposal. The dissertation committee chair will complete the **Dissertation Proposal Report (DPR)**; a copy of the form is in the Appendix. A copy of the DPR is provided to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research, each committee member, and the student.

7. If revisions of the proposal are required, the candidate will submit a copy of the revised dissertation proposal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. The revised copy will be filed in the office. Since the filing constitutes registration of the topic and protects the student, filing should be done by the end of the semester following approval of the proposal.
8. If there is a change in the composition of a dissertation committee, the new committee must be approved by the Ph.D. Program Committee. When a student submits a request for approval of changes in the dissertation committee, the Ph.D. Program Committee will decide whether a new proposal defense will be required. If the new proposal is not required by the Ph.D. Program Committee, the new dissertation committee can choose either to accept the terms of original proposal or to require a new proposal defense.
9. Following the successful completion of the proposal defense, the student must complete the form **Admission to Master's or Doctoral Degree Candidacy** (copy in Appendix).

D. Dissertation Format and Defense

1. As stated above (Dissertation Proposal, #5) and reiterated in the Graduate Bulletin: "The VCU Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation website, as developed by the University Graduate Council and VCU Libraries, serves as a guide for the preparation of electronic graduate theses and dissertations for graduate students in all programs within the university. Information and a video tutorial are available online at www.graduate.vcu.edu/community/thesis.html."
2. Upon completion of dissertation research, the candidate will be required to give a successful oral defense of the dissertation on the academic campus, in person. The dissertation chair will schedule the final defense by submitting a written request to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. The request must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the date proposed for the defense and must specify the student's name, dissertation title, as well as the date and time of the scheduled defense.
3. All members of the dissertation committee and the candidate must agree to the date of the dissertation defense. Dissertation defenses may be held on any day that the University is in session, excluding weekends and final examination dates. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research will publicly announce the date, time, location, dissertation title, and name of the student for the defense.
4. The defense will be open to all members of the academic community. Electronic copies of the dissertation are to be distributed to all members of the committee, as well as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research.

F. Approval of the Dissertation

1. Following the oral defense of the dissertation, the committee may decide to approve the dissertation as written, request the candidate make specific changes, or reject the dissertation.
2. The minimum number of positive votes required for approval is one less than the number of members on the dissertation committee. The one negative vote may come from any member of the committee, including the chair.
3. The dissertation committee chair will complete and submit a **Dissertation Defense Report** (copy in Appendix) to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research. Committee member signatures on the title page of the dissertation will further signify acceptance of the dissertation.
4. The student must follow the VCU Graduate School's requirements for the submission of the final approved version of the dissertation. According to the Graduate Bulletin: All thesis/dissertation requirements must be completed no later than the Friday preceding the week before Commencement of the semester in which candidates plan to graduate, including:
 - Final defense of thesis/dissertation
 - ETD Approval Form with all approval signatures, including the graduate dean's and, if applicable, documentation of IRB or IACUC approval number
 - Submission of the ETD to the VCU Digital Archives
<http://www.library.vcu.edu/help/etd>
 - Submission of the Survey of Earned Doctorates to the graduate dean (doctoral students only). To complete the survey electronically, go to www.norc.uchicago.edu/sed

7. Responsibilities During the Dissertation Process

A. Candidate

1. While the dissertation is the student's research, it is the student's responsibility to seek out and act upon guidance from the dissertation chair and each committee member. Maintaining contact with all committee members will facilitate good communication that helps make the dissertation development process a rewarding experience for both the student and committee.
2. Early in the process, the candidate should meet with the dissertation chair to prepare a realistic timeframe for completing the dissertation. Students should be prompt and prepared when meeting with committee members and when distributing manuscripts for review. Students should periodically update all committee members on progress.

B. Dissertation Committee Chair

1. Serving as a dissertation chair constitutes a major responsibility to the student and the School of Business.
2. The dissertation chair is the student's primary contact during the dissertation process. The dissertation chair should provide clear direction, work with the student to establish attainable goals, and be prompt in reviewing manuscripts from the student. Through successful guidance of a completed dissertation, the chair not only contributes to the expansion of knowledge in a given field, but also becomes an integral part of that contribution as the dissertation becomes a basis for future research.

C. Dissertation Committee

1. The expertise of each committee member is essential to the development of the candidate's dissertation research, and as such, will be reflected in the quality of the final product.
2. Dissertation committee members mentor the student's research by:
 - Critiquing all written materials submitted by the candidate in a timely manner.
 - Providing content, methodological, and/or statistical expertise related to the research problem under study.
3. Committee members provide feedback to the dissertation chair concerning the ongoing research activities of the student. Committee members are expected to be present for the proposal defense and dissertation defense presentations.

8. Appendix: Forms for PhD in Business

1. Research Methods Courses for Research Core
2. Approved Program Form – Business Foundation Courses
3. Approved Program Form – Concentration Area Courses and Prerequisites
4. Request for Independent Study Form
5. Application to Take Comprehensive Examination
6. Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee
7. Dissertation Proposal Report
8. Admission to Doctoral Degree Candidacy
9. Dissertation Defense Report

Research Methods Courses for Research Core
(list not exhaustive)

| COURSE # | COURSE TITLE |
|-----------------|---|
| BUSN 700 | Principles of Scientific Inquiry in Business |
| BUSN 701 | Research Methods in Business |
| BUSN 702 | Research Analysis in Business |
| MGMT 702 | Causal Analysis for Organizational Studies |
| MGMT 703 | Advanced Topics in Research Methods for Organizational Studies |
| ECON 501 | Introduction to Econometrics |
| ECON 612 | Econometrics |
| ECON 641 | Econometric Time-series Analysis |
| ECON 642 | Panel and Nonlinear Methods in Econometrics |
| PSYC 610 | Attitude Theory and Research |
| PSYC 620 | Design and Analysis of Psychological Research |
| PSYC 631 | Evaluation Research: Psychological Perspectives |
| PSYC 643 | Principles of Psychological Measurement |
| PSYC 680 | Statistics in Psychological Research I |
| PSYC 681 | Statistics in Psychological Research II |
| STAT 608 | Statistics for Social Research |
| STAT 642 | Design and Analysis of Experiments I |
| STAT 675 | Time Series Analysis I |
| STAT 742 | Design and Analysis of Experiments II |
| EDUS 710 | Educational Research Design |
| SWKD 701 | Quantitative Research Methods and Analysis I |
| SWKD 702 | Quantitative Research Methods and Analysis II |
| SWKD 705 | Multivariate Analysis in Social Work and Human Services Research |
| HADM 761 | Health Services Research Methods I |
| HADM 762 | Health Services Research Methods II |
| ALHP 762 | Multivariate Statistical Methods for Health Related Sciences Research |

**Approved Program Form
Business Foundation Courses for Ph.D. in Business**

Graduate Studies in Business – Virginia Commonwealth University

Student _____

Student ID _____

Ph.D. in Business Concentration Area: Accounting Information Systems Management

Previous Educational Experience:

| | Institution Attended | Degree/Program | Date Conferred |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Master's | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Bachelor's | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Transfer Credits: Students may transfer up to six credit hours of study from another AACSB accredited program to the Ph.D. in Business. Courses that are used as transfer credit must not have been used to satisfy degree requirements for a previous degree program. Students must also have earned no less than a "B" in the course that is to be transferred.

| | Course Number/Name | University Attended | VCU Course Satisfied |
|----|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Foundation Courses for the Ph.D. in Business

Foundation courses for the Ph.D. in Business are determined by the student's concentration area and may be waived when a student has already had the equivalent coursework as part of his/her master's or bachelor's degree. Required business foundations must be completed at the graduate level if not waived at the time of admission.

List the foundation courses required by the student for their program:

Student

Date

Concentration Area Doctoral Program Advisor

Date

Associate Dean

Date

Approved Program Form
Concentration Area Courses and Prerequisites for Ph.D. in Business
Graduate Studies in Business – Virginia Commonwealth University

Student _____ **Student ID** _____

Ph.D. in Business Concentration Area: Accounting Information Systems Management

Concentration Area Doctoral Program Advisor:

The student and concentration area doctoral program advisor will complete this form together to create a map of the concentration area courses the student is expected to complete to satisfy requirements for the research core and concentration under the Ph.D. in Business. Original signed copies of this form are to be filed with the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.

Concentration Area Prerequisites: List course numbers (as necessary).

1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

Research Courses: List course numbers.

1. _____ 5. _____
2. _____ 6. _____
3. _____ 7. _____
4. _____ 8. _____

Concentration Area Required Courses: List course numbers.

1. _____ 6. _____
2. _____ 7. _____
3. _____ 8. _____
4. _____ 9. _____
5. _____ 10. _____

GRAD 602 _____

Dissertation Research: All candidates must complete a minimum of 12 hours of dissertation research credit prior to completion of the Ph.D. in Business.

Signature Approvals:

Student _____ **Date:** _____

Conc. Area Doctoral Program Advisor _____ **Date:** _____

Associate Dean _____ **Date:** _____

**Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Business
Request for Independent Study**

Name: _____ SID: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Concentration: Accounting Information Systems Management

Faculty supervising research:

Circle semester course is to be taken: Fall / Spring / Summer Year:

Circle Requested Credit Hours for Independent Study (BUSN 897):

 one two three Other:

Submit the following documents with this signed request form:

- Current Approved Program Form. If you have not previously submitted an Approved Program Form, complete and return the form with this request.
- Description of proposed research, including how the work will be graded.

Signatures Required

Date

Student: _____

Supervising Faculty: _____

Conc. Area Doctoral Program Advisor: _____

Associate Dean: _____

**Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Business**

Application to Take Comprehensive Examination

This form must be submitted to your Concentration Area Doctoral Program Advisor.

Name: _____ SID: _____

Address: _____ Office Tel: _____

_____ Home Tel: _____

E-mail Address:

Concentration: Accounting Information Systems Management

Semester in which comprehensive examination will be taken:

Signature Approvals:

Student: _____ Date: _____

Conc. Area Doctoral Program Advisor: _____ Date: _____

Associate Dean: _____ Date: _____

Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Business
Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee

Student: _____ V#: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Date Student Successfully Completed Comprehensive Exam: _____

Date Student and Chair Signed VCU Dissertation Compact: _____

Proposed Committee Membership:

Please print the names of faculty members who have agreed to serve on your dissertation committee. Obtain each faculty member's signature and attach a current curriculum vita for any faculty member who is from outside the School of Business.

| | Printed Name | Signature |
|----------|--------------|-----------|
| Chair | _____ | _____ |
| Co-Chair | _____ | _____ |
| Member | _____ | _____ |
| Member | _____ | _____ |
| Member | _____ | _____ |

| Approvals | Signature | Date |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|
| Student | _____ | _____ |
| Program Advisor | _____ | _____ |
| Department Chair | _____ | _____ |
| Ph.D. Committee Chair | _____ | _____ |

Revised April 2024

**Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Business**

Dissertation Proposal Defense Report

Student: _____ **SID:** _____
Address: _____ **Office Phone:** _____
_____ **Home Phone:** _____
E-mail: _____

Dissertation Title:

This is to certify that the undersigned have heard the student's oral presentation of the dissertation proposal and have agreed upon the following action:

- Accept the Proposal**
- Accept the Proposal with Specific Revisions**
(specific revisions listed in comment section)
- Reject the Proposal**

Comments:

Date of agreement on the above action: _____

Dissertation Chair

Dissertation Co-Chair

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

Admission to Master's or Doctoral Degree Candidacy

Student _____ SS or VCU ID# _____

Address _____

Degree _____ Major _____

My signature acknowledges that I have read and understand the following policies regarding research involving human or animal subjects and continuous enrollment requirements.

Student's signature

Date

Research involving human or animal subjects must receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before collection of data may begin. I understand that failure to obtain a copy of the IRB or IACUC approval letter from the project principal investigator will negate the use of that data for my thesis/dissertation or in any form of presentation or publication. (Information on human and animal subjects can be found at www.research.vcu.edu/irb/index.htm and www.vcu.edu/research/iacuc/index2.htm.)

University Graduate Council and Graduate School continuous enrollment policy requires that any student engaged in any form of study at VCU that involves use of university facilities, laboratories/studios and/or libraries, or who is supervised by or consults regularly with a faculty member concerning graduate work on a project, work of art, thesis or dissertation must register formally for a course while engaged in these activities, including the semester in which the student graduates.

Graduate students approved for candidacy must register for at least one graduate credit hour at VCU each fall and spring semester until the degree is awarded (including the semester of graduation). Students should consult with their program directors regarding additional enrollment requirements. Graduate students with approved leaves of absence are exempted from continuous enrollment requirements for the LOA period. **Note: While an LOA temporarily suspends continuous enrollment requirements, it does not extend the time limit for degree completion.**

Major Adviser and Advisory Committee Members (if applicable):

Major adviser

Committee member

Committee member

Committee member

Committee member

Committee member

The program director, major adviser and/or advisory committee (if applicable) have approved this student for admission to candidacy effective _____ and confirm the following (check all that apply):

- A 3.0 GPA has been maintained on all graduate course work attempted after acceptance into program (for repeated courses, both original and repeat grade must be included in calculation of graduate GPA).
- No more than 6 semester hours or 20 percent of total semester hours attempted (whichever greater) at "C" or below level (C, D, F).
- Graduate course work only (500 level or higher) may be applied to a graduate degree with at least one half of required course work designated exclusively for graduate students (600 level or higher).
- Written and oral comprehensive and/or qualifying examinations (if required) have been passed.
- The thesis or dissertation prospectus (if required for candidacy) or final research project has been approved.
- The major advisor and/or advisory committee members (if applicable) have been identified (**please identify above**).
- Other _____

Approval signatures:

Major Adviser's Signature

Date

Graduate Program Director's Signature

Date

School Dean's Signature

Date

Graduate Dean's Signature

Date

Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Business

Request to Schedule Dissertation Final Defense

This form must be submitted to the Office of the Associate Dean at least two weeks prior to the date proposed for the defense.

Candidate's Name: _____ **VID:** _____

Address: _____

Office Tel: _____ **Home Tel:** _____ **Email:** _____

Concentration: Accounting Information Systems Management

| Requirement or prerequisite: | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Electronic copy of the dissertation submitted to the Associate Dean for Research and Doctoral Studies. (See Handbook 6.D.4) | | |
| "Acceptable" Teaching Portfolio submitted to the Department's Doctoral Program Advisor. (See Handbook 4.F) | | |
| Successful completion of CITI Program. (See Handbook 4.G) | | |

Dissertation Title: _____

Dissertation Chair: _____ **Dissertation Co-Chair** _____

It is the student's responsibility to schedule, in conjunction with the dissertation chair, the date and time of the dissertation defense. The student should work with the Associate Dean's Office to reserve the room.

Dissertation Defense Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Room:** _____

Concentration Advisor Approval Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Revised February 2022

**Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Business**

Dissertation Defense Report

Student: _____ **SID:** _____

Address: _____ **Office Phone:** _____

_____ **Home Phone:** _____

E-mail: _____

Dissertation Title: _____

This is to certify that the undersigned read the submitted dissertation, heard the student's dissertation defense, and agreed upon the following action:

- Accept the Dissertation as Written**
- Accept the Dissertation with Specific Revisions**
(specific revisions in comment section)
- Reject the Dissertation**

Comments:

Date of agreement on the above action: _____

Dissertation Chair

Dissertation Co-Chair

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

Copies to: Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, Dissertation Chair, and Student