SDPEGS Milestones and Guidelines

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# Timeline of **Preparation and Milestones**

The suggested timeline below includes tips and milestones to prepare you to stay on track to finish your PhD in 4 years. Unless indicated, these are guidelines rather than deadlines. Always keep in communication with your advisor to clarify specific expectations and advice that they have for their students. Each year, fill out the [individual development plan for UVM graduate students](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/GradExecApprovedmyIDP-1_0.pdf) and review it with your advisor.

This timeline applies to a May graduation. The dates vary each year. Updated timetables and deadlines for summer, fall or winter graduation can be found in the thesis/dissertation forms section on the [Graduate College Resources website](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/defensemembershipform.pdf).

Review the [UVM Graduate College requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree](https://catalogue.uvm.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/requirementsforthedoctorofphilosophydegree/). Forms, deadlines, and other useful information can be found [here](https://www.uvm.edu/graduate/resources).

## **1st Year**

### Fall Semester

* + Coursework
  + Research Assistantship
    - Work with your advisor to develop a clear understanding of the expectations (both in time commitment and deliverables) that come with a funded research assistantship.
    - Advisor-Advisee relationships differ based on the individuals’ style, but be proactive in setting the groundwork for a positive and mutually beneficial working relationship.
  + Deepen and broaden your understanding of your area(s) of interest
    - Start a research journal where you can track your thoughts, areas for further inquiry, and ideas for research.
    - Read literature on your topic of interest
    - Begin collecting articles for a literature review-- reference managers are a great way to organize journal articles (e.g., [PaperPile](https://paperpile.com/))
    - Explore policy reports and news articles related to your area of interest.
    - Podcasts and twitter communities (e.g., #climatetwitter) are a great way to engage with the field without feeling like you’re working all the time.
  + Begin to develop relationships with prospective committee members.
    - Target: Meet with five different faculty members (SDPEGs and non-SDPEGs faculty) with the goals of introducing yourself and getting a field for where the “research frontier” is in your area of interest. Send an email with a couple sentences of an introduction and ask for a 30-minute meeting to talk about your initial interests, thoughts on potential research directions, and/or their research. If you don’t have a research plan or a clear idea of what questions you want to work on, look for faculty who are doing work that interests you, read a recent paper they wrote, and meet to talk about what else they are working on and where they see the field going.

### Spring Semester

* + Coursework, Research Assistantship, and independent exploration of your research interests is ongoing.
  + Identify the types of analytical skills and methods that you want to develop or that you’ll need to carry out the research you plan to pursue. Take note of the kinds of methods that are used in journal articles and look for courses, tutorials, or other papers that can help you learn methodological skills that you are considering using in your dissertation research.
  + Follow-up with potential committee members again to ask for a second meeting. When you meet, ask if they would be willing to join your dissertation committee.

### Summer

* Research Assistantship
  + Finalize dissertation committee
  + Sketch your dissertation proposal
    - Write down your big questions that really excite you and that have been driving your explorations over the past year. Then, break them down into smaller questions. Keep dividing your questions into pieces until you feel like you have specific enough questions that could be addressed with a single research paper.
    - Utilize brainstorming tools (e.g., <https://miro.com/>) to connect your ideas to the bigger picture and the existing literature.
    - Develop an annotated bibliography of references and your reflections on papers that are relevant to your questions. Be sure to tie in both major foundational or highly cited papers and recent papers.
    - Sketch out a research plan to address your questions.
  + Explore funding possibilities for your work
  + Make space to rest and recharge. This is critical for long-term productivity, creativity, and mental health.

## **2nd Year**

### Fall Semester

* + Coursework
  + Research Assistantship
  + Send a draft of your dissertation proposal to your advisor as early in the semester as possible. Meet to discuss the proposal and revise it based on feedback.
  + Schedule meetings with each of your committee members to discuss your dissertation proposal. Depending on the time constraints of each faculty member, you may or may not get written feedback.
  + Attend a conference relevant to your field.

### Spring Semester

* + Coursework
  + Research Assistantship
  + Defend Dissertation Proposal

### Summer

* Research Assistantship
* Internship
* Dissertation Analysis and Writing
* Create calendar of conference deadlines
* Submit abstract to present at a conference
* Target: Submit 1st dissertation-related paper for peer-review

## **3rd Year**

### Fall Semester

* Dissertation Analysis and Writing
* Research Assistantship
* Discuss the upcoming comprehensive exam with your advisor and lay out a clear focus of the exam, usually based on your dissertation proposal and fields of interest. Use these discussions to help you plan your exam preparation.
* Complete teaching requirement.

### Spring Semester

* Dissertation Analysis and Writing
* Research Assistantship
* Written comprehensive exam
  + Hard deadline: six months before dissertation defense.
* Prepare for job market – begin informational interviews, attending events and conferences to extend network, etc.

### Summer

* Dissertation Analysis and Writing
* Research Assistantship
* Submit 2nd paper for peer-review

## **4th Year**

### Fall

* Dissertation Analysis and Writing
* Research Assistantship
* Begin job applications and focus on networking
* Present your research at a conference
* Work closely with your committee to prepare final or near-final drafts of your dissertation chapters.

### Spring

* Dissertation Analysis and Writing
* Research Assistantship
* January:
  + Submit the [Defense Committee Membership Form](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/defensemembershipform.pdf) to the Graduate College.
  + Submit the [Intent to Graduate form](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/IntenttoGraduateFillable_3.pdf) to the Graduate College.
  + Schedule your oral defense and send a [defense notice](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Defense%20Notice%20Template.doc) to the Graduate College.
* February
  + Submit your complete, written dissertation to the members of your dissertation defense committee at least two weeks before your defense.
* Mid-March – Oral Dissertation Defense
* Mid-April – Dissertation Submission – be sure to review and follow the [required formatting guidelines](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Electronic_Thesis_and_Dissertation_Guidelines.pdf) and schedule a Graduate College Format/Record Check well before the submission deadline.
* Submit remaining papers to peer-reviewed journals
* May – Commencement. Congratulations, Dr.

# Additional Information

## Dissertation Committee Requirements

The University of Vermont Graduate Catalogue outlines committee requirements for Ph.D. students under the [Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree](https://catalogue.uvm.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/requirementsforthedoctorofphilosophydegree/).

The dissertation committee must include at least 4 [Graduate Faculty](https://catalogue.uvm.edu/graduate/faculty/?_ga=2.19610040.1633786059.1649855570-441006115.1569953382), including the following:

* The dissertation adviser must be a faculty affiliated with SDPEG and a member of the Graduate Faculty.
* At least two members must be from within the CDAE department, affiliated with the SDPEG Program, and members of the Graduate Faculty.
* The dissertation committee chairperson must be from outside your and your advisor’s department and graduate program including primary and secondary appointments.

The Dean of the Graduate College must approve the graduate dissertation defense committee. The approval process begins after submitting [this form](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/defensemembershipform.pdf).

The composition of a Graduate Studies Committee may be modified in between stages of the dissertation development process. SDPEG students have the right to switch advisors and committee members.

**The standard for a dissertation is three lead-authored papers that have the potential to be published in refereed journals.**

## SDPEG Internship Requirements

For the academic component of the internship, the student will submit:

1. Work Plan
   1. name and location of internship host site and contact details for supervisor
   2. articulation of learning goals and expected outcomes
2. Final Reflection
   1. How did the internship meet the student’s expectations?
   2. How did the internship contribute to the student’s professional development?
   3. How did the internship provide an application of the core SDPEG concepts & SDGs?
   4. How did the internship further the student’s understanding of their research area?

The student should sign up for the internship course for 3 credits. In order to earn 3 credits, the student should work 200 hours at their host site. Within the first 3 weeks of the internship, the student should draft the work plan and run it by their adviser for feedback. A final draft of the work plan should be sent to Julie Starr. At the end of the internship, the student should email the final reflection to Julie. This will be a pass/fail class.

## Teaching Requirement for SDPEGs PhD Program

As the SDPEGs program is designed to prepare students to become leaders in government, higher education, public and private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, and research institutes, there are multiple options to fulfill the teaching requirement that can be tailored to develop the appropriate teaching skills for the student’s career path.

The goal of the teaching experience is to develop communication skills and pedagogical practice. As a general minimum, the teaching experience must include at least five hours of active teaching, whether that is actively leading discussions, presenting, public speaking, or traditional classroom teaching. Active teaching, in this definition, does not include the preparation time, attending or participating in meetings, or presenting research in a research-focused conference or seminar.

Plans for teaching experiences should be reviewed and approved by the student’s advisor. Upon completion of the teaching experience, documentation (as described below or equivalent) should be submitted to Julie Starr, the graduate program coordinator.

A non-exhaustive list of teaching experience activities includes:

[1] **Primary instructor for a course:** Following completion of the course the student should provide a copy of the syllabus, 1 example of teaching materials, 1 example of assessment materials, a summary of course evaluations, and a 1-page Teaching Philosophy statement, describing the student's teaching style and how they have responded to student feedback.

[2] **Teaching assistant for a course:** As part of the TA assignment the student should have at least 5 student-facing hours in the form of lectures, leading discussion sessions, or other student-facing time. Evaluations are optional, but encouraged for students with potential teaching interests. Following completion of the course the student should provide 1 example of teaching materials, a summary of evaluations [if available], and a 1-page Teaching Philosophy statement, describing the student's teaching style and how they have responded to student feedback.

[3] **Public engagement:** Public communication activities that seek to educate specific groups or the general public on issues related to sustainable development, policy, and governance can also fulfill the teaching requirement. For example, public engagement can include a mix of speaking engagements, news media or podcast interviews, podcast productions, webinars or web-based video productions, panel discussions, leading stakeholder meetings, or similar public-facing education work. Instead of a minimum of five hours of public speaking, five separate events that each include a substantial involvement may be approved to satisfy the teaching experience requirement. Students are encouraged to collaborate in organizing public engagement events to meet this requirement. Events must be documented (e.g., video, photo, or event announcement) and a brief reflection (2-5 pages) should be written that summarize the activities and the takeaways from the experiences.