

STATISTICAL SCIENCE, PHD

Banner Code: EC-PHD-STAT

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The PhD in Statistical Science represents the highest academic attainment for a statistician and, as such, requires in-depth knowledge of modern statistical theory and practice. The degree program is a hybrid of theory, computation, and data analysis; and students are expected to be proficient in all three. Current research areas of key department faculty in the program include biostatistics, modern statistical methodology, big data, data analytics, statistical or machine learning, applied probability, statistical networks, statistical computing, statistical imaging, bioinformatics, financial statistics, Bayesian statistics, data confidentiality, and statistics interfaced with other disciplines.

Admissions & Policies

Admissions

Students should have a master's degree in a mathematically-intensive discipline with a minimum 3.50 GPA. Students entering with a master's degree are expected to have completed coursework equivalent to STAT 544 Applied Probability, STAT 554 Applied Statistics I, STAT 652 Statistical Inference, and STAT 654 Applied Statistics II with exceptional performance. The program also requires a course in advanced calculus, MATH 315 Advanced Calculus I or equivalent, with a B or better. In exceptional circumstances, talented students with a mathematically-intensive undergraduate degree may be admitted.

Specific application deadlines and requirements (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now/how-apply/graduate/>) are available through the Office of Graduate Admissions.

Policies

For policies governing all graduate programs, see AP.6 Graduate Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/>).

Reduction of Credit

Students must complete a minimum of 72 graduate credits, which may be reduced by a maximum of 24 credits with a master's degree in statistics, mathematics, or similar discipline, or by 30 credits with a Master's degree from the George Mason University Department of Statistics. Reduction of credit requires the approval of the Director(s) of the PhD program in Statistical Science or designee and the dean or designee of the school. They determine whether the credits are eligible for reduction of credit and applicable to the degree program and the number of credits to be reduced.

Requirements

(Banner code updated on July 12, 2021. Formerly: VS-PHD-STAT)

Degree Requirements

Total credits: 72

The 72 hours of required doctoral-level credits typically consist of 48 credits of regular coursework and 24 credits of dissertation research. The following degree plan is based on a student who receives a 24 credit reduction. Students who receive more or less than a 24 credit reduction should consult with their advisor.

Doctoral Coursework

Students are required to complete a minimum of 24 credits of advanced emphasis coursework, including five core courses:

Code	Title	Credits
STAT 662	Multivariate Statistical Methods	3
or STAT 672	Statistical Learning and Data Analytics	
STAT 778	Statistical Computing	3
STAT 971	Probability Theory	3
STAT 972	Mathematical Statistics I	3
STAT 973	Mathematical Statistics II	3
	The remaining three courses are selected and approved by the Dissertation Committee and the Director(s) of the PhD program in Statistical Science and should be numbered 600 or above. ¹	9
Total Credits		24

¹ STAT 652 Statistical Inference and STAT 654 Applied Statistics II do not count toward advanced emphasis coursework, if a student has received a 24 credit reduction.

Qualifying Exams

Written qualifying exams will be taken in the following areas:

- Applied Statistics
- Theoretical Statistics

The exam on Applied Statistics will cover content from STAT 778 Statistical Computing and (STAT 662 Multivariate Statistical Methods or STAT 672 Statistical Learning and Data Analytics). The exam on Theoretical Statistics will cover content from STAT 971 Probability Theory, STAT 972 Mathematical Statistics I and STAT 973 Mathematical Statistics II.

Qualifying exams are offered in August and January. Full-time students are required to take the qualifying exams in August of the year following year of admission. Part-time students are required to take the qualifying exams within the first three years of enrollment in the program. Students who do not pass both exams in two consecutive exam periods are terminated from the program.

Dissertation Research

In order to advance to candidacy, students must complete all coursework, pass the qualifying exams, and defend a dissertation proposal.

Code	Title	Credits
Select 24 credits from the following:		24
STAT 990	Dissertation Topic Presentation (required)	
STAT 998	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal	

STAT 999	Doctoral Dissertation (must complete a minimum of 12 credits)
Total Credits	24

Dissertation Committee Selection

Following successfully passing the qualifying exams, students should identify a dissertation director who is willing to work with them and together assemble a Dissertation Committee. The chair of the Dissertation Committee must be a member of the graduate faculty with a regular appointment in the Department of Statistics, and will typically be the dissertation director. The Dissertation Committee consists of a chair, two members of the graduate faculty who hold regular appointments in the Department of Statistics, and an external member; see AP.6.10.5 Dissertation Committee (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#text>). The Dissertation Committee must be approved by the Director(s) of the PhD program in Statistical Science.

Advancement to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy is acquired on completion of a dissertation proposal examination. A dissertation proposal examination consists of:

- A proposal manuscript containing a problem statement, a review of related scholarly work, preliminary results, and an outline of the work to be conducted.
- An oral proposal presentation and a subsequent examination by the Dissertation Committee on aspects within the scope of the proposal that pertain to principles and questions fundamental to the field of Statistics. The presentation and examination are attended by the Dissertation Committee and the Director(s) of the PhD program in Statistical Science.

A student who fails the dissertation proposal examination may take it a second time, within six months. If the student fails a second time, the student is terminated from the program.

Doctoral Defense

The dissertation defense serves as the student's final examination and is conducted by the Dissertation Committee. Both the pre-defense and final defense are scheduled on approval of a written request to the department chair; see AP.6.10.8 Doctoral Defense. (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#text>)