

**Candidacy Requirements
Effective Fall 2025**

**Joint Program in Survey Methodology (JPSM)
Michigan Program in Survey and Data Science (MPSDS)**

To advance to Doctoral Candidacy, a doctoral student must:

1. Complete all course requirements in accordance with their home program's policy;
2. Earn a passing grade on the Qualifying Exam within twelve months of entering the program, or complete all conditions required by the program faculty if given a "conditional pass" grade;
3. Complete four terms in the Doctoral Seminar; and
4. Earn a passing grade on the candidacy paper and its presentation, which will occur at either the end of the last term of the Doctoral Seminar or at a later date after conditions required for passing the Qualifying Exam have been satisfied.

The decision about advancing to candidacy will be made at either the May JPSM/MPSDS joint faculty meeting following the completion of a student's final term in the Doctoral Seminar, or a faculty meeting following successful completion of all conditions required to pass the qualifying exam and earning a passing grade on the candidacy paper and presentation. At that meeting, the faculty will determine if a student has met the requirements outlined above. This will be a holistic decision which will consider other circumstances, including work performance (if applicable), course performance, professional development, and the likelihood that the student will find a dissertation advisor who will chair the dissertation committee.

The program directors will communicate the candidacy decision to each student no later than May 31, following the standard schedule, and soon after any other faculty meeting when the candidacy is discussed. The program will process the necessary paperwork for approved students to advance to candidacy by the following Fall term.

With the approval of the instructors of the Doctoral Seminar and the student's advisor, a student may progress to candidacy sooner than at the end of year two in their program. In this case, the student will still be expected to complete four terms of the Doctoral Seminar.

1. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students must meet registration requirements based on the requirements of their home program. Students will be provided with these requirements prior to the start of their doctoral program.

2. QUALIFYING EXAM

See Qualifying Exam Policy for details.

3. DOCTORAL SEMINAR

The Doctoral Seminar is designed to help students:

- A. Gain a thorough knowledge of important literature;
- B. Identify gaps in the survey and data science literature worthy of further investigation;
- C. Formulate research aims with questions and hypotheses centered on the identified gaps;
- D. Design a research study including planned statistical analyses (experimental, quasi-experimental, observational) for addressing the research aims; and
- E. Communicate the study's rationale and design in writing as well as in an oral presentation followed by questions.

Should a student not pass the Qualifying Exam before the start of the second year and is permitted to continue in the program, they are encouraged to continue with the Doctoral Seminar in the second year. In this case, at the conclusion of the 4th term of the Doctoral Seminar, they will take the second qualifying exam, and, after passing the Qualifying Exam, will become eligible for the Candidacy Paper Exam.

4. CANDIDACY PAPER EXAMINATION

The Doctoral Seminar is designed to assess whether a student has sufficient knowledge and creativity to develop and complete a dissertation. To that end, each student will prepare a Candidacy Paper to be presented to the candidacy paper exam committee at the end of the student's 4th term in the Doctoral Seminar or after meeting the conditions of the Qualifying Exam. The Candidacy Paper Exam committee will consist of the two Doctoral Seminar instructors, one individual chosen by the student (with the approval of the seminar instructors), and another individual chosen by the seminar instructors. The Candidacy Paper Exam committee will evaluate both the paper and the oral presentation of the paper.

Students are allowed to consult with any faculty members, including but not limited to the Doctoral Seminar instructors, an academic advisor, the exam committee members, or (if one has been chosen) a dissertation advisor, about their research ideas and questions. The faculty advice can include:

- A. whether the topic is suitable for such a paper;
- B. pointers to relevant bodies of literature the student may not be aware of; and
- C. whether the proposed research is well designed.

Advice should not include detailed feedback on theory or design nor editorial assistance for grammar, format, or organization. Individual faculty members will use their judgment to determine what kinds of discussions with the students they feel able to take part in, given these broad guidelines.

Candidacy Paper Format and Schedule

The Candidacy Paper will consist of two sections:

- A. a description of a problem or gap in the literature identified by the student and accompanied by a review of relevant literature and
 - B. a proposal for a research study that would fill this gap in that literature, which includes a detailed description of the study design that considers possible data sources, analytic methods, outcomes, and their implications.
- (If preliminary results are available, the student is encouraged to include them.)

The Candidacy Paper must be written clearly and concretely following the standards for scholarly publications. It should be 20 double-spaced pages at maximum, with 12-point font and one-inch margins. Tables, figures, references, and appendices do not count toward the page limit.

The Candidacy Paper should address a problem that would be appropriate for a dissertation. The design of the proposed study should be informed by what is feasible given the resources typically available for dissertation research. Methods of data collection, generation, or analysis should be proposed to investigate the problem.

The student must make the Candidacy Paper available to the Candidacy Paper Exam committee members at least 7 calendar days (i.e., including non-business days) before the oral presentation. Failure to submit the paper 7 days prior to the scheduled date will disqualify the student from being examined, barring extenuating circumstances.

Students are strongly encouraged to use the Candidacy Paper developed in the Doctoral Seminar as the basis of their dissertation proposal (prospectus). While the student may develop a different topic for their dissertation research, this is inefficient and less likely to be successful, because it does not build on work already completed.

Oral Presentation Format and Schedule

The presentation session will be scheduled for one hour outside of the regularly scheduled time for the Doctoral Seminar and will take place no later than the first week of May. The schedule will be determined by the Doctoral Seminar instructors in order to accommodate the number of students being examined in a given year and the Candidacy Paper exam committee availability.

The session will start with a brief (15 minute) presentation of the research topic and the proposed study. It will be followed by a session that will include questions from the Candidacy Paper Exam committee members and responses from the presenting student. The student will be asked to leave after this question-and-answer session and will be invited back and provided with the outcome and the Candidacy Paper Exam committee comment summary.

Results of Candidacy Paper Examination

The Doctoral Seminar instructors will provide the results as well as detailed feedback to each student and communicate the exam committee's evaluation of the Candidacy Paper Exam to the respective program director. Should there be any conditions associated with the Candidacy Paper evaluation, students may be assigned to work with a faculty member who then will report to the director of the respective program whether the conditions have been met.