

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES
GRAD FACTS

COMMON PAPERWORK PITFALLS

You have reviewed the document "Grad Paperwork_4-29-24.pdf" (found at: <https://www.uwyo.edu/ceas/academics/graduate-programs/files/grad-paperwork-4.29.24.pdf>) and you are following the steps indicated at the "Degree Timeline" link: (<https://www.uwyo.edu/uwgrad/graduate-degree-timeline.html>). You are now preparing your graduate paperwork. This document describes the common pitfalls to avoid when preparing your paperwork. Following the suggestions in this document should enhance the probability that your paperwork will be processed quickly and without rework.

Pitfall No. 1: Assuming That Your Committee Chair Knows the Paperwork Requirements

Your Committee Chair is an expert in their field, and they will provide you excellent guidance throughout your graduate studies. They may not, however, be experts in the graduate paperwork that you need to complete. Take the responsibility to know what paperwork is needed and work with your Committee Chair to stay on track.

Pitfall No. 2: Not Signing the Paperwork

Most of the forms that you prepare require your signature. Be sure to check every form carefully for the spot where you should sign, and then sign it. Students not signing their paperwork is the most common reason for it to be returned.

Pitfall No. 3: Outside Member Selection for Committee

All graduate committees require an "Outside Member". When preparing their committee, every student understands the first requirement of the "Outside Member": That the person be a UW faculty member from outside of the student's academic unit (with specific requirements for interdisciplinary degrees). The requirement that is sometimes missed, though, is that the Outside Member must be tenured or, at a minimum, tenure track with additional information. See the following from page 7 of <https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/graduate-students/caf.pdf>

"The role of the Outside Member is to uphold the rigor and fairness of the graduate process."

"a. Tenured and emeritus faculty."

"b. Tenure-track faculty may serve if they have demonstrated experience mentoring graduate students and the Committee Chair has no role in evaluating the untenured faculty member."

What if you really want a tenure-track faculty member or a non-tenure-track faculty member on your committee? That is not a problem - they may serve as a "UW Member".

Adding someone who does not meet the "Outside Member" requirements is guaranteed to delay processing of graduate committee forms.

Pitfall No. 4: Not Preparing the Paperwork in Sequence

Completing the paperwork for your graduate degree is an administrative process and like any process, it must be conducted in sequence. Otherwise, paperwork becomes lost, and the process does not perform. The "Degree Timeline" link provides an overview of the sequence but some key points merit being repeated here.

1. The Committee Assignment Form must be prepared first. Most of the other graduate paperwork requires the signatures of your committee members so none of that paperwork can be processed until your committee has been formed. Form your committee within the first two semesters of starting your graduate studies.

2. The Program of Study Form is then prepared. This form tells the Registrar's Office what courses you will complete for your degree so without it, the Registrar's Office will have no way to check that you are indeed done. Prepare this form shortly after your committee has been formed. Predict the courses that you will take. If later you take different courses, this can be changed with the "Request for Change in Graduate Program" form.

3. (For doctoral students). Complete your preliminary examination. Quoting from the UW catalog:

"The preliminary examination may not be given before: (a) the research tool requirements, if any, have been met and certification approved; (b) at least 30 hours of coursework have been completed; and (c) the doctoral program of study has been approved. The format and conduct of this examination shall be the responsibility of the student's committee, in accordance with any departmental policies (see specific departmental guidelines)."

If you have your preliminary examination before these requirements are met, your "Report on Preliminary Examination for Admission to Candidacy" form will be rejected by the Registrar's Office.

4. Complete your final examination. Believe it or not, students have had final examinations without having completed the prior steps. Do not be one of those students! If your "Report of Final Examination" (RFE) reaches the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and the previous steps have not been completed, your RFE will not be approved. All is not lost, but the administrative steps necessary to fix this are tedious and annoying for all. Additionally, your graduation date may be delayed in the meantime.

Pitfall No. 5: (For Students Petitioning Time Limits) Not Explaining Extraordinary Circumstances.

If you exceed the time limits for completing your degree, you will need to complete one of several petitions, depending on your situation (see the FAQ document for more details). There are numerous reasons for taking longer than the time limits and each of these petitions requires a that you describe these reasons as "extraordinary circumstances" that are causing you to exceed the time limits. Prepare this description thoughtfully and in detail. If the authorities that must approve these petitions cannot readily understand why you need extra time, they will deny the petition and you will have to prepare a new one with more clearly described reasons.