Ph.D. Process

1. **Pass the Preliminary exam** (Typically occurs between the first and second semester of study.)

2. **Have an initial committee meeting once a topic is determined.** Plan of study needs to be completed at or prior to this meeting and should be examined for possible modification in light of the PhD topic. (Typically occurs at the beginning of the second year of study.)

3. **Admission to candidacy-proposal defense.** The proposal should contain a complete description of the problem, a literature review, and a proposed outline of the work involved. It is not necessary to complete proofs or have the work completed; simply a possible plan of attack is needed. Students are encouraged to complete this step as soon as possible. (Students must take at least 10 research hours after this process and before graduation. Typically occurs during the second year.)

4. **Qualifying exam.** At least three weeks prior to the exam date students provide committee members with a document that includes everything from step 3 plus details about completed work. Proofs and other theoretical details should be near completion or a comprehensive simulation study or similar analysis of performance should be presented. Committee members will provide students with written questions, which may cover any material from the student’s coursework, at least two weeks prior to the exam date. Students will provide written answers to these questions to the committee at least one week prior to the exam date. Students will give a brief (20 minutes or less) overview of their topic to the committee and the committee will ask questions over the document or coursework. (Typically occurs six months prior to graduation.)

5. **Dissertation Defense.** Students provide the completed dissertation to their committee at least one week prior to the defense date. Ideally on the defense date, students give a departmental seminar (approximately 1 hour) and after the seminar, the committee and the student meet separately for questions. If the committee cannot meet at the regular departmental seminar time, then the student may give a scheduled seminar on a date prior to the defense date. However, a scheduled departmental seminar IS required.