

Admission to Candidacy

Admission to PhD candidacy is based on the successful completion of course work and progress in research. Most students who are making adequate research progress apply for PhD candidacy during their 3rd long semester at UT. The application for PhD candidacy can be prepared and submitted online [here](#) (listed under "Applying for Candidacy"). The official candidacy application requires a short statement describing the general topic of your research (max. 4600 characters). This should not be a historical summary of work done in the area of research nor should it require extensive supporting data, but rather, it should include the following:

- A statement explaining why this problem is worth studying from an academic perspective (note that this is not the same thing as the commercial relevance).
- An explanation of the methods and techniques you intend to use to study/address the proposed question(s).

Sample candidacy abstracts are available for students [here](#). Students are expected to structure their candidacy abstract in a similar fashion. Students are expected to first draft their candidacy abstract in MS Word, using 12 point Times New Roman font. Basic proofreading of grammar and spellchecking is required.

After approval of the candidacy abstract by your supervisor, consult with your supervisor and the graduate advisor about who should serve on your PhD committee. Your dissertation committee must consist of at least four faculty members. Three of these (one being your supervisor who serves as Chair) must be members of the MS&E GSC and one must be from outside the MS&E GSC. To see an up-to-date list of who is a member of the GSC, please see [here](#). On rare occasions, you may wish to include a committee member who is not on the faculty at UT Austin. Such a member must have academic and professional standing that is equivalent to that of a faculty member and must be approved by the graduate school. If you are considering including a non-UT member on your committee, please see the graduate advisor, as there is additional paperwork that must be completed. If you would like advice or have questions about the committee membership, please also see the graduate advisor.

After you and your supervisor have agreed on the committee membership, contact each member and ask if they are willing to serve. Some invited committee members may say no. Once you have received approval from each member, contact the graduate advisor for approval. In some cases, a petition letter must be submitted to the graduate school. Only when you have received approval from the graduate advisor should you complete the online application. Once complete, the application will route electronically to your research supervisor, the graduate advisor, the GSC chair, and the Office of Graduate Studies for approval. At the end of this process you are eligible to register for dissertation courses.

The Dissertation Committee is responsible for conducting the preliminary and final oral examinations and must approve your dissertation. Any changes to your committee after your candidacy application is approved should be discussed with your supervisor and the graduate advisor before submitting an official [change of doctoral committee](#) form to the graduate school. Note that changes to the committee are very carefully scrutinized by the Graduate School and must be justified. Changes in the last 30 days prior to a dissertation defense are granted only in exceptional circumstance. Thus, choose your committee wisely and if changes are needed, make sure you take care of this early.