

I/O Division Student Progress FAQ

Below are a number of questions that frequently arise around administrative details in your degree matriculation. Please note that these questions aren't about divisional culture (e.g., research, research, research!) and should be considered as an accompaniment to the I/O Policies, Rules & Guidelines, the Department Student Policies and Rules, and information found in the Graduate catalog.

1. When should I pick a major advisor?
 - a. You all have the same major advisor (the Division Head) when you come into the door in the Fall semester and we encourage you to “shop around” with faculty until both you and the faculty member have agreed that you will have a mutually agreeable working arrangement. What are some of the questions that might help both of you determine this working arrangement? How about:
 - i. Are you taking on additional students at this time?
 - ii. I'm interested in _____. What do you think about this topic?
 - iii. Can you tell me about your advising style?
 - b. We anticipate that such conversations will be resolved before the end of the Fall semester. (Goal for Thanksgiving, so you have something to celebrate!)
2. Once you've determined your major advisor, what next?
 - a. Make it official! You need to file a Change of Advisor form through the graduate school. Make sure that it's changed for BOTH your master's AND your PhD!
 - b. Be compulsive ... it's a good idea to check that your major advisor has changed. It's not official until the name is changed in PeopleSoft/Student Admin.
3. I'd like to make progress on my master's thesis. Are there any particular tips for this?
 - a. Form an advisory committee. The way that you do this, to make it official, is to file a Plan of Study for your master's degree. On the form, you will need to identify your major advisor, as well as two associate advisors. Divisionally, we require that one of these associate advisors be within the I/O Division; the other, however, need not be. (Your major advisor for your master's degree needs to be an I/O faculty member.)
 - b. Tips on the Plan of Study ... and, in general, What Course When:
 - i. Only put the minimum on your master's Plan of Study. (It's no longer the case that the first-year stat courses need to be reserved for your PhD Plan of Study.) At minimum, you need:
 1. 9 credits of thesis hours, which can be spread over many semesters
 2. 15 credits of coursework
 - ii. We'd recommend that you put down everything from your first year (Core, stat, BB and research teams) + second year (Core, BB and research teams), BUT leave all I/O-required specialization seminars (4) and Department-required breadth seminars (3) for the PhD Plan of Study.
 - iii. File this AS SOON AS you've formed this committee, not waiting until you've defended your master's thesis!
 1. Note that BB and research teams hours do not have to be on your MA Plan of Study, so don't worry about that!
 2. Keep in mind that this is a PLAN! It can be changed, but is easiest to just put down the minimum suggested above as that's pretty much set in your first two years.

- c. Unlike the dissertation, the graduate school does not require students to defend (or even write) a master's thesis proposal. Individual faculty, however, might differ on their expectations of this process. Ask!
 - d. Once you've managed to settle on a thesis defense date, let Ginny know, so she can announce it to the department.
 - e. At your master's thesis defense, make sure you bring paperwork from Ginny and copies of the signature page for your committee.
4. What's next, after my MA degree is awarded?
- a. Form a PhD Advisory Committee! These can be, but doesn't have to be, the same folk on your master's committee. What's most important is that everyone is on the same page that they are continuing (or not).
 - i. Keep in mind that committee membership can be (fairly) easily changed. So, don't get too worked up that this is etched in stone! (Faculty availability might change. Your research interests might change. It's All Good!)
 - ii. The chair of your dissertation does not have to be an I/O faculty member, but the division does require that you have at least one I/O faculty member on your committee.
 - iii. Note that sometimes students will want to have more than 2 associate advisors, given expertise and whatnot. This is OK!
 - b. Think about preparing for the General Exam. In that it is now standardized for the Fall semester, this might require some pre-planning!
 - i. The timing of this might vary from person to person, but the primary consideration is that you should be finished with the bulk of your core/specialization courses (not necessarily your breadth courses) before taking this on.
 - ii. At your Oral Defense, make sure you bring paperwork from Ginny!
 - c. Details on the requirements for the dissertation are much better discussed on the Graduate School website as these requirements are standard across the entire university (which is not the case for the master's degree). Additionally, the department has a fantastic step-by-step guide for the dissertation. A couple of tidbits, though:
 - i. There is a university minimum of 15 dissertation research hours needed for your PhD. NOTE: In that the MA and PhD are different Plans of Study, you can enroll in dissertation research hours as soon as you've met the 9-hours for your MA!
 - ii. Dissertation proposals have to be defended. Outside readers (2) are needed from the graduate school, indicating that the project is reasonable. They do NOT, however, have to attend the proposal defense and they do not have to be the same people as examiners at the final defense. "Outside readers" can be any faculty member outside the committee – or otherwise qualified PhD-level individual, although folk who are not on the UConn faculty will need to be approved by the graduate school.
 - iii. Dissertations require a public, oral defense. The outside examiners (2) DO have to attend the oral defense. Again, these "outside examiners" are "outside" the committee; although readers often serve as examiners, this does not have to be the case.