

DOCTORAL PROGRAM MILESTONES

STEM

Five phases from coursework to the defense. Timelines vary by program, so write in the target dates that fit yours and confirm them with your graduate advisor.

PHASE	FOCUS	MILESTONE	MY TARGET DATE
1 YEAR 1	FOUNDATION Core coursework and lab rotations	Joining a lab / selecting advisor	
2 YEAR 2	CANDIDACY Advanced coursework, TA-ship and research proposal	Qualifying exam and advancement to candidacy <i>Timing varies: many programs hold qualifying exams in Year 2, others in Year 3. Check your department's handbook.</i>	
3 YEAR 3	RESEARCH Experiments, analysis and conferences	First-author paper submitted	
4 YEAR 4	WRITING Dissertation drafting and fellowships	ABD and final experiments	
5+ YEAR 5+	COMPLETION Defense prep and job market	Defense, graduation and transition	