Direct to Doctorate Guidelines

For select students we will allow them to enter our PhD (doctorate) program after completing their bachelor’s degree (direct from Bachelors to Doctorate). This will require the approval of both the graduate director for the department and the area advisor for the student’s specific area of study within civil engineering. Only truly outstanding students will be permitted to enter this program. A student would need to have at least a 3.5 GPA plus strong recommendation letters. Having participated in an undergraduate research program would be considered positively.

The degree will require 96 credit hours – similar to if the student completed a masters degree (32 credit hours) followed by a PhD (64 credit hours). However, the process is somewhat streamlined. The student will not have to complete a masters thesis. In addition the number of credit hours that must be taken as coursework is reduced to 45 hours (approximately 15 classes). It is expected that coursework will take the better portion of the students first two years and then the student can focus on their dissertation research. However, the timing of coursework and research is decided on an individual basis with the chair of the student’s committee. The time required to complete a dissertation is variable – but the required research hours could be done in two additional years. Thus the entire process can take 4 years, when it typically takes 5 years to complete a masters degree and then a PhD.

All PhD students are required to take three exams – and direct to doctorate students are no exception. However, the timing of the exams may be different. A direct to doctorate student may be allowed to postpone their qualifying exam until their fourth semester of study if they need additional time to prepare for the exam based on their background. The preliminary exam should be taken between two to three years after the student starts the program. The final exam (dissertation defense) is taken when the dissertation is ready.