Program goals

The ECE department aims to educate PhD candidates to achieve a strong foundation in their research area by successfully completing coursework and the qualifying examination. The PhD candidate is expected to make an original and substantive contribution to their discipline through their research. The student is expected to become known in their field by communicating their research results via conference presentations and publications and reviewed journal articles, and the completion and defense of their PhD thesis. The goal of the PhD program is to provide the PhD candidate with the tools to become a knowledge creator and leader in their future careers in academia, industry, non-profit organizations and government.
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PhD Degree Programs in Electrical and Computer Engineering

There are two PhD programs offered in ECE: a post-BS PhD program and a Post-MS PhD program. A student enrolls in either the Electrical Engineering or Computer Engineering degree for either program outlined above.

The post-BS PhD program is a 64-credit program of which 32 credits must satisfy the MS EE or MS CE program requirements and a minimum of 16-research credits (EC900, EC991) is required. The 4-credit MS degree practicum requirement may be satisfied with 4 credits of EC900 research work in the semester in which the student successfully passes the prospectus defense. All students must apply for graduation and complete the required tasks in order to receive the Master’s degree. The student may take graduate-level technical courses applicable to their research outside of the department, e.g., ME, MSE, BME, CS or PY graduate courses in consultation with their research advisor. However, courses from Boston University Metropolitan College will not count towards the program requirements.

The Post-MS PhD Student is required to complete 32-credits applicable to their degree. Of those 32 credits, 8 structured credits come from ECE graduate-level courses (EC500- or EC700-level) in compliance with TPC (Technical Preparation Criterion) requirements and are expected to support the intended research area. A minimum of 8 credits of research or dissertation credits (EC900, EC991) is required. A student cannot transfer courses from another university to reduce the 32-credit requirement.

A Post-MS PhD student, who obtained a Master’s degree in Engineering at Boston University, may petition the Registrar to release up to 8 credits to their PhD program if the course credit was not used towards the Master’s degree. Only credits that are applicable to the PhD degree requirements are acceptable (e.g. EC500 and EC700-level with a 3.0 GPA or better in order to
satisfy TPC requirements). The student must submit a [Graduate Petition Form](#) to the [Academic Programs Manager](#) for processing.

Once PhD students have completed all credit requirements they must register for a minimum of 2 research or dissertation credits (EC900 or EC991) each academic semester unless taking a specific course or on an approved leave of absence. Courses below the 500-level are not applicable to the PhD program. Only grades of P, F, or J are assigned to research or dissertation credits.
Summary of PhD Timeline and Milestones
Details of the PhD milestones and requirements are treated in more detail later in the handbook. Additional information is also located in the overview of Boston University Doctoral Programs.

First year

Matriculation- The PhD program starts each fall at the beginning of the academic year. Mandatory Orientation takes place before the start of classes.

Coursework – The majority of coursework should be completed during the student’s first year. All first-year PhD students participate in the ECE Seminar courses EC890 and EC891, which aims to prepare them for a successful launch into the department.

Research home - The most important task for first-year PhD students is to find a research home. By the end of the second semester, students are expected to establish a working relationship with a faculty research advisor, who will provide funding for the remainder of their PhD studies.

Qualifier exam - The student must pass their Research Preparation Criteria (RPC) exam by the end of the first academic year. The RPC is an oral examination with a written component. Regular RPC exams take place at the end of the spring semester of the first year. Students actively engaged in research may opt for the Early RPC exam in March of their second semester. Any student who fails or conditionally passes on their first attempt can retake the exam later that same summer.

Candidacy - A PhD Student is eligible to apply for candidacy once they have successfully passed both the RPC exam and have completed the TPC requirements. Students must Apply for PhD Candidacy in order to receive the stipend increase, which will be effective the next semester after the milestone is reached.

Second Year

Teaching Practicum - All ECE PhD students are required to complete two semesters of an academic teaching requirement. Typically, the first teaching assignment (EC801) is during the second year and the second assignment (EC802) is during the third year. During the semester in which the student is enrolled in EC801 or EC802, he/she may only register for 8 credits (EC801 or EC802 plus 4 credits of EC900). Students may take a structured course while teaching if they receive permission from their research advisor. Students are funded as Research Assistants by the faculty research advisor during their teaching semester and not funded by the department.

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) - All students are required to enroll in and complete five sessions of RCR training before prospectus defense.

Third Year

Prospectus - Within two years of achieving PhD candidacy, the student is expected to present an oral dissertation proposal to the prospective dissertation committee and obtain approval for the written dissertation prospectus. The committee evaluates the potential of the proposed research and the student’s academic preparation to engage in dissertation research. Upon approval of the committee members and the departmental associate chair, the student submits the PhD Prospectus Defense Form to the ECE Department.
Fifth Year

Dissertation - A PhD candidate is expected to prepare and carry out an independent and original research project in partial fulfillment of the dissertation requirement. The dissertation committee must consist of College of Engineering (tenured or tenure-earning) faculty. Occasionally scholars from outside the University serve on dissertation committees.

Final Oral Examination – A PhD student must defend their dissertation no more than 5 years after achieving candidacy. Students shall present themselves for a final oral examination in which they must defend their dissertation as a worthy contribution to knowledge in their fields and demonstrate mastery of their field of specialization as related to the dissertation. The Examining Committee is composed of at least five members of which two must be (ECE tenured or tenure-earning) faculty. The department will appoint the defense chair.

Time Limit - Both the Post-BS and Post-MS programs must be completed within five years of acceptance into PhD candidacy. Once entered, PhD candidacy will expire on the fifth anniversary and after such time will be renewed only if the student requalifies for candidacy as determined by the department and the Graduate Committee. PhD program deadlines can be found on the Graduate Program Deadlines page.

Satisfactory Academic Progress
Satisfactory Academic Progress consists of two essential components: Good standing in Academics and Good standing in research.

Good standing: Academics
The academic progress of every graduate student is reviewed at the end of each semester. Failure to make satisfactory progress and remain in Good Standing can result in Academic Probation, Suspension for a stated time or until stated conditions are met, or Dismissal, as detailed below. Grades of C+ or lower for PhD students are interpreted as failures.

Boston University’s Academic Conduct Code is designed to assist in the development of a supportive and productive learning environment. It is both a description of the University’s ethical expectations of a student as well as a guarantee of the student’s rights and responsibilities as a member of a learning community. The Code provides clarity related to policy and procedure regarding academic conduct. Any egregious violation of academic or research ethics may result in immediate dismissal from the program at any stage with no opportunity for re-admission.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is committed to providing five full years of financial support to PhD students who maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. This financial support will be in the form of a Teaching Fellowship, Research Assistantship, or Graduate Fellowship. Funding beyond five years is generally provided (but not guaranteed) to students who are working productively toward the PhD degree (Good Standing Academics).

Good standing: Research
The student is expected to find a research home and funding by the summer of their first academic year and is required to find them no later than 12 months after beginning the program. Once a funded
research home has been secured, the department guarantees continued funding until the end of the 5th year, provided the student is making satisfactory progress as defined by their research advisor and prospectus committee.

PhD students are reviewed annually starting with their second year in the ECE department. In January, before the spring semester starts students complete and submit an ECE Annual Research Progress form detailing their progress during the past year and set goals with the faculty advisor for the upcoming year. Students who receive an unsatisfactory grade will meet with their advisor and the Associate Chair of PhD programs in order to receive feedback and set goals for the next year.

**Inability to find a research advisor**

If a PhD student is unable to find a faculty research advisor willing to mentor and fund the student by the end of the first academic year; it is considered not making satisfactory progress toward the PhD degree. If a student is able to identify a faculty member willing to serve as a research advisor, but neither the research advisor nor the student is able to secure extramural funding for the second year, the student can petition and request one additional year of funding from departmental resources. Such a request will need to convey to the chair that the student has found a research advisor willing to supervise the student and that the advisor and/or student have a concrete plan to secure extramural funding sources following the additional year. Decisions to support this request are at the discretion of the department chair. If no such funding has emerged after the second year, the student will be deemed as not making satisfactory academic progress and may not be permitted to complete their PhD studies.

**Dismissal of a student from the research advisor’s group**

In the event a research advisorship proves unsuccessful, the research advisor must provide a letter to the student, copying the Associate Chair. This letter should be provided 4 months ahead of the dismissal date (equivalent to a semester or summer). During this time, the student is encouraged to find another faculty member to work with who can fund the student. The department may instruct the student of possible alternatives, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to find a new research home.

**A student leaving a research group**

It is useful to figure out the reasons why a student is contemplating changing their advisor and discuss options to rectify the situation. Therefore, students are encouraged to discuss the situation with their peers, advisor, and graduate chair. If the student decides to leave the group, the student should give ample notice to the current research advisor to allow for a transition as smooth as possible. For example, the student should facilitate the transfer of knowledge that the student acquired in the group, e.g., by providing training for another student and leaving documentation. The student must meet with the new advisor and their former advisor to discuss the transition schedule and duties. A student who wishes to leave an advisor and join a different group should be aware of the need to have continuous research funding.

**PhD Student Funding**

An incoming PhD student is typically funded by the college and department through Distinguished ECE Fellowships or a Dean’s Fellowship. All incoming PhD students on a fellowship will receive the same monthly stipend at the base rate.
PhD student funding has three levels that increase with progression through the program.

1. **Pre-candidacy** Base pay
2. **Pre-prospectus** Base pay +5%
3. **Post-prospectus** Base pay +10%

Stipend increases will be implemented at the beginning of the next semester (spring, fall, or summer) following achievement of eligibility. The student is guaranteed 5 years of funding, given satisfactory progress.

**Distinguished ECE Fellowship**
The Distinguished ECE Fellowship is awarded to most PhD students for their first academic year. It fully covers tuition, BU’s basic individual health insurance, the student services fee, and a monthly stipend at the pre-candidacy level. It is not renewable for the years to follow.

**Dean’s Fellowship**
The Dean’s Fellowship is awarded to a PhD student of exceptional academic promise for the period of their first academic year. It covers their full tuition, BU’s basic individual health insurance, student services fee, and a monthly stipend at the pre-candidacy level. It is not renewable for the academic years to follow.

**Research Assistantship (RA)**
The most common funding mechanism after the first academic year is a Research Assistantship (RA). The RA is offered by individual faculty members with sponsored research grants. An RA is a member of a research group in a laboratory or center. The position offers a close association with faculty members and is an effective arrangement for graduate study. RAs are paid weekly and work closely with faculty members on a dissertation project as part of their assignments. RAs are expected to work full-time, with time allowed for courses during the academic year.

**Gap Funding**
If a research advisor is unable to provide funding to the student immediately, or if there will be a gap in the funding at any point, the advisor may apply for gap funding from the department. If approved, the gap funding normally takes the form of a teaching fellowship, but Gap-funded teaching does not count towards the two semester academic teaching requirement. The advisor needs to fill out a gap funding form and notify the student and the graduate chair in advance of the need so the department can incorporate the student into the teaching rotation. Typically, these assignments are made in October for spring teaching and in April for fall courses.

The department may support the student by means of summer teaching or providing a semester of gap funding if there is another faculty member willing to supervise the student. However, there is no guarantee provided by the department to continue to support a student without research support. Decisions to support this request are at the discretion of the department chair. Lack of support will result in the final dismissal of the student from the PhD program.

**External Fellowships**
ECE encourages PhD students to seek internal and external fellowships from reputable sources that will enhance their careers and provide financial support toward their tuition and stipend. If awarded an external fellowship, the department expects the student will accept external funds in lieu of internal fellowships and assistantships. In the event that an external award is less than the ENG stipend rate, ECE
will supplement it to make up the difference. Tapping into these external sources allows the ECE department to support the greatest possible number of eligible students, while also enhancing the research environment and impact. A student who accepts such fellowships should check to make sure there are no stipulations from their funding agency that are at odds with the ECE PhD program.

**Internal Fellowships**

There are several BU Fellowships for which an ECE PhD student is eligible to apply or can be nominated. Some fellowships give extra support for a student, e.g. for travel or supplies, while others are full graduate fellowships covering the stipend, tuition, etc. The deadlines change each year, but the historical dates are noted below. Check the program websites below for up-to-date information.

- [Hariri Fellowship](#) Deadline ~ March
- [Clare Boothe Luce Fellowship](#) Deadline ~March
- [BUnano Fellowship](#) Deadline ~May

**PhD External Funding**

It is in the best interests of PhD students and their advisors for students to seek independent funding. Granting agencies and the outside world consider such funding a critical sign of a strong department. To remain competitive, and to increase the number of NIH and NSF fellowship holders in the department, ECE will provide a $1500 annual bonus to students for every year they are funded by an external source. Students must reapply each year to receive the bonus. [ECE PhD Bonus Policy for an external funding source](#).

Graduate Students have external funding opportunities to help support their graduate education and research at Boston University. The external funding opportunities are organized based on their application deadline. Please read each entry carefully to determine eligibility and application requirements. In addition, the following databases are maintained by other institutions, but are publicly searchable:

- [Cornell University](#)
- [Duke University](#)
- [Harvard University](#)
- [UCLA](#)

**Departmental Travel Awards**

A student who plans to give an oral presentation at a conference may apply for a $250 travel award, and an additional award of up to $250, if matched by their PI. Successful recipients must present receipts to claim their award. [Department Travel and Expense Report](#)

**PhD Travel Award**

The ECE Department has set aside a limited amount of money for the academic year to support PhD student travel for those who have achieved PhD candidacy. Travel must be to a conference that provides recognition to the PhD student, the ECE department, and to Boston University. Awards are made on a first-come, first-served basis and should be requested at least two weeks in advance of the travel date. Only one award is given to a student for the duration of their PhD program.
If approved, the department will provide an initial $250. In addition, the department will match the student’s advisor’s contribution up to $250 (i.e., the maximum award from the ECE is $500). Requests may be made by filling out the PhD Travel Award Request Form. Please note that you need the following documents to submit in the form:

- The letter/email of your presentation acceptance
- Copy of your abstract
- Anticipated amount of financial support to be provided by faculty (if applicable)
- The grant source number to be charged.

Financial Information

A student receiving any form of financial support for graduate studies is not permitted additional employment without prior written approval from both the student’s advisor and the ECE PhD Graduate Committee. These forms of financial support include BU Fellowships (Dean’s, ECE, Hariri, BUnano) Training Grant Fellowships, Research Assistantships and other external Fellowships (NSF, NIH, foreign government fellowships or other foundations).

Stipend Paychecks

A student is expected to have a bank account in the United States. Direct Deposit payments to your bank account is the norm for most students. (Please note that a Social Security Number is required for Direct Deposit: international students should apply for one as early as possible.) If you elect not to use direct deposit, or while you are waiting for your SSN, paychecks can be picked up at the “Paycheck Express” counter located in the First Point Lobby, 881 Commonwealth Ave, 2nd Floor. Paychecks are issued on the Friday following each week of work.

Doctoral Research Fellowships

A first-year PhD student with a standard BU fellowship (Dean’s, ECE, etc.) should secure a funded Research Assistantship (RA) no later than the end of their first academic year (April 30). Research Assistantships and academic obligations constitute a full-time commitment. In exchange for the stipend provided, the student agrees to work a minimum of 20 hours/week during the academic year and 39 hours/week during the summer term. Because this appointment is considered employment, the student should be aware that taxes might be deducted from the stipend portion of their award. The student must have prior written approval from their research advisor and the Associate Chair before undertaking any other employment, either inside or outside the University. The student must also sign the University’s standard patent agreement form.

As an RA, the student will receive a tuition scholarship for credits leading toward their degree during the period of employment. They must obtain written approval from their advisor if they wish to register for coursework in excess of 10 credit hours per semester. The student is required to register for each semester in a timely manner and complete required payroll forms as requested.

PhD students may only work under one Research Assistantship at a time.
RAs are paid weekly; this breaks down to 17 weeks in the Fall and Spring and 18 weeks in the summer. Fall semester paychecks are issued from September through December, spring semester paychecks are issued from January through April, and summer paychecks are issued from May through August.

**International Students**
An international student’s visa and work-permission status must be up to date before they can begin work. US visa regulations prohibit any additional work, either on or off campus, during the duration of the RA appointment.

**US Citizens and Permanent Residents**
The RA scholarship is a form of financial aid and may affect eligibility for certain need-based funds, including but not limited to: Direct Loans, Federal Work-Study, and Perkins Loans. If the student has already received need-based funds prior to the RA appointment, the terms of their financial aid package may be adjusted.

**Payroll**
The Academic Programs Manager will coordinate with the ECE Finance Manager to make sure that student funding is set up each semester prior to the account settlement date. In order to be set up on Payroll, students must register according to the Student Payroll-Related Deadlines. First-Year PhD students must notify the Academic Programs Manager when a research advisor and summer funding is confirmed. If the information is not communicated, the student will not be set up on Student Payroll.

- **Fall Payroll**: Continuing students must be registered and have a DRF by July 1 in order to be set up for the fall semester on time.
- **Spring Payroll**: Students must register by December 1 and have a DRF commitment by November 1 in order to be set up for the spring semester on time.
- **Summer Payroll**: All students must register for fall by April 1 and have a DRF commitment in order to be set up for summer Payroll on time. (PhD students graduating in September must register for 2 credits of research in SUM1.) First-Year Students must have a research advisor and funding secured by April 30.

**Tuition**
RAs supported full-time by a faculty’s sponsored research grant receive tuition coverage up to 18 credits. RAs who have completed their course requirements may still take courses but must inform their advisor. (Please note that any credits past the first 18 will not be covered.)

**Summer Stipends and Tax Withholding**
PhD students must be registered for EC900S or EC991S for the Summer I term (2 credits) prior to the start of the summer session. International students must also pre-register for the fall semester, prior to the start of the summer term. Students funded on fellowships other than NIH will have FICA taxes withheld from their paychecks during the summer (May, June, July, and August).
Students will find information about Direct Deposit, International, U.S. Citizen, and Permanent Resident, and Student Employment forms under Student Resources.

**Registration Requirements**

A PhD student is required to register each semester (fall, spring, and summer) unless on an approved Leave of Absence. Failure to register with full-time status before the registration deadline, found here, will result in automatic removal of the student from the payroll, and the student will also incur late fees.

**Full-Time Status**

Full-time status is achieved either by registering for 12-18 credits for a given semester, or via full-time certification for a student who is no longer taking a full-time course load. A post-B.S. PhD student should 12 credits of ECE courses (including research) during the first semester, and, typically, 8 credits of coursework and 4 credits of research in the second semester. After the first year, the PhD student registers for a mixture of courses and research credits each semester until completion of all credit requirements. When an ECE PhD student has completed all credit requirements, they should register for four credits of EC900 or two credits of EC991 for the remainder of their program. This provides certified full-time status. All PhD students must maintain full-time status throughout their time in the program, with the sole exception of an authorized Leave of Absence.

**Residency Requirement**

Each student must satisfy the minimum residency requirement of two consecutive regular semesters of full-time graduate study at Boston University. “Full-time study” in this context is a full-time commitment to the completion of degree requirements as determined by the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs. In order to graduate, a student must be registered as full or a part-time student in the semester in which they complete degree requirements and in the preceding semester.

**Leave of Absence/Withdrawal**

A student must register for each academic semester until the completion of all degree requirements. If a student requires a leave of absence, it is the student’s responsibility to submit a completed Withdrawal/Leave of Absence form to the Graduate Programs Office.

A student is allowed a maximum of two semesters of leave without having to re-apply to the program. Beyond two semesters, the student must submit a petition approved by the advisor and the Department Associate Chair. The period of authorized leave of absence is counted as part of the time allowed for completion of degree requirements.

An international student must also contact the International Students and Scholars Office when taking a leave of absence or when withdrawing from the University.

**Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation for a Full-time PhD Student**

The childbirth and adoption accommodation policy for a full-time or certified full-time PhD student in good academic standing provides for extensions for academic coursework and other requirements to the primary caregiver of an infant or adopted child. It also provides for a continuation of stipend support for a funded student during the accommodation period. Please contact the Graduate Programs Manager for the form. Additional information: [http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/childbirth-and-adoption-accommodation/]
Credit Requirements

Credit Requirements for Post-BS PhD Students
The post-BS PhD program is a 64-credit program of which 32 credits must satisfy MS Electrical Engineering or MS Computer Engineering program requirements. Additionally, a minimum of 16-research credits (EC900, EC991) must be completed to meet the 64-credit requirement. The 4-credit practicum requirement for an MS degree may be satisfied with four credits of EC900 research work. All students must apply for graduation and complete the required tasks in order to receive the Master’s degree.

The student may take graduate-level technical courses applicable to their research outside of the department, e.g., ME, MSE, BME, CS or PY graduate courses in consultation with their research advisor. However, courses below the 500-level or classes from MET College will not be accepted towards the MS or PhD credit requirement.

The course load for a first-year student will vary depending on whether the student is already committed to a research advisor, or still exploring options. If the student is trying out advisors, the expectation is that the student will take two or three courses in the first semester and two courses in the second semester in addition to four credits of research with their research advisor.

Examples for a First-Year, Post-BS PhD Student
Possible semester load:
3 EC graduate courses (3 ⋅ 4) + EC 890/891 ECE Seminar, (1) = 13 credits
2 EC graduate courses (2 ⋅ 4) + EC 900 Research, (4) + EC 890/891 ECE Seminar, (1) = 13 credits
2 EC graduate courses (2 ⋅ 4) + EC 801 Teaching, (4) + EC 890/891 ECE Seminar, (1) = 13 credits
1 EC graduate course (4) + EC 801 Teaching, (4) + EC900 Research, (4) + EC 890/891 (1) = 13 credits. Summer: EC 900 Research (2) with a research advisor.

Credit Requirements for Post-MS PhD Students
The Post-MS PhD Student is required to complete 32-credits applicable to their degree. Of those 32 credits, eight structured credits must be from ECE graduate-level courses (EC500- or EC700-level) in compliance with TPC requirements and in support of the intended research area. A minimum of eight credits of research or dissertation credits (EC900, EC991) is required. Courses cannot be transferred in from another university to reduce the 32-credit requirement.

A PhD student, who obtained their Engineering Master’s degree at Boston University, may petition to release up to eight credits to fulfill PhD requirements as long as those credits were not used for completing their Master’s degree. Only credits that are applicable to degree requirements are acceptable (EC500 and EC700-level with a 3.0 GPA or better in order to satisfy TPC requirements). The student must submit a Graduate Petition Form to the Academic Programs Manager for processing.

Examples for a First-Year, Post-MS Student:
Possible semester load:
2 EC graduate courses (2 ⋅ 4) + EC 890/891 Seminar, (1) + EC 900 Research, (4) = 13 credits
1 EC graduate course (4) + EC 900 Research, (4) + EC 890/891 EC Seminar (1) + full time certification
EC 900 (Research, 4) + EC 801/802 (Teaching, 4) + EC 890/891 (EC Seminar, 1) + full time certification
EC 900 (Research, 4) + EC 890/891 EC Seminar (1) + full time certification

Summer: EC900 (2) with a research advisor.

Research Credit Courses: EC900 and EC991
An ECE PhD student who has earned candidacy is registered for four credits of research credits every academic semester. During the summer, the student registers for two research credits. The exception is if the student is taking an internship (off-campus work), in which case the student should register for four credits of EC810 only. PhD students, who have completed all credit requirements, will register for a minimum of two research or dissertation credits each academic semester unless taking a specific course or on an approved leave of absence.

EC900 denotes pre-Prospectus research, and EC991 denotes post-Prospectus research.

Only grades of P, F, or J (Pass, Fail, or continuing) will be assigned to research credits.

Physical Education Classes (PDP)
While the student is registered for a full-time course load (12 credits) they may add PDP classes at no extra cost, as long as the total credits are below 18.

Internships in Electrical and Computer Engineering
Internships are valuable opportunities to gain practical experience integral to a students’ program of study, thereby allowing them to develop additional technical and professional skills. Many PhD students engage in summer internships in the post-prospectus dissertation phase of their program of study. However, to be eligible, students must complete 2 full semesters. The student’s faculty advisor and the PhD Associate Chair must review and approve the internship site and project before registering the student for EC810. Students submit an ECE PHD Internship Summary to be graded Pass or Fail after completing their internship.

Career Practical Training (CPT) for International Students
International Students need to be authorized for Career Practical Training (CPT) for an internship placement. In order to apply for CPT authorization, international PhD students need to follow these steps prior to going to ISSO:

- Secure a job offer and obtain a written offer letter.
- Complete a CPT Form (sections 1, 2, 3 only and the Student Acknowledgement page)
- Submit the completed CPT form along with a supporting letter (Sample Support letter from Advisor) to the Academic Programs Manager

The support letter must include:

- Topic of thesis and expected defense date,
- Start and end dates of internship (keep in mind that CPT must follow semester calendar dates and can only be authorized one semester at a time),
- Explanation of the research objectives of the placement as they relate to the student’s thesis or dissertation and why they cannot be accomplished using Boston University facilities,
● Name of the faculty advisor, who will monitor the progress of the off-campus research,
● Signature of faculty advisor AND co-signature of ECE PhD department chair
● Once the CPT recommendation is complete, the College of Engineering notifies the student that it is approved and they may proceed to ISSO.
● The Academic Program Manager registers the student for EC810.

ECE’s Qualifying Examination: TPC and RPC

The ECE PhD qualifying process is designed to provide feedback to the department regarding the suitability of the student to the PhD program, and on areas that need improvement. Likewise, the preparation and examination provide opportunities for the PhD student to acquire and demonstrate skills that will be important for their research. Failure to satisfy the requirements of the ECE PhD Qualifying Process results in withdrawal of the student from the PhD program.

The ECE PhD qualifying process requires the first-year PhD student to satisfy a Research Preparation Criterion (RPC) that is based on reading and presenting a research paper and a Technical Preparation Criterion (TPC) that is based on coursework. The ECE PhD qualifying process is designed to provide feedback to the department regarding the suitability of the student to the PhD program, and on areas that need improvement. Likewise, the preparation and examination provide opportunities for the PhD student to acquire and demonstrate skills that will be important for their research. Failure to satisfy the requirements of the ECE PhD Qualifying Process results in withdrawal of the student from the PhD program.

Technical Preparation Criterion (TPC)

The student is required to demonstrate sufficient technical preparation and adequate learning through their coursework (TPC). In order to satisfy the TPC, the student needs to earn a GPA of at least 3.7 across a set of eligible ECE graduate courses. All EC500 and EC700 level courses satisfy the TPC criterion. However, at least one of these courses must have a strong analytic/theory component. It is expected that the courses chosen to satisfy the TPC requirement are relevant to the student’s future thesis work. The requirement differs for post-B.S. and post-M.S. students in both a number of courses and a timeline.

Post-BS PhD – The student is required to satisfy TPC within their first 3 academic semesters by obtaining a GPA of at least 3.7 across 4 eligible ECE graduate courses.

Post-MS PhD – The student is required to satisfy TPC within their first 2 academic semesters by obtaining a GPA of at least 3.7 across 2 eligible ECE graduate courses.

Research Preparation Criterion (RPC)

The student is required to satisfy the Research Preparation Criterion (RPC) by passing a ~1.5-hour oral examination in which 3 ECE faculty members assess the research abilities of the student. Regular RPC exams are held at the end of the spring semester of the first year in the PhD program, however, students actively engaged in research may opt in to complete the Early RPC exam in March of the second semester. The assessment is carried out in the context of a research article from the field of the student’s intended PhD research. The presentation of the research article provides a starting point for exploring the general research area. The student is expected to know the research context of the article, be able to demonstrate
an understanding of the general field, and be able to suggest and evaluate some potential research directions. A Leave of Absence will not exempt an individual from completing the RPC examination at the end of their second academic semester in the program. If the student fails or conditionally passes, the student can retake the exam later that same summer.

Any student who does not pass the oral examination on their first attempt is allowed one additional attempt later that same summer; a second failure results in withdrawal from the program. The student does have the right to petition the outcome of the second failed exam. The petition MUST be completed within one week (5 business days) after notification of failure, and must first be reviewed and approved by the student’s faculty advisor. It will then be reviewed at both the ECE Doctoral Committee and the College Graduate Committee.

A PhD student is eligible for PhD candidacy upon successfully completing both the TPC and RPC requirements AND submitting a PhD Candidacy Application to the Academic Programs Manager for department review. The candidate receives formal notification from the ECE Department when the application has been approved. The date on which a student achieves candidacy is the basis for determining the prospectus defense and dissertation defense deadlines (start of the fall or spring semester, respectively). The student’s pay level will be “Post-Qual” and a stipend-level increase will become effective in the next semester after becoming a candidate. The student’s next PhD milestone will be the Prospectus Defense, which must be completed within 2 years of obtaining candidacy. The PhD student enrolls for pre-prospectus research credits (EC900) until they pass their prospectus defense.

PhD students are reviewed annually starting with their second year in the ECE department. In January, before the spring semester starts students complete an ECE Annual Student Research form detailing their progress during the past year and set goals with the faculty advisor for the upcoming year to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress. Each student is evaluated and receives a grade. Students who receive an unsatisfactory grade will meet with their advisor and the ECE Grad Chair in order to receive feedback and set goals for the next year.

**ECE PhD Candidacy**

A student is eligible for PhD candidacy upon successful completion of both the TPC and RPC requirements. The student needs to formally apply for candidacy before the semester (September or January) after completion. When the application has been approved, the candidate will receive formal notification from the ECE Department.

- A post-MS PhD student must achieve candidacy by the start of their second fall semester.
- A post-BS PhD student must achieve candidacy by the start of their second spring semester. A post-BS PhD student may apply for candidacy at the start of their second fall semester.

The date on which a student achieves candidacy is the basis for their prospectus defense and dissertation defense deadlines (start of the fall or spring semester, respectively).

**Expiration of Candidacy**

PhD candidacy will expire on its fifth anniversary. The student should plan to finish and defend their thesis well in advance of this deadline.
If it becomes clear that this will not be feasible, the student and the advisor need to agree on a plan to complete the degree in the semester before the last semester of valid candidacy. The student must submit a petition which includes the student’s CV, the accomplishments so far, a plan or timeline for completion; an explanation of why the dissertation has not been completed on time; and confirmation from the advisor that he/she approves of the plan. Note that there are no committee meetings scheduled during the summer so that a September deadline needs to be addressed during the previous April.

**Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)**

All College of Engineering PhD students, regardless of funding, are required to complete the Advanced Responsible Conduct of Research program prior to completing the Prospectus. The Advanced RCR program includes an online module and live-discussion workshops. Information about the modules and a registration link are online. The workshops run three times a year in October, February and June, and fill up quickly. PhD students are required to complete the RCR prior to completing the Prospectus and before they can receive the post-prospectus stipend rate increase.

**Teaching Requirement: EC801 and EC802**

All ECE PhD students are required to teach for two semesters. Typically, the first teaching assignment (EC801) takes place during the second year and the second assignment (EC802) takes place during the third year. During the semester in which the student is enrolled in EC801 or EC802, he/she may only register for eight credits (e.g. EC801 or EC802 plus 4 credits of EC900 unless they receive permission from their research advisor.

**ECE Prospectus Defense Requirements and Guidelines**

In the prospectus, the student will outline their proposed research for their dissertation. The student must be familiar enough with the field of study to know the most prominent current work and to pick a dissertation topic. The prospectus requires a written document and an oral departmental presentation to a committee. The student will invite faculty to form their prospectus committee that will also serve as the dissertation committee. The committee will evaluate the prospectus and may recommend further preparation, or grant approval.

**Prospectus Defense Timeline**

A student is required to present their prospectus defense within two years of attaining candidacy. The prospectus defense usually takes place during the students third year, or by January year 4 for post BS PhD students who delayed their candidacy until January of their second year. In no instance will a student be allowed to present a prospectus defense until they have become a PhD candidate. The prospectus defense typically takes place during the students third year, or by January year 4 for post BS PhD students who delayed their candidacy until January of their second year. Failure to complete the prospectus exam on time may result in academic probation.

**Prospectus Defense Topic**

A research problem is selected after discussions between the faculty research advisor and the student. For the prospectus defense, the student is expected to understand literature and state-of-the-art work in
their specific area as well as propose and motivate a research topic in the prospectus defense. At that time the student will assemble a prospectus committee in consultation with their research advisor. The student registers for pre-prospectus research credits (EC900) until sufficient investigation of the topic has been undertaken to believe the subject is worthy of a dissertation.

**Prospectus Defense Committee**
The prospectus committee will consist of a minimum of three tenured or tenure-earning ECE faculty, one of whom may be an affiliated faculty member. In addition to the minimum three ECE faculty minimum, the committee can also hold faculty members outside the department if the expertise is fitting.

The student must report the composition of the prospectus committee to the Associate Chair prior to scheduling the prospectus defense. The department will assign one member of the committee to serve as prospectus defense chair. The prospectus defense chair must be a tenured or tenure-track ECE faculty, who is not the student’s research advisor.

Occasionally scholars from outside the University serve on ECE dissertation committees. When a committee member is from outside the University the student must Request a Special Service Appointment along with a copy of the scholar’s vitae. The external scholar’s appointment approval automatically transfers to the student’s dissertation committee.

**Prospectus Written Guidelines**
The student must provide a copy of the prospectus document to all members of the prospectus committee a minimum of three weeks ahead of the planned oral defense date. The preferred format is similar to that of proposals submitted to a Federal Agency.

Students should refer to the following ECE Prospectus guidelines:

- A title page should contain the proposed title, author’s name, research advisor’s name and an abstract of approximately 350 words.
- The proposal should specifically document the anticipated contribution that this work will have to the wider body of knowledge.
- There is a 10 page limit on the scientific portion of the proposal, which includes tables and figures but does not include the title page, the bibliography or the student’s CV.
- Use single-spaced at 11-point font size.
- Students should consult the College’s Guide for Writing Theses & Dissertations and the Introduction to LaTex for guidance and download the .tex template.
- Additionally, a Prospectus Template may prove helpful, as well as the Prospectus example.

Suggested content includes a statement of the problem to be investigated; background, current status, and significance of the proposed work; approach(es) to be followed for its resolution; preliminary results, and an anticipated timetable for completion. The work should be annotated with pertinent citations that should also be listed in the bibliography. An up-to-date copy of the student’s curriculum vitae should be included (this does not count towards the 10-page limit). The student is expected to have created a Google Scholar profile at the time of the prospectus.
Prospectus Defense Scheduling
After reading the prospectus and agreeing that the student is ready to defend the proposal, all prospectus committee members indicate their approval by signing the PhD Prospectus Defense Form. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the necessary committee members’ signatures and set a date, time, and location for the presentation. When all this has been completed and noted on the PhD Prospectus Defense Form, the form (with abstract attached) is submitted to the PhD Associate Chair for final approval.

Prospectus Defense Oral Presentation
The title, location, date, time and abstract of the prospectus defense must be submitted to the Academic Program Manager, together with a signed copy of the PhD Prospectus Defense Form, no less than two weeks before the prospectus defense date.

It is the ECE Department’s responsibility to provide adequate publicity for the student’s prospectus defense and assign a committee member to serve as chair of the prospectus defense. It is the prospectus chair responsibility (not the research advisor) to bring the original form containing the committee members’ signatures to the oral presentation.

The chair of the prospectus defense will introduce the student, including a brief description of their academic background. The student should restrict the length of the presentation to approximately 45 minutes. During this period, committee members or the audience may ask clarifying questions. The chair should guard against digressions and inappropriate questioning during the presentation, but invite questions from the audience after the presentation is completed. Following a reasonable public question period, the chair will excuse the general audience while the committee remains to complete its assessment of the prospectus defense.

Prospectus Defense: Assessment and Reporting
The prospectus committee is charged with assessing the appropriateness of the problem and the student’s preparation based on the written proposal and the oral presentation. The committee must decide if the student passes, passes with conditions, or fails. The chair of the committee must complete the “Prospectus Defense Results” sections on the Prospectus Defense Form, documenting all required revisions to the written proposal, or additional coursework, including a timeframe for completion.

Before the prospectus defense concludes, the committee determine a date for the next committee meeting (at least once in the following 12 months) and designate expected milestones to be completed by that date.

All committee members must submit a Program Evaluation at Prospectus form assessing the student’s technical and communication skills. This assessment does not identify the student specifically, rather will only be evaluated in aggregate form for the purposes of evaluating the PhD program.

The Academic Programs Manager records and confirms the results of the prospectus defense to the candidate in writing. If the results indicate that more work must be done and/or that specific conditions must be met, these conditions will be indicated in the letter to the student. The student must complete the required revisions to the proposal satisfactorily before a final “Pass” grade is given.

Post Prospectus Coursework and Progress
After passing the Prospectus Defense, students will enroll for four credits of EC 991 Dissertation each
semester until the total credit requirement is met. Once the student has fulfilled the total minimum credits requirement (64 credits for Post-BS, 32 credits for Post-MS), the Academic Program Manager will register he/she for two credits of EC 991 each semester until they graduate.

Post-BS PhD students satisfy the 4-credit practicum requirement of the Master of Science degree for Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering with 4 credits of EC900 research in the semester of they pass prospectus defense and may apply for graduation to receive the Master’s degree.

Annual Progress Reports
A post-prospectus student must schedule an annual check-in with all members of their prospectus defense committee. The first meeting should be scheduled at the prospectus defense and should be set within a year. At each subsequent meeting, the student will discuss progress and possible roadblocks with the committee and determine new milestones. The student will turn in a copy of the signed Online Yearly Dissertation Research Progress Report Form and an updated CV to the Academic Programs Manager. The ECE PhD Graduate Committee will use the reports in aggregate form for a yearly assessment of the PhD.

Final Dissertation Defense
PhD candidates are expected to prepare and carry out an independent and original research project in their field of study in partial fulfillment of the PhD requirements. The dissertation is primarily guided by the research advisor, with the advice of the prospectus defense committee members. Students undergo a final oral examination in which they publicly defend their dissertations as worthy contributions to knowledge in their fields and demonstrate a mastery of their fields of specialization in relation to their dissertations. No student is allowed to defend a completed PhD dissertation if they are not a PhD candidate, which includes the residency requirement.

Final Dissertation Defense: Committee

The candidate is responsible, in conjunction with their research advisor, to appoint a defense committee with a minimum of four members. The core of the committee consists of the same three ECE-tenured or ECE tenure-earning faculty who participated in the prospectus defense, plus one additional reader, to make up the minimum four readers. Affiliated faculty may be appointed to the committee as long as a minimum of two-committee member have ECE primary appointments. The department will assign a member of the College of Engineering as defense chair, who cannot be a reader. It is the student’s responsibility to arrange a meeting with this departmentally assigned chair prior to the defense.

If necessary, more members can be added to the dissertation defense committee. When adding a scholar to the committee from outside the University, a Request Special Service Appointment must be submitted to the Academic Programs Manager, with a copy of the scholar’s CV. The student will be notified in writing of the approval or disapproval of the special appointment. If a Special Service Appointment was already approved during the prospectus defense, the information should already be in the student’s file and does not need to be repeated for the dissertation. However, if the student is appointing a new member to the committee from outside BU or for some reason, the procedure was not followed at the time of the prospectus defense; it must be done prior to scheduling the final dissertation defense. This is a College of
Engineering policy that applies to all PhD students. In the event that it is necessary to replace a committee member, e.g. due to a faculty member having left BU, the candidate should fill out a petition to change the composition of the committee from the original members.

Final Dissertation Defense: Written Guidelines and Formatting

Candidates shall demonstrate their abilities for independent research and scholarship by completing a doctoral dissertation in their field of study. The dissertation will be primarily guided by the first reader (advisor), with the advice of the other members of the dissertation defense committee. The dissertation should represent original scientific/engineering contributions that are appropriate for publication in a recognized peer-reviewed journal. The dissertation is defended at a presentation open to the entire BU community. Although the student will have an opportunity to make final revisions to the dissertation and abstract after their final oral examination, they should not regard the version used for their defense as a “rough draft.” This version of the abstract is the version circulated to all ECE graduate students, ECE faculty, and members of the examining committee.

The Mugar Library stipulates that all dissertations submitted at Boston University must have consistent formatting. Therefore, the student is expected to read and follow the latest edition of the Research Guide for the Writers of Theses and Dissertations while preparing the dissertation and the abstract. These must conform to the requirements of the University Microfilms International. Please follow all formatting requirements stated in the library guide while preparing your dissertation draft, and include all required elements such as the preliminary pages, references, and your CV. Additionally, they have created Samples of Preliminary Pages, which will help to show these requirements in practice.

At least three weeks before your defense you must submit a draft of your dissertation as a PDF to theses@bu.edu for a format review. You will be notified if the format is approved or if any changes are required. It is advised that all formatting issues be resolved before you defend your dissertation. Following your defense, please allow ample time to complete all requirements and content revisions that are required by your committee.

Final Dissertation Defense: Scheduling

It is the candidate’s responsibility to select a defense date based on the availability of all committee members and inform the Academic Program Manager of both the date and the composition of the committee. Candidates must adhere to the current deadlines for completing the final oral examination and submitting their dissertation, location and time with all the Dissertation Defense Committee members for the examination.

At least two weeks prior to the Dissertation Defense date, the candidate must submit the PhD Final Oral Examination form to the Academic Programs Manager. Before submitting this form, the candidate must have provided a copy of the dissertation document to all members of the Dissertation Committee and obtained their ORIGINAL signatures on the form indicating 1) that they received a copy of the dissertation and 2) agree that it is ready to be defended. This form must also contain the date, time, location and the
dissertation abstract (maximum of 350 words). The student must also provide one copy of the dissertation abstract electronically to the Academic Programs Manager at this time.

Final Dissertation Defense: Oral Presentation

No final oral examination may begin unless all approved committee members, as listed on the Final Oral Examination Form, are present. It is the committee chair’s responsibility to enforce this requirement. The student’s faculty research advisor or committee chair should introduce the candidate and include a brief description of their academic background.

The candidate should restrict the length of the presentation to approximately 45-60 minutes. The candidate’s conduct and manner should be professional, and any handouts, slides, etc. should be neatly prepared. It is the chair’s responsibility to ensure the student’s presentation is given the respect it deserves by not allowing the committee or audience members to have side discussions. Clarifying questions may be asked by the committee members or the audience, but the chair should guard against digression and inappropriate questioning during the presentation. Following a reasonable question and answer period, the chair dismisses the audience will be dismissed. The committee may wish to ask additional questions of the candidate at this time. Following this additional questioning by the committee, the candidate will be excused so that the committee may complete its assessment of the defense and dissertation.

Final Dissertation Defense: Assessment and Reporting

The Dissertation Defense Committee assesses the completeness of the research, contribution to knowledge, and the candidate’s mastery of his/her research area, based on the written dissertation and the oral presentation. The vote may be ballot or voice. A unanimous vote is required for a candidate to pass. It is the Chair’s responsibility to call the candidate back after the committee has reached a decision. The chair will advise the student of the committee’s decision. At this time, the candidate is informed of any changes that must be made to the final title, abstract or dissertation document, with a deadline provided by the Dissertation Defense Committee.

The committee and chair will evaluate the technical and communication skills of the candidate via an Program Evaluation at Dissertation assessment form. The evaluations are not tied to the student of record, but are used to assess the PhD program by the Graduate Committee every Fall, for the Office of the Provost’s assessment.

The chair must fill in the PhD Final Oral Examination Form at the time of the presentation, with a specific indication of whether the title, abstract and dissertation are acceptable as submitted. The chair must note any required revisions and the timeframes for completion on the Final Oral Exam form itself or attach a separate piece of paper indicating a plan for completion. Committee members sign off on the Final Oral Examination Form at this time but should refrain from signing the Dissertation Signature Page until all conditions have been met. The Associate Chair gives final approval on the Final Oral Examination form.
Final Format Check and Dissertation Library Submission

It is the student’s responsibility to incorporate all changes from their committee and deliver the copies of the dissertation to their research advisor, the ECE office, and submit electronically by the Graduate Program deadlines: NOTE: The student should consult the ETD Administrator Walk-Through for help. The student will then follow the electronic submission guidelines provided by Mugar Library. Doctoral candidates are also expected to submit the significant results of their research to recognized journals for publication.

The Academic Programs Manager will provide departmental approval to the Graduate Programs Office for the student upon seeing the 1) original signatures page and 2) title page. This will ensure that University records reflect that the candidate has completed all necessary requirements for their PhD degree.

All students must complete the BU Doctoral Exit Survey and the NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). Upon completion of the BU Exit Survey, there will be link to redirect you to the NSF SED. Students must send enggrad@bu.edu a copy of the SED completion certificate you receive. NOTE: Both surveys must be received to officially award your degree.

Graduation

Students intending to graduate must have met all degree requirements and submit an application for graduation by the deadline.

The hooding ceremony for PhD students is held once each year, in May. Students who graduate in September or January are invited to the May hooding ceremony following their graduation date. All students must complete the required tasks in order to graduate and confirm their participation in College of Engineering Graduate Convocation Ceremony.

Departmental Student Awards

ECE Department Outstanding Teaching Award

This award is given based on recommendations from the faculty instructor in charge of the relevant course, as well as student evaluations. Student Teaching Awards are presented at the annual ECE end-of-year party.

Outstanding Dissertation Awards

The dissertation work of a PhD student may be nominated by the dissertation committee for the Outstanding Dissertation Award at the time of the defense. This award is offered separately to CE and EE PhD students. A student who graduates in May has the option to delay consideration for the award until the following year, but each student is only eligible to be considered for the award one time. Applications from students nominated from the previous May and current May, September and January graduations are due in April and will be awarded at the May graduation ceremony. Criteria are based on the merit of the scholarly work, publication record and impact. The student should supply their CV, including a link to a Google Scholar profile. The research advisor should provide a recommendation letter, together with a 2-3 sentence non-technical summary of the impact of the work.
Resources
Electrical and Computer Engineering

Anna Swan – ECE Associate Chair of Doctoral Programs, swan@bu.edu (617) 353-1275
Christine Ritzkowski – Academic Programs Manager, critzk@bu.edu 617)353-1048
Faculty Staff directory - ECE website http://www.bu.edu/eng/departments/ece/people/

Graduate Programs Office Administration (617) 353-9760
Stacey Herman – Director, Graduate Programs Office, dloomanno@bu.edu
Kirstie Miller - Director of Professional Education & Corporate Relations, kimiller@bu.edu
Andrew C. Butler - Assistant Director, Enrollment Services, acbutler@bu.edu
Anthony Morejon - Assistant Director, Financial Aid, lholh@bu.edu
Denise Joseph - LEAP Program & Student Relations Manager, dejoseph@bu.edu
David Apostol - Data Analyst/Graduate Records, dapostol@bu.edu
George Zhang - Senior Program Coordinator, hession@bu.edu
Kimberley Riley - Senior Staff Assistant, kimriley@bu.edu

Professional Development
Sarah Hokanson Director - Professional Dev & Postdoctoral Affairs Runs professional development workshops open to PhD students http://www.bu.edu/postdocs
Center for teaching and learning has some programs focused on graduate students https://www.bu.edu/ctl/programs/

Health and fitness
Physical health https://www.bu.edu/studenttheyalth/services/
Mental Health https://www.bu.edu/studenttheyalth/counseling/
Fitness https://www.bu.edu/studenttheyalth/facilities/
Disability Services http://www.bu.edu/disability/

Advocacy
Title IX Issues http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/title-ix-bu-policies/
ENG representative- Ruthie Jean, (617) 353-6447, ruthiej@bu.edu
BU representative - Kim Randall, (617)-353-9286, krandall@bu.edu
LGBTQ https://www.bu.edu/admissions/student-life/community-diversity/lgbtq/
Ombuds http://www.bu.edu/ombuds/

International
ISSO https://www.bu.edu/admissions/admitted/international-students/isso/
ISSO Contact - Monica Rodriguez, Advisor (617) 353-3565, mrodr@bu.edu
International Community  https://www.bu.edu/admissions/student-life/community-diversity/international/

Campus Life  http://www.bu.edu/students/  To help you navigate your way through life at BU!