

# Ph.D. Timeline

(approximate schedule for graduation in five years)

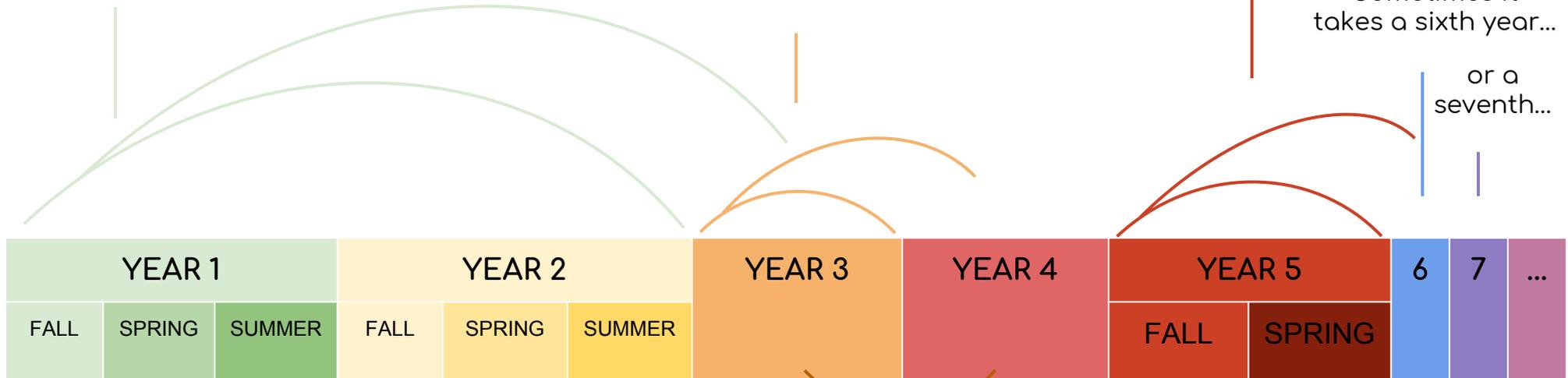
The first two (or three) years might seem like an extension of the M.A.: the only thing you're *required* to do is take classes. But if you use this time to **build your C.V.**, you'll be glad in year 5 that you did. (You'll never have this much time on your hands again.)

Study for your (2) field exams. (There is no avoiding this. If you have extreme test anxiety, *seek help*.)

Enter the job market. (You'll have less time to work on your dissertation.)

Sometimes it takes a sixth year...

or a seventh...



Great time to **refine** a term paper and **submit** it for publication!

Keep submitting papers for publication.

Wrap up your diss. (You won't have much time in the spring.)

Defend & submit your diss. (It's a whole thing.)

Apply for awards, present at conferences (& **meet** other doc students in your field!), **reach** out to notable scholars, and **ask** professors if you can guest lecture in a course or TA for them, and **be involved** in departmental service..

Select your diss topic, ask a professor to be your director, and find at least two extra committee members. Write your diss proposal, your "prospectus," and formally defend it.

and that's OK. You're not alone. Shoot for five years, but *have a plan B*.

GRADUATE.

# Tips

Give extra attention to a seminar paper so you can submit it for publication during the summer.

Hold one service position at a time, but hold several throughout the program. This will diversify your C.V.

Volunteer in the community. Thinking of and helping others will help you keep things in perspective. (Just don't spend *too much* time volunteering.)

Use one (or both) of your two independent studies to prepare for a field exam.

Remember that *you* are in control of your dissertation process. If necessary, you can change topics (and even committees).

Break up your dissertation into small, manageable sections (10-20 pages). Write one section at a time, and don't get distracted by the big (intimidating) picture.

Don't let yourself become isolated. Study and work with friends.

Take breaks, and do not feel guilty for doing so. You will do better work when you regularly have something to look forward to.

Read for pleasure. *Make* time for it. (You are at risk of losing interest in your topic and even in reading itself.)

Mental health problems are *normal* and treatable. If you feel too anxious and/or depressed to work, seek help.



# Resources

## CFPs, Awards, Fellowships, & Certificates:

[NIU.edu/grad/academics/certificates/index.shtml](http://NIU.edu/grad/academics/certificates/index.shtml)

[NIU.edu/grad/funding/fellowships.shtml](http://NIU.edu/grad/funding/fellowships.shtml)

[Newberry.org/fellowships](http://Newberry.org/fellowships)

[call-for-papers.sas.UPenn.edu](http://call-for-papers.sas.UPenn.edu)

[MLA.org/Resources/Career/Conferences-Fellowships-and-Announcements](http://MLA.org/Resources/Career/Conferences-Fellowships-and-Announcements)

[grad.UCLA.edu/funding](http://grad.UCLA.edu/funding)

## Dissertation:

Thesis and Dissertation Office · [thesis@niu.edu](mailto:thesis@niu.edu)  
Adams Hall 104, Mon.-Thurs. 10:00-2:00

## When you need help:

### Our graduate director

\*We have a caring and understanding faculty. Let them help you.\*

NIU Counseling and Consultation Services · (815) 753-1206  
Campus Life Building 200, Mon.-Thurs. 8:00-4:30

## When you need help **NOW**:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
CHAT: [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org](http://SuicidePreventionLifeline.org)

Crisis Text Line · TEXT: "HOME" to 741-741

NIU Crisis Services · (815) 753-1206

Kishwaukee Behavioral Health Crisis Line · (866) 242-0111

For more tips and resources, take a look at the [NIU English Doctoral Success Guide](#).