

The Graduate School handbook

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Handbook Website: <http://handbook.unc.edu/>



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Preface

The Graduate School Handbook

The Graduate School Handbook contains the policies and procedures of The Graduate School, as established by the actions of the Administrative Board of The Graduate School. Each student should become familiar with the material pertaining to the degree program, and, together with a faculty advisor, make certain that the chosen program of study complies.

Section I: Contains information related to graduate education at UNC-Chapel Hill, including a description of The Graduate School and its Academic Policy Committee, a staff directory, and links to graduate education references. **Section II:** Describes the policies and procedures pertaining to the general academic requirements of The Graduate School. **Section III:** Provides a detailed outline of requirements for master's and doctoral degrees.

All graduate degree-granting entities at UNC-Chapel Hill including departments, curricula, schools, and programs will be referred to as *academic programs* throughout this Handbook.

The Graduate School has attempted to include most of the regulations governing graduate academic programs; however, many programs have additional requirements and regulations. Sometimes these requirements are more stringent than the general requirements of The Graduate School.

The Graduate School reserves the right to make changes to this Handbook at any time. In instances of discrepancy between this document and the University Catalog, this Handbook takes precedence.

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of, and comply with, all regulations, policies, procedures, and deadlines. Please consult widely with your academic program and The Graduate School with questions or concerns about the information in this Handbook.

Thirty-second Edition, 2020-2021

(Last Updated: August, 2020)

Changes and Updates to the Current Edition

Changes to the current edition of The Graduate School Handbook include:

- Provided instruction on [degree level changes](#) from doctoral to master's level.
- Clarified requirements of the university [withdrawal processes](#).
- Updated information in the [grade appeal policy](#) related to the University's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct.
- Provided updates related to the Residency Determination Service for [residency status for tuition purposes](#).
- Provided more detail on leave of absence ([master's](#) and [doctoral](#)) processes.
- Updated web links and included new campus policies developed in the past year.

Graduate Education at UNC-Chapel Hill

The Graduate School and the Administrative Board

In 1903, a separate graduate school with a dean was established. Several graduate degrees were awarded before the turn of the century, however, including the first degree of doctor of philosophy conferred in 1883.

In 1922, the graduate faculty voted, first, to vest in the Administrative Board of The Graduate School legislative powers in matters that affected graduate education; second, to authorize the Administrative Board to admit members to the teaching faculty of The Graduate School; and, third, to vest in the Administrative Board the responsibility for authorizing curricula and courses carrying graduate credit.

With the exception of the master of business administration (MBA), the master of accounting (MAC), the master's in clinical laboratory science (MCLS), the master's in radiologic science (MRS), the master of health sciences (MHS), the master of law (LLM), the master of education for experienced teachers (MED), and the master of school administration (MSA), all master's degrees offered by the University and the degrees of doctor of philosophy, doctor of education (post-2011), doctor of nursing practice, and doctor of public health are conferred by The Graduate School.

Work toward advanced degrees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill proceeds under policies and regulations established by the graduate faculty. The immediate direction of The Graduate School is in the charge of the Administrative Board, of which the Dean is chair. At present, the board consists of academic and health affairs faculty representatives appointed by the Chancellor upon nomination by the Dean of The Graduate School.

Academic Policy Committee

The Academic Policy Committee is a subcommittee of the Administrative Board of The Graduate School. This body is responsible for approving academic policies in graduate education, including any substantive changes to this Handbook. This body is also responsible for hearing student petitions when multiple policies may be involved or when there are differences between the student and academic programs concerning a policy in this Handbook.

The Graduate School Staff Directory

Directory information for the staff of The Graduate School can be found on [The Graduate School's website](#). The Enrolled Students Services staff is available to assist students with questions about the policies and procedures in this Handbook.

The Graduate School's homepage is located online at <http://gradschool.unc.edu/>.

Graduate Education References

- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Student Resource Guide](#)
- The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#)
- [Academic Integrity and Ethics](#)

Graduate School Calendar

For a detailed listing of Graduate School events, please visit the [Graduate School events web page](#).

For academic and registration calendars, please see the [University Registrar's Calendars](#).

General Academic Requirements and Regulations

Admission and Matriculation

An individual is admitted to The Graduate School to pursue a single specified degree program beginning in the semester designated in the offer of admission letter. There is no transfer process between programs once admitted to The Graduate School.

A desire to pursue a different degree requires a new application to the new degree program. For example, an individual who is admitted to a PhD program in Department A may not transfer to a PhD program in Department B. The individual must formally apply and be admitted to the PhD program in Department B in a subsequent semester.

Degree level changes within the same graduate program are allowed, such as doctoral students opting to earn a master's degree or master's students granted [Permission to Proceed](#) to the doctoral level. Other cases of degree changes within the same graduate program (e.g., online/residential or multiple master's degrees) will be handled on a case by case basis taking into consideration timing, advising, and accreditation requirements.

Non-degree Students

The Graduate School does not admit non-degree students.

If non-degree students decide at any time to pursue a degree, they must formally apply for new admission, and all Graduate School and program criteria standards must be met. If an individual is granted admission and subsequently wishes to transfer credits earned while in non-degree status into the academic program, The Graduate School's transfer of course credit guidelines will apply.

See [Transferring Course Credit](#).

Dual Bachelor's-Master's Programs

An undergraduate student admitted into a master's degree program as part of a dual bachelor's-master's program must meet all the policies and guidelines for both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. For additional information about course credits, admissions, and funding, please see the [Dual Bachelor's-Graduate Degrees](#).

Readmission

A formal request for readmission to The Graduate School is required whenever a student fails to register for a regular (fall/spring) semester without being approved for a leave of absence—whether the student withdrew during the semester or simply did not register. To resume their studies, such students must submit an [Application for Readmission](#) according to the following deadlines:

- July 1 for the fall semester
- December 1 for the spring semester
- April 1 for the first summer session
- June 1 for the second summer session

Readmission after a long absence is not automatic and will be reviewed carefully by the academic program prior to making a recommendation to The Graduate School.

If a student has not been enrolled for one academic year, the student must also request a new residency determination via the [Residency Determination Service](#) and follow the [instructions](#) to be considered a NC resident for tuition purposes.

A student who receives a [medical withdrawal](#) may be required to receive [medical clearance](#) before being readmitted.

If a student is not registered for as long as two academic years, a new immunization record and [Medical History Form](#) must also be submitted to Campus Health Services to avoid future registration cancellation.

Reapplication

An individual must formally apply for new admission ([Admission Application](#)), application

fee, current GRE scores, etc.) in the following circumstances:

- An individual remains unregistered for five years or longer and wishes to resume graduate study. The academic program and The Graduate School will consult to determine if credits previously earned will meet current degree requirements.
- An individual withdraws during the first semester of enrollment in an academic program and later wishes to pursue the degree after two years have passed.
- A student exceeds the time limit for degree completion and wishes to continue studies. See [Time Limit for Master's Degree](#) or [Doctoral Degree](#) for information about time limits and options for extensions.

To resume their studies, such students must submit an [Admission Application](#) request according to the following deadlines:

- July 1 for the fall semester
- December 1 for the spring semester
- April 1 for the first summer session
- June 1 for the second summer session

Students should first contact their former academic program to develop a feasible academic plan for returning to complete the degree. The academic program and The Graduate School will consult to determine admission application requirements, an academic plan for completion of degree requirements, and a new timeline for completion. The academic plan should be submitted as part of the reapplication materials.

If a student has not been enrolled for one academic year, the student must also request a new residency determination via the [Residency Determination Service](#) and follow the [instructions](#) to be considered a NC resident for tuition purposes.

Faculty as Students

Members of the General Faculty of UNC-Chapel Hill may not pursue a graduate degree at this institution except under the following conditions:

- The course of study and the conditions of employment are approved annually by The Graduate School; and

- The employing academic program chair(s) and dean must certify annually that the degree to be pursued is of demonstrable value to the institution.

Eligibility

A student may become ineligible to continue studies at UNC-Chapel Hill and The Graduate School for academic reasons and student code violations. For more information, please refer to the [University Registrar's Policy Memo No. 7: Cancellation, Withdrawal, and Suspension](#).

Academic Eligibility

Under certain circumstances a student will not be allowed to continue in The Graduate School. Registration in following semesters for academically ineligible students will be canceled automatically.

A student becomes academically ineligible to continue in The Graduate School for the following reasons:

1. Receives a grade of F, F*, XF, or nine or more hours of L.
 - The computation of hours taken will include courses for which the student has received a grade of H, P, L, or F, as well as equivalent grades for courses taken through [inter-institutional registration](#) where other permanent letter grades may be assigned.
 - [Undergraduate courses](#) taken as a graduate student will not be included in this computation.
 - If a student completes or withdraws from one academic program and begins study in another academic program, all grades remain part of the permanent record. The grades for any courses to be credited toward the new program will be included in the calculation of academic eligibility.
 - Students may refer to [Graduate Grading](#) for a more detailed description of grading policies.
2. Fails a written or oral examination for the second time.

- Once a student is notified of failing a written or oral exam for the second time, the student automatically becomes ineligible for further graduate work.
- See [Failure of Examinations for Master's degree](#) or [Doctoral degree](#).

Reinstatement

When special circumstances warrant, a student made academically ineligible under the conditions stated above may be reinstated upon petition initiated through the student's academic program. Students and academic program representatives must develop an appropriate academic plan as part of the [Request for Reinstatement to Graduate School Form](#).

The student's director of graduate studies must submit the petition together with a statement endorsing or declining to endorse the student's request to The Graduate School. Final approval rests with The Graduate School. Graduate School staff are authorized to consider routine, first instances of reinstatement requests. If there is a disagreement between the student and academic program, or for any subsequent reinstatement requests, the Academic Policy Committee of the Administrative Board of The Graduate School will hear and vote on the situation. Decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

Academic eligibility reinstatement solely to award the degree is generally not permissible. If a student is declared academically ineligible based on their final term of work, the degree will not be awarded and an academic plan for degree completion should be developed as part of a reinstatement.

After academic eligibility reinstatement, any subsequent grade below P or failure of an attempt of written or oral examinations will result in the student becoming academically ineligible again.

Students declared academically ineligible in one graduate program who later apply and are accepted to another graduate program should contact The Graduate School for direction on their academic standing with the University.

Student Honor Code

Students are subject to the regulations of student government under the Honor Code. Students may become ineligible to continue studies at UNC-Chapel Hill for student code violations. Instances of suspected plagiarism, cheating on examinations, or other violations of the Honor Code should be reported either to the [Office of Student Conduct](#) or the [Office of the Dean of Students](#).

It shall be the responsibility of every student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to support and comply with the enforcement of the [Honor Code](#), which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing involving academic processes or interactions with University, student, or academic personnel acting in an official capacity.

It shall be the further responsibility of every student to hold themselves, as members of the Carolina community, to a high standard of academic and non-academic (i.e., teaching, research, and personal) conduct; namely, to conduct oneself so as not to impair significantly the welfare or the educational opportunities of others in the University community.

Course Credit

Transferring Course Credit

General Guidelines

Requests for courses to be transferred for credit toward a graduate degree are reviewed by The Graduate School upon recommendation by the student's academic program. Such work must represent graduate-level courses relevant to the degree being sought, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least equivalent to those of currently enrolled students as determined by the academic program. Students seeking transfer credit must provide the following to their academic program:

- Published course description;
- Course reading list;
- Course requirements, including assignments and grading criteria;

- Information on the types of tools and methods that were used to engage students in learning; and
- Official transcripts noting earned credit for the course. Note: Transcripts received from other universities cannot be released to students or third parties.

Students should then submit the [Transfer Credit Recommendation Form](#) to The Graduate School for processing.

In addition, the following guidelines apply:

- Transferred credit will not be included in the program residence credit calculation.
- Grades earned on transferred work must be equivalent to B or better (B- is not equivalent to B).
- Courses taken on a pass/fail or satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis may not be included in transfer credit.
- Credit hours earned on transferred work will not be greater than the earned credit hours reflected on the official transcript. If necessary, earned credit hours will be converted to semester hours before posting as transferred credit hours. The academic program has discretion to allow fewer hours.
- Transfer of thesis or dissertation credit hours is permitted if the academic program agrees the project complies with the general standards of their own requirements. In most cases, this applies to doctoral students given permission to bypass a master's degree or to students who are transferring to UNC-Chapel Hill following faculty. Under no circumstances may a completed dissertation project or a completed thesis project (for a terminal/stand-alone master's degree) serve in lieu of these requirements as part of awarding a Chapel Hill degree.
- A student who wishes to take one or more courses at another institution (other than by inter-institutional registration) must first consult the academic program if asking to receive credit for such courses. Once such course credit is earned, the procedure for transferring the credits earned is the same as that described above.
- The Graduate School does not accept transfer credit for non-credit courses, including lifetime learning seminars and programs, or courses taken for Continuing Education Units.

Master's Degree Guidelines

The 20 Percent Rule

Upon recommendation of the academic program and approval by The Graduate School, up to 20 percent of the total hours required for the master's degree may be graduate-level courses transferred from another approved institution, or from this institution for courses taken before admission to the academic program in The Graduate School (e.g., courses taken as a non-degree or Continuing Studies student, an undergraduate, or a degree student in another program).

Credit received for graduate-level courses taken as an undergraduate may be transferred into an academic program with the program's approval provided the course did not count toward the requirements of the undergraduate degree.

Transferred credits will not be included in the program residence credit calculation.

Doctoral Degree Guidelines

Upon recommendation of the academic program and approval by The Graduate School, a doctoral student may transfer into the degree program relevant graduate courses from approved institutions or from other graduate programs within this institution.

The doctoral student may be examined on all transferred courses at the time of the doctoral oral examination.

There is no limit to the number of hours that can be transferred into a doctoral program to meet course requirements—with the academic program's approval.

Transferred credits will not be included in the program [residence credit](#) calculation.

Transferring Exam Credit

Requests for prior milestone examinations to be transferred for credit toward a UNC graduate degree are permissible only for comprehensive exams. An oral prospectus of the dissertation/thesis project must be conducted and approved by the UNC faculty committee. Students seeking transfer credit for exams must petition their academic program and seek approval from The Graduate School.

Pass/Fail Courses

No graduate-only level courses (at UNC-Chapel Hill, those numbered 700 and above) may be established as pass/fail courses. All required coursework intended to count toward degree credits or requirements, including those taken on this campus or elsewhere via inter-institutional registration, study abroad, etc., may not be taken on a pass/fail basis. Students who wish to take a non-required or undergraduate level course pass/fail should contact The Graduate School.

Undergraduate Courses

Courses approved for undergraduate credit only (at UNC-Chapel Hill, those numbered below 400), including required prerequisite courses, will not be counted toward academic program requirements, do not count toward full-time enrollment status, will not carry either course or residence credit, and will not be entered into the student's Graduate School academic eligibility calculation.

Continuing Studies and Summer Sessions

Degree-seeking students must register for all courses through The Graduate School (not Continuing Studies or Summer School).

Auditing Courses

To audit a course, students must obtain the written permission of the course instructor and the academic program chair. Students can request this permission only after the end of the official registration period.

Students may later enroll in and receive academic credit for a previously audited course; however, retroactive academic credit for an audited course is not permitted.

Degree-seeking students cannot audit courses at the Friday Center for Continuing Education or a course preparing a student for "Credit-by-Examination." Students officially registered for other courses during a semester or summer session may audit a course without paying a fee.

For more information, please refer to the [University Registrar's Policy Memo No. 9](#).

Registration

Full-Time Registration

A full-time student is one who is matriculated and meets the conditions for each term noted below:

- Registers for nine or more graduate credit hours in a fall or spring term; or
- Registers for a minimum of three hours of thesis substitute (992), thesis (993), or dissertation (994) in a fall, spring, or summer term. Note: A student may register for additional courses as needed, but if registering for less than nine hours, this must include a minimum of three hours of 992/993/994 to be considered full-time; or
- Registers for fewer than nine graduate credit hours in a fall, spring, or summer term, exclusive of 992/993/994, and has been granted a [Waiver of Hours](#) for that term.

A student who was registered for the immediately preceding fall and spring semesters and expects to return for the fall semester does not need to enroll during either of the summer sessions to maintain status as a full-time matriculated student. Certain campus services may have required fees for access during the summer sessions.

Individual graduate programs may set guidelines on research enrollments, including which academic milestones should be passed before enrolling in 992/993/994. Once students successfully defend their dissertation or thesis or complete their thesis substitute, no further enrollments are necessary or permissible, and graduation should not be delayed.

All 992/993/994 courses are similarly named following university guidelines and hold fixed credit hours at 3.0, thereby always conferring full-time status.

Students should contact the [Office of Scholarships and Student Aid](#) with questions about full-time status for financial aid purposes.

Waiver of Hours

Graduate School approval of a waiver of hours is contingent upon the student submitting a [Waiver of Hours Form](#). This form must also include a statement from the academic program

certifying that the student's overall academic involvement—teaching assignments, research projects—is consistent with the workload of a full-time student.

All waiver of hours requests must arrive at The Graduate School by the close of the normal add period (generally five days after classes begin) for final review and processing before the semester's census date ("census date" is generally two weeks after classes begin). No waiver of hours requests will be retroactively approved.

Required Registration

Students are required to be registered whenever degree progress is being made or University resources (including faculty time) are being used to appropriately reflect work being done.

Academic programs and students should be aware that students who lapse enrollment lose official student status and recognized University affiliation. Relinquishing formal student status can disadvantage students by eliminating their eligibility for financial aid and student campus services and benefits.

In addition, the following specific registration requirements apply.

Assistantships and Fellowships

Each student holding a service (assistantship) or non-service (fellowship) appointment must be registered full-time in order to hold that position during the fall and spring semesters. Students must be on-campus unless the award requires their presence at another campus or research center.

Examinations and Thesis/Dissertation

A student must be registered during the semester(s) or summer terms in which any written and/or oral examinations are taken and graded.

Students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of thesis substitute (992), thesis (993), or dissertation (994) during the semesters or summer terms in which the thesis/dissertation is proposed and defended or a thesis option is completed.

Registration for the prior semester will cover events that occur during a break between

semesters. This registration covers a student from the first day of class in a semester until the day before classes begin for the next semester. For example, if a student is registered for a minimum of three credit hours of 992/993/994 in the fall semester and intends to defend in the same term, the defense must occur between the first day of fall classes and the day before the first day of spring classes. Similarly, summer registration would cover a defense occurring anytime between the first day of summer session I classes until the day before the first day of fall classes. If the defense takes place during a summer, students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of 992/993/994 during either the first or second summer session to be covered for the entire summer term.

Individual graduate programs may set guidelines on research enrollments, including which academic milestones should be passed before enrolling in 992/993/994.

Once students have completed all courses, including a minimum of three credit hours of thesis substitute (992)/thesis (993) or a minimum of six credit hours of dissertation (994), they must continue to register for three credit hours of 992/993/994 each academic semester (fall/spring) until the degree is completed to reflect academic progress and in order to use University resources (including faculty time).

Once students successfully defend their dissertation or thesis or complete their thesis substitute, no further enrollments are necessary or permissible, and graduation should not be delayed.

Credit/Course Load

Students should register for no more than 16 hours in any semester. A student enrolled in the summer may not register for, and will not receive graduate credit for, more than eight hours a session. Overload requests are considered on an exceptional basis and should be initiated by the student's academic program and forwarded to The Graduate School for approval.

A student who holds a service appointment within the University or is employed either on- or off-campus is advised to register on the following basis:

- A student engaged in teaching three to six credit hours or in performing other part-time duties for 10 to 20 hours weekly is advised to register for no more than nine hours of course credit.
- A student engaged in teaching more than six credit hours or in performing other part-time duties for more than 20 hours weekly is advised to register for no more than six hours of course credit.
- A student engaged in full-time employment is advised to register for no more than three hours of course credit.
- During a summer session, a student who holds a service appointment should register for no more than three hours of course credit.

Adding Courses

Courses may be added only during the official add period. Please refer to the [University Registrar's Calendar](#) for official add period dates for the standard semester and summer terms.

The Graduate School serves as the Dean's Office authorization for University Registrar forms.

A Graduate School signature is required to process an add in a regularly-scheduled course after the census date in a given term. Effective dates are not altered. For courses scheduled outside the standard term dates, proportional deadlines are similarly applied.

Dropping Courses

Drop deadlines for the standard semester and summer terms are given in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#). To drop a course outside the normal drop period, the student must complete and obtain the required signatures on the Registration Drop/Add Form, available through the student's academic program or the Office of the University Registrar.

The Graduate School serves as the Dean's Office authorization for University Registrar forms.

A Graduate School signature is required to process a drop in a regularly-scheduled course after the normal drop period in a given term. Effective dates are not altered. No regularly-scheduled course may be dropped in the last

two weeks of classes in a fall or spring semester or during the last week of a summer session. For courses scheduled outside the standard term dates, proportional deadlines are similarly applied.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Dropping a course after the census date may have financial and academic consequences. Please refer to the [Academic and Financial Policy Regarding Tuition and Drop Dates](#).

A student registered for and wishing to drop an inter-institutional course follows the same procedures and deadlines as required for dropping courses at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Official [withdrawal from the University](#) is required if a student wishes to drop all courses after a semester begins.

Post-Semester Registration Changes

Course changes after the last day of classes for the current term must be submitted on a Post-Semester Registration/Drop/Add form available through the student's academic program or the Office of the University Registrar. Appropriate justification and approval by the academic program should be attached to the post-semester form prior to submission for processing by The Graduate School.

Inter-Institutional Registration

Students may take a maximum of two graduate-level courses through inter-institutional registration during a fall or spring term or a maximum of one graduate-level course during a summer term, provided that the student is also registered for the balance of a normal load (at least three credit hours) at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Students may take courses in residence at North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, North Carolina Central University, or Duke University. Students may also take courses online through the [UNC System inter-institutional website](#) by having a request approved and paying tuition directly to the visited institution.

No inter-institutional course may be taken pass/fail (satisfactory/unsatisfactory, credit/no

credit, etc.) and all courses must earn a specific grade. Please refer to the [Graduate Grading](#) section of this Handbook for the policy concerning inter-institutional grading.

To [register for a residential inter-institutional course](#), the student must complete an [Inter-Institutional Approval Form](#) and obtain the director of graduate studies' signature certifying the following requirements:

- the course is appropriate for the student's degree program, and is a graduate-level course according to the current numbering schemes below:
 - Duke – 500 and above (except Divinity and Nursing courses)
 - NCCU – 4000 and above
 - NCSU – 500 and above
 - UNC-C – 5000 and above
 - UNC-G – 500 and above;
- an equivalent course is not available on this campus; and
- the course does not earn a pass/fail grade.

The Graduate School serves as the Dean's Office authorization for University Registrar forms. The student then submits the request form to the UNC-Chapel Hill Office of the University Registrar for approval and processing.

Courses taken by UNC-Chapel Hill degree students via inter-institutional registration earn residence credit as if they were courses on this campus.

The exchange of inter-institutional grades between universities is a time-consuming process and grades may not appear on a student's record at the same time as grades from their home campus. Students opting to take inter-institutional courses during their final semester should closely monitor their academic record for posting delays that may prevent graduation.

International Students

English Prerequisite to Registration

All new international students subject to the English proficiency exam requirement (TOEFL or IELTS) will have their test scores reviewed in their first semester of study. Students who may

benefit from additional support services in reading, speaking, and writing will be notified of campus resources available to them.

Full-time/Continuous Registration

International students must observe all enrollment conditions required by their student visa, including remaining enrolled full-time in the program to which they were admitted. Changes in the enrollment status of international students must be reported to [International Student and Scholar Services](#) by the student as soon as possible.

Please note that certain restrictions may apply on distance and online course enrollments. Please consult with your graduate program with questions about maintaining full-time enrollment.

Failure to maintain continuous and accurately reported full-time registration can have severe consequences, including, but not limited to, loss of visa status and deportation.

International Teaching Assistants

International teaching assistants may be evaluated for their teaching ability and choose to register for "[GRAD 810: Communicating in the American Classroom](#)." This course focuses on interpersonal communication, teaching skills, and classroom phrases and pronunciation.

Cancellation of Registration

The University will only cancel registration for students who did not attend or participate in any courses. If a student attended or participated in any portion of courses, then [Dropping Courses](#) or official [Withdrawal from the University](#) processes should be followed. Appropriate justification and approval by the academic program should be included with the cancellation request prior to submission for electronic processing by The Graduate School.

Additionally, registration may be canceled under the following circumstances:

Academic Ineligibility

The Graduate School will automatically cancel the registration of those students who become academically ineligible. See [Academic Eligibility](#).

Nonpayment of Tuition and Fees

A student's registration will be canceled if tuition and fees are not paid (or properly arranged for their deferment) by the payment deadline given in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#). To register subsequent to such cancellation, students must pay tuition and fees in advance and add courses no later than the last day for adding courses specified in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#).

Failure to Submit Campus Health Services Forms

If a new or transfer student, or a matriculated student not registered for two years, fails to submit the immunization record and [Medical History Form](#), registration will be canceled.

For additional information about the University's Cancellation policies, please refer to the [Office of the University Registrar](#).

Residence Credit

Students have a minimum number of required semesters of UNC-Chapel Hill registration. The program residence credit hour requirement is earned in the process of fulfilling course credit requirements and requires UNC-Chapel Hill registration, although not necessarily physical presence on campus (for example, the student may be doing field research).

Calculation

Semester credit hours are converted to program residence credit on the same basis as tuition:

- 9 or more credit hours earn a full semester of residence.
- 6 to 8.9 credit hours earn three-fourths semester of residence.
- 3 to 5.9 credit hours earn one-half semester of residence.
- 0 to 2.9 credit hours earn one-fourth semester of residence.

Credits earned in any summer session count toward residence credit on the same basis as courses taken in a fall or spring semester.

Residence credit earned on work for a master's degree at UNC-Chapel Hill is applicable as

program residence credit for a doctoral degree in the same program.

Courses taken by UNC-Chapel Hill degree students via inter-institutional registration earn residence credit as if they were courses on this campus.

Thesis and dissertation research earns residence credit based on the number of enrolled credit hours and not necessarily full-time status (i.e., one semester registration in three credit hours of 992, 993, or 994 equates to one-half semester of residence).

Teaching or other service duties do not count as part of the residence computation for the degree.

Transferred credit will not be included in the program residence credit calculation.

Special Language Course credit does not count toward the residence credit requirement. See [Credit and Residence Requirements for Master's degree](#) or [Doctoral degree](#).

Graduate Grading

All master's and doctoral programs administered through The Graduate School operate under the same grading system. The graduate grading scale in use at UNC-Chapel Hill is unique in that it cannot be converted to the more traditional ABC grading scale. Graduate students do not carry a numerical GPA.

Grade Scale

Grading at the graduate level is intended to offer feedback to students on their performance in a given course, including once students reach the thesis and dissertation stage. Faculty are encouraged to specify course requirements and grading expectations for students. Students enrolled in courses numbered 400 and above must receive one of the following grades.

Graduate Permanent Grades

H	High Pass – Clear Excellence
P	Pass – Entirely Satisfactory Graduate Work
L	Low Pass – Inadequate Graduate Work
F	Fail

Special Permanent Grades	
F*	Fail-Administratively Assigned; equivalent to F
NG	No grade assigned; administratively assigned only
XF	Fail-Honor Court hearing outcome; equivalent to F

Temporary Grades	
AB	Absent from final examination
IN	Work incomplete
NR	Not recorded

Special Grading Symbols

Administrative F (F*) Grade

The Office of the University Registrar automatically converts the temporary grades of AB and IN to F* when the time limit for a grade change on these temporary grades has expired. Receiving a grade of F* results in the student becoming academically ineligible to continue in The Graduate School.

See [Academic Eligibility](#).

Satisfactory (S) Progress

Effective Fall 2013, the S grade was no longer available as a permanent graduate grade. Faculty and instructors should use the permanent HPLF graduate grading scale for all graduate level courses.

No Grade (NG) Assigned

The symbol of NG is recorded for pending Honor Court situations. Should a faculty member need to assign a NG grade, please contact the Registrar's Office, Records Section or the Office of Student Conduct.

Honor Court F (XF) Grade

A grade of XF indicates an Honor Court sanction of a failing grade in a course. Receiving a grade of XF results in the student becoming academically ineligible to continue in The Graduate School.

Temporary Grades

A temporary grade of IN, AB and NR converts to F* unless the grade is replaced with a permanent grade by the last day of classes for the same term one year later. Failure to remove temporary grades by the last day of classes of

the term in which a student plans to graduate will prevent graduation.

Temporary grades are not available as a graduate grade in thesis and dissertation research courses (992/993/994). Faculty advisors and instructors should set clear expectations and use the permanent HPLF graduate grading scale for reflecting academic progress on research in a given term. Exception requests should be directed to The Graduate School.

When extenuating circumstances warrant, The Graduate School may grant a student a time extension to complete a course and replace a temporary grade. Extensions must be requested prior to the deadlines for temporary grade conversion; retroactive grade changes will not be accepted for permanent grades.

The student must first complete the [Request for Extension of Time Form](#) and receive approval from their academic program, after which time the program's director of graduate studies may forward a petition for extension to The Graduate School.

Absent (AB) Grade

An AB grade must be given to a student who did not take a traditional/sit-down final exam regardless of the reason, but might have passed the course had they done so. AB is a temporary grade that converts to F* unless the grade is replaced with a permanent grade by the last day of classes for the same term one year later.

If the exam absence is officially excused by the instructor or University, the student must take the final examination at a mutually reasonable time designated by the course instructor, in no case to exceed one year from the original examination.

Since the grade of AB is given after the deadline to change courses in that semester, a student may not retroactively drop a course where an AB was received. The student must complete the final exam in the timeframe expected or earn F*.

Incomplete (IN) Grade

A grade of IN is given when the course instructor determines that exceptional circumstances warrant extending the time for the student to

complete the course. IN is a temporary grade that converts to F* unless the grade is replaced with a permanent grade by the last day of classes for the same term one year later.

The instructor should set clear expectations for course completion requirements and set the maximum allowable period for completing the course, but in no case will this extension exceed one year. If the time allowed is to be less than one year, this information should be transmitted in writing to the student and copied to The Graduate School. It is the sole responsibility of the student to complete the course and initiate the grade change prior to the one-year deadline.

Since the grade of IN is given after the deadline to change courses in that semester, a student may not retroactively drop a course where an IN was received. The student must complete the work in the timeframe expected or earn F*.

Not Recorded (NR) Grade

A grade of NR is administratively assigned by the University when the deadline to assign grades in a given term passes and the instructor has not finalized the grade roster. NR is a temporary grade that converts to F* unless the grade is replaced with a permanent grade by the last day of classes for the same term one year later.

Since the grade of NR is listed after the deadline to change courses in that semester, a student may not retroactively drop a course where an NR was received. The student must complete the work and work closely with their instructor to ensure a permanent grade is assigned.

Grade Change

Course grades of H, P, L, F, and F* are permanent grades. A permanent grade may be changed upon the initiative of the instructor, only in cases of arithmetic or clerical error, and then only with the approval of the director, chair or dean of the instructor's academic program and of The Graduate School.

Such grade changes may be made no later than the last day of classes of the next succeeding regular semester.

The Graduate School serves as the Dean's Office authorization for University Registrar forms.

More information about graduate grade changes can be found in the [University Registrar's Policy Memo No. 24](#).

Grade Appeals

The following summary details the steps involved in a grade appeal, which are elaborated on more fully immediately below the summary:

- 1) The student should first address concerns to the instructor who assigned the grade.
- 2) If, after consultation with the instructor, a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the student may lodge an appeal of the instructor's decision, in writing, with:
 - a) the chair/director of the academic program which is the home unit of the course instructor, or
 - b) the instructor's dean, in cases where the school is the instructor's home unit.

All appeals must be in writing and signed by the student. They must contain a summary of the evidence and arguments that the student believes supports the stated position in the appeal.

It is the responsibility of the University official noted above to determine whether the evidence cited by the student warrants further investigation. If the determination is made that the evidence cited warrants further investigation, it is the responsibility of the University official noted above to investigate the complaint.

The burden of proof falls upon the student to show that (a) an impermissible element existed in the instructor's evaluation of the student's coursework, and (b) that element influenced the grade assignment to the detriment of the student.

- 3) If the outcome of this first level of appeal is not satisfactory to the student, an appeal of the chair's/director's decision may be lodged in writing with:
 - a) the chair's dean, in cases where the appeal was initially reviewed by the chair of the instructor's home unit,

- and the chair's school has a process for review at the dean's level, or
- b) The Graduate School, in cases where the school is the instructor's home unit, or the school in which the chair's academic program is based does not have a process for review at the dean's level.

- 4) In cases where the student has appealed to the chair's dean, subsequent to appealing to the instructor's chair (3 (a) above), and the outcome is not satisfactory to the student, the student may lodge an appeal of the dean's decision, in writing, with The Graduate School.

In appealing an appeal decision (steps 3 and 4, above), the burden of proof falls upon the student to show that (a) an impermissible element existed in the review of the appeal, and (b) that element influenced the chair's/dean's determination of the outcome of the review to the detriment of the student.

- 5) Decisions of The Graduate School are final and cannot be appealed.

Before filing any appeal of a course grade, the student should first address concerns to the instructor who assigned the grade. Should the instructor detect an arithmetic or clerical error that negatively influenced the grade assignment, a grade change form should be executed reflecting the corrected grade. An instructor may not initiate a change of a course grade as a result of reevaluating the quality of the student's performance or as a result of additional work performed by the student.

If, after consultation with the instructor, a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the student may appeal the grade to the instructor's chair or dean. Such an appeal should be lodged by the student in writing with the instructor's chair or dean, with a copy to be provided by the student to the instructor, and should cite the evidence by which the student judges (a) that an impermissible element existed in the instructor's evaluation of the student's coursework and (b) that it influenced the grade assignment to the detriment of the student. Appeals should be submitted no later than the last day of classes of the next succeeding regular semester.

For an appeal of a course grade to be considered, it must be based upon one or more of the following grounds and upon allegation that the ground or grounds cited influenced the grade assignment to the student's detriment: (1) arithmetic or clerical error; (2) arbitrariness, possibly including discrimination or harassment as defined in University policies; (3) personal malice; and/or (4) student conduct cognizable under the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance.

The University's [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct](#) prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of an individual's age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Section V under the Policy provides specific information about Prohibited Conduct for students who believe that they have been discriminated against or harassed on the basis of one or more of these protected classifications.

Students who want additional information regarding the University's process for investigating allegations of discrimination or harassment should contact the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office for assistance:

Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
214 W. Cameron Avenue, 2nd Floor
Campus Box 9160
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599
Telephone: (919) 966-3576
Email: eoc@unc.edu

Any administrator or supervisor, including a department chair, associate dean or other administrator, who receives a student's complaint about prohibited harassment or discrimination must notify the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office immediately after receiving the complaint. If a student raises a claim of prohibited harassment or discrimination during an academic appeal, an investigation of the student's claim must be performed under the direction of the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. The school or department must await the results of the harassment or discrimination investigation before deciding the student's academic appeal.

The chair or dean will evaluate the material presented and determine whether the evidence cited warrants further investigation of the charges. The burden of proof shall fall upon the student. The determination by the chair or dean shall be made only after providing the instructor with the opportunity to reply to the charges as cited in writing by the student.

If the chair or dean judges the evidence cited by the student to be insufficient to warrant further investigation of the charges, the appeal may be denied by the chair or dean. In this case, the student has the right to appeal the ruling in writing to the Administrative Board of The Graduate School.

If the chair or dean, or the Administrative Board (if the ruling has been appealed to that body), judges the evidence cited to be sufficient to warrant further investigation, the chair or dean of the academic program in which the course was offered will appoint a committee of no less than three members of the Graduate Faculty to investigate the charges and to render a written set of findings and recommendations. The findings and recommendations shall be transmitted to the student by the chair or dean, with a copy to The Graduate School.

Should a change of permanent course grade be recommended, The Graduate School shall present that recommendation for action by the Administrative Board of The Graduate School. Should change of grade not be recommended, the student retains the right to appeal in writing to the Administrative Board of The Graduate School. A change of grade following these appeal procedures requires a vote of no less than two-thirds of those Administrative Board members who are present and voting. The decision of The Graduate School is final and cannot be appealed.

Other types of official academic decisions, (e.g., evaluation of oral or written examinations or of theses/dissertations), may be appealed according to the above criteria and procedures, with the single exception that protest of non-grade academic evaluations may call for the reevaluation of student performance.

Inter-Institutional Grading

A grade received for a graduate-level course taken by inter-institutional registration that is considered the minimum passing grade for the partner institution will be interpreted as L. F will transfer as F.

Institution	Minimum Passing Grade (L at UNC)
• Duke	C
• NCSU	C
• NCCU	C
• UNC-C	C
• UNC-G	C

For an inter-institutional course to apply towards a UNC-Chapel Hill student's graduate degree, the inter-institutional course may not be taken pass/fail. Grades earned for courses taken via inter-institutional registration do factor into a student's academic eligibility calculation.

Pass/Fail Courses

See the Course Credit section on [Pass/Fail Courses](#) for further information on pass/fail courses.

Assistantships and Fellowships

Students may be awarded a service (research or teaching assistantship) or a non-service (fellowship) appointment. As part of this award, students may receive a [Tuition Remission Award](#), reducing tuition to in-state rates, and an [In-State Tuition Award](#).

The Graduate School recognizes that graduate students are first and foremost students and their making continual significant progress toward their degree is paramount to the ethical training and education of students. The Graduate School recommends that students should not normally conduct service work (research or teaching assistantships) in excess of 15-20 hours per week on average for doctoral students and 12-15 hours per week on average for master's students. This recommendation enables them to work on their own studies and research for at least the remaining 20-25 hours per work week. However, it is not simple to set maximum service work hours due to the complexity inherent in the education and training of graduate students. Directors of graduate

studies, therefore, need to be thoughtful about the specifics involved in each particular student's situation and sensitive to the incremental gains in knowledge and skill acquisition in the particular situation.

The University asks graduate students to perform work that is simultaneously both training and service. Their training may take various forms, including apprentice-type training under faculty mentors within the research lab, classroom or community, as well as more traditional coursework. This training often is the primary way in which students learn the core skills, expectations, norms, ethics, and content of their graduate disciplines/fields. However, when examining a particular student's educational/training program, it may be seen that while initial training is requisite to acquiring appropriate knowledge and skills, additional similar training may add only incrementally to their development. In such cases, the standard of not exceeding 15-20 hours per week for doctoral students and 12-15 hours per week for master's students should apply.

Directors of graduate studies in each graduate program are best informed to make these judgments on an individual basis and should be responsible for monitoring that service expectations do not impede any student's significant progress toward their degree.

All policies on graduate teaching assistants should adhere to the UNC System policy [Guidelines on Training, Monitoring, and Evaluating Graduate Teaching Assistants](#). The [Office of the Provost](#) maintains policies about the Professional Development of Graduate Teaching Assistants, as well as an Eligibility Waiver Request Form.

Additional financial policies and procedures can be found on our [Funding Resources](#) website.

Tuition and Other Charges

Payment Schedule

All students must pay tuition and fees according to the schedule printed in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#) unless they qualify for a

deferment. Refer to the [University Cashier's Office](#) for current cost of attendance information.

Residence Status for Tuition Payment

As a state supported institution, the tuition rate for legal residents of North Carolina is less than the tuition rate for nonresidents. Information regarding residency requirements is available on [The Graduate School's residency website](#).

Students requesting readmission or reapplication may also need to request a new residency determination via the [Residency Determination Service](#) and follow the [instructions](#) to be considered a NC resident for tuition purposes.

Tuition Remission and In-State Tuition Awards

A full-time, non-resident student who is awarded a qualifying fellowship or assistantship appointment and meets eligibility standards may receive a [Tuition Remission Award](#) reducing tuition to in-state rates. Tuition remission awards are guaranteed for one academic year for doctoral students, after which the student's graduate program has discretion about remission funding. The program has discretion about remission funding for master's students for all years.

In addition to tuition remission, non-resident and resident students who are awarded a qualifying fellowship or assistantship appointment will receive an [In-State Tuition Award](#).

Tuition remission and in-state tuition awards are initiated by the academic program in which the student is enrolled.

Tuition remission and in-state tuition awards are available fall and spring semesters only. No summer awards are made. Students must be on-campus unless their fellowship or academic progress requires their presence at another campus or research center.

Per federal policy, if a student is eligible for an in-state tuition award, the funding source(s) of the student's stipend are required to pay the tuition. If the student's stipend is from a state source, the tuition will be paid from the designated tuition fund.

Additional financial policies and procedures can be found on our [Funding Resources](#) website.

Eligibility

Students must meet the following criteria to qualify for tuition remission and in-state tuition awards:

- 1) Students must be full-time, degree-seeking, and enrolled in a residential graduate program.
- 2) Students enrolled in master's/doctoral sequence programs or [stand-alone or free-standing master's programs](#) must receive a minimum stipend level per semester, as set by The Graduate School. [Stipend levels](#) are subject to change each year.
- 3) Students must have an appointment as a teaching assistant, research assistant, or fellow/trainee. The appointment must be in effect for a period of not less than one full semester for the student to be eligible for, and to retain, tuition remission and an in-state tuition award.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students determined at any point in the semester to no longer meet the eligibility requirements to receive a tuition remission and in-state tuition award will have the full amount of any tuition remission and in-state tuition award rescinded, and are then personally responsible for paying the full costs of tuition for that semester. Tuition remission and in-state tuition awards are not prorated. Students with extenuating circumstances should discuss with their director of graduate studies and The Graduate School.

Duration of Support

- Free-standing master's program students are eligible for tuition remission and in-state tuition awards for **four semesters**;
- Doctoral students (or students in master's/doctoral sequence programs) are eligible for tuition remission and in-state tuition awards for **ten semesters**.

Individual programs are permitted to grant additional semesters of tuition support from their own budget or other departmental sources of funding. Students must maintain eligibility to

receive tuition remission and in-state tuition awards.

Additional semesters of in-state tuition support from Graduate School funding sources are not allowed.

Semesters in which the student does not receive tuition remission and in-state tuition awards from The Graduate School do not count toward the four or ten semester limit. Students who complete a degree in one academic program and then enroll in another academic program or change academic programs without receiving a degree are only eligible for the maximum semesters of eligibility as noted above during their enrollment at the University.

Mandatory Student Fees

Students who meet the eligibility requirements to receive tuition remission and in-state tuition awards will receive mandatory fee awards. The fee award pays the cost of mandatory fees charged by the University Cashier's Office. The fee award does not include special program fees. Students are responsible for individual program fees.

In most cases, mandatory student fees will be paid by the same funding source(s) that covers stipend support.

Students who pay their own tuition will continue to be responsible for paying their mandatory student fees.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students determined at any point in the semester to no longer meet the eligibility requirements to receive a mandatory fee award will have the full amount rescinded, and are then personally responsible for paying the fees for that semester. Fees are not prorated. Students with extenuating circumstances should discuss with their director of graduate studies and The Graduate School.

Consequences of Academic Actions

Resignation from Appointment

Students who have received a tuition remission, in-state tuition award, and mandatory fee award who resign from their University appointment

prior to the end of the semester (for personal, financial, medical, or any other reason) will have the full amount of their award rescinded and **are then personally responsible for paying full costs for that semester**. Tuition remission, in-state tuition awards, and mandatory student fee awards are not prorated. Students with extenuating circumstances should discuss with their director of graduate studies and The Graduate School.

Adding a Course

Students who have received a tuition remission and in-state tuition award and add a course **before** the end of the official registration add period, which results in additional tuition charges, will receive additional tuition remission and in-state award funds to cover the cost of the hours added should funds be available. Students who add a course **after** the official add registration period, which results in additional tuition charges, will not receive additional tuition remission and in-state award funds to cover the credit hours added and are then personally responsible for paying the additional cost for the credit hours added.

Dropping a Course

Students who have received a tuition remission and in-state tuition award who drop a course at any point in the semester will be re-evaluated to ensure that they still meet the eligibility requirements to receive a tuition remission and in-state tuition award.

Students determined to still meet the eligibility requirements, for whom the reduction in credit hours occurs **before** the census date and still receive credit on their financial account (“census date” is generally two weeks after classes begin), may have their financial account adjusted with no penalty.

Students determined to still meet the eligibility requirements, for whom the reduction in credit hours occurs **after** the census date and still receive credit on their financial account (“census date” is generally two weeks after classes begin), will have the tuition remission and in-state award to cover the credit hours for the course dropped rescinded and **are then personally responsible for paying the tuition costs for the credit hours dropped**.

Please refer to the [Academic and Financial Policy Regarding Tuition and Drop Dates](#) for further details on the consequences of dropping a course after the census date.

Withdrawal

Students who have received a tuition remission, in-state tuition award, and mandatory fee award who withdraw from the University (i.e., drop all classes) prior to the fulfillment of their term commitment (for personal, financial, medical, or any other reason) will have the full amount of their award rescinded and **are then personally responsible for paying full costs for that semester**.

Tuition remission, in-state tuition awards, and mandatory student fee awards are not prorated. Students with extenuating circumstances should discuss with their director of graduate studies and The Graduate School.

Partial Tuition Remissions

Programs with [stand-alone or free-standing master's degrees](#) are allowed to provide students a partial tuition remission, equal to 25 percent, 50 percent or 75 percent of full tuition. This plan was designed to accommodate students who have reduced Research Assistant responsibilities as master's degree students. In order to qualify for these partial tuition remissions, students must receive a [minimum stipend level](#) per semester, as set by The Graduate School. Please note that this program is voluntary. Students in stand-alone programs are still eligible for a full tuition remission, provided they meet the eligibility criteria as described above for teaching or research assistants.

Off-Campus Reduced Fee Rate Policy

Graduate students who must be engaged in full-time academic work that must be conducted off campus as determined by the requirements of the academic program can petition to be charged a reduced fee rate. This rate reflects the fact that these graduate students must be away from campus and cannot utilize many on-campus services.

Students must first register for regular courses in ConnectCarolina, typically 992/993/994 research credits. Student petitions will be reviewed by the

academic program, who will take the student's progress to date, academic plan for the semester, and need for University resources, including faculty time, into consideration.

Approved petitions must then be submitted to The Graduate School for review. If approved, the Cashier's Office will revise the bill at the appropriate rate.

The [Petition for Off-Campus Rate Adjustment form](#) should be submitted following the listed deadlines.

Student Services

Students approved for Off-Campus Fee Rate Adjustments retain official student status; access to IT services provided by the Educational & Technology Fee, such as email, software, mainframe computing access, and an active Onyen and PID; access to the University Library; and access to mandatory student services, such as Accessibility Resources and Service, Office of the Dean of Students, and The Graduate School. Full-time enrollment status, financial aid eligibility, and loan deferment status will be determined based on the student's course enrollment following standard University policies.

Because students approved for Off-Campus Fee Rate Adjustments will not be paying the Student Health fee or able to use Campus Health Services, they will lose access to the Student Blue optional health insurance plan. Students with RA/TA appointments retain eligibility for the GSHIP health insurance plan. Access to other campus-based services not covered in the above fees will not be retained, including, but not limited to: athletic events, recreational facilities, fee-based units such as the Writing Center, University Career Services, or Student Legal Services.

Graduation

Application to Graduate

Students must notify The Graduate School of their plan to graduate by submitting an Application for Graduation no later than the deadline shown in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#) for the semester in which they expect to graduate. Applications should only be submitted when the student realistically intends to graduate that semester and are valid for one semester only. If a student does not graduate in

the semester expected, another application for graduation in a future semester must be submitted.

Complete the Graduation check-out page in ConnectCarolina's Self Service area: Log in to ConnectCarolina → In your Student Center, under the "Academic" tab, choose "Apply for Graduation" in the drop-down box, and then click the double arrows.

Students in officially recognized dual degree programs, other than the MD-PhD program, must apply to graduate for both degrees at the same time, even if the requirements for one degree are completed sooner than the second degree. Academic programs are asked to provide flexibility so students may be able to walk ceremoniously with their cohort even if they do not earn the degree that semester. See [Dual Degree Programs](#) for additional information.

Degree Award

Master's and doctoral degrees are awarded at the end of each semester and the second summer session. Formal commencement exercises are held in May and December.

All students receiving their degrees in May are encouraged to participate in the May commencement ceremony. All students receiving their degrees in August and December are encouraged to participate in the December commencement ceremony.

Doctoral students are also encouraged to participate in the [Hooding Ceremony](#), held in May only, recognizing those who are graduating in May or those who graduated in the prior most recent December or August terms. Students must have completed all degree requirements fully to participate. Students who are eligible to participate in the Hooding Ceremony will receive an invitation from The Graduate School via email during the spring. Students planning to participate should respond to the invitation and provide requested information per posted deadlines.

Enrollment

Although students must be registered in the semester in which they defend the thesis/dissertation or complete the thesis substitute, they need not be registered in the

semester in which the degree is to be awarded, provided that no use of University faculty time or facilities is required, and as long as they were registered appropriately in prior terms.

The defense of the thesis/dissertation or completion of the thesis substitute is the culminating experience for students. This final milestone signifies the end of their research/project as well as the synthesizing outcome of all pedagogical and research contributions to their degree requirements. Once students successfully defend their dissertation or thesis or complete their thesis substitute, no further enrollments are necessary or permissible, and graduation should not be delayed beyond the next graduation cycle (i.e., a student with a successful spring semester defense must plan to submit all materials and graduate no later than August graduation).

Clearance

Degree requirements and milestones vary by academic program, and The Graduate School maintains the master listing of milestones required for degree clearance. Graduate School staff certify each degree candidate has met all requirements before clearing them to graduate. Milestones include:

- Application(s) to graduate
- Minimum credit hours required for the degree
- Foreign language requirement, if required by the academic program
- Committee structure approved
- Certification of program degree requirements received (via [PCDR form](#))
- Exam documentation approved
- Thesis/thesis substitute/dissertation enrollments
- Residence credit requirement
- Thesis/dissertation approved via ProQuest; OR, thesis substitute documentation
- All grades submitted
- Exit survey completed

Students can view the status of their degree milestones in their Student Center in ConnectCarolina.

Graduate School staff endeavor to clear students efficiently and accurately. Even if all completed milestones are in order and

submitted, it can still take several business days for degree clearance to be processed.

Any requests for early graduation clearance due to extenuating circumstances (generally only for employment or visa requirements) should be submitted through the academic program and only after the census date for the given graduation term.

Medical or Personal Issues

Medical History Form

All new, transfer, and readmitted students (who have not attended UNC-Chapel Hill for the previous two years) must submit a completed immunization record and [Medical History Form](#) to Campus Health Services to avoid registration cancellation.

Leaving the University

Students with medical or personal issues may seek ways to depart the University, temporarily or permanently. Students should refer to relevant sections of the Handbook for information, such as [Withdrawal from the University](#), [Leave of Absence for Master's degree](#) or [Doctoral degree](#), and [Readmission](#).

Because each student situation is individualized, students should reach out to their director of graduate studies or The Graduate School for guidance and options.

Parental Leave Policy

The UNC-Chapel Hill [Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy](#) is designed to assist a full-time graduate student who is the primary child-care provider immediately following the birth or adoption of a child. This policy will ensure the student's full-time, registered status and will facilitate their return to full participation in class work and, where applicable, research and teaching in a seamless manner. All matriculated, full-time graduate students who have been full-time for at least one academic semester are eligible to apply for this leave. A [Parental Leave Application Form](#), along with other supporting documentation as outlined in the policy, must be completed and submitted to

The Graduate School at least eight weeks prior to the anticipated birth or adoption of the child.

Student Emergency Fund

Graduate students should be aware of the 1) Student Emergency Fund sponsored by Student Affairs and Scholarships and Student Aid and 2) GPSF Emergency Fund. Both funds may provide immediate limited financial support for unexpected emergency expenses.

See [Student Emergency Fund](#) or [GPSF-EF](#) for additional information and the applications.

Health Insurance Plans

As per the UNC Board of Governors, all students enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill are required to have verifiable health insurance coverage. Graduate students are offered health insurance coverage through either a [TA/RA plan](#) (offered as part of a teaching or research assistantship) or the [mandatory student plan](#). While enrolled, a student can switch back and forth between these two options as appropriate.

For information on either plan, visit [Campus Health Services](#).

Withdrawal from the University

Official withdrawal from the University is required if a student wishes to drop all courses after a semester begins. The student must submit an electronic Withdrawal Form through their ConnectCarolina Student Center and complete the withdrawal steps as indicated. An [Instructor Grade Input](#) form must be uploaded for each course in which the student is enrolled. If at the time of withdrawal the student is failing any course, a grade of F is assigned to the student's permanent record and the student becomes ineligible to continue in The Graduate School.

A student who withdraws during the first semester of enrollment in an academic program may request [Readmission](#) if later wishing to pursue the degree. After two years have passed, the student must submit a [Reapplication](#) to that program if later wishing to pursue the degree.

Withdrawal from the University is not equivalent to a formal leave of absence from The Graduate School. See [Leave of Absence for Master's degree](#) or [Doctoral degree](#).

An official medical withdrawal from the University must be processed directly by Campus Health Services or Counseling and Psychological Services, and only for those students who are eligible to use these campus offices (i.e., distance students are not eligible for this option). A student who receives a medical withdrawal may be required to receive [medical clearance](#) before being readmitted.

International students who withdraw from the University may face critical consequences regarding their visa status. International students should contact [International Student and Scholar Services](#) to discuss the implications of noncompliance well in advance of processing a withdrawal.

Withdrawal from the University also has financial consequences for students who have been awarded tuition remission and in-state tuition award through a fellowship or assistantship appointment. See the withdrawal policy for students receiving tuition support under [Tuition and Other Charges](#).

Policies and Procedures

Campus Policies and Procedures can be found online at:

- [Campus Policies and Procedures](#)
- [The Office of the Provost](#)
- [The Office of the Dean of Students](#)
- [The Graduate Catalog](#)

The following are selected Policies and Procedures that may be of immediate interest for students.

- [Honor Code](#)
- [Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
- [Research Misconduct](#)
- [Copyright Policy](#)
- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
- [Illegal Drug Policy](#)
- [Alcohol Policy](#)
- [Annual Security Report](#)
- [Immunization Requirements](#)
- [Class Attendance](#)

- [University Approved Absences](#)
- [University Travel Policy and Global Travel Registry](#)
- [Improper Relationships between Students and Employees](#)
- [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#)
- [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct](#)
- [Faculty Grievance Committee](#)
- [Residency Status for Tuition Purposes](#)
- [Pregnancy-Related Resources and Policies](#)
- [Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy](#)

Students as Faculty

A student pursuing a graduate degree at this institution may not be appointed as a member of the General Faculty, except under the following conditions:

- The appointment may be made only if the appointment begins in the same semester that the degree is awarded.
- The appointment may be made only if the conditions of employment are approved by The Graduate School, the academic program chair and dean, if appropriate, of the program in which the student is pursuing a degree, and the employing academic program chair and dean, if appropriate.

Graduate Students Teaching Graduate Students

Graduate students normally do not teach other graduate students from the same academic program. Academic programs may apply for exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis by submitting a [Request for Permission for a Graduate Student to Teach a Graduate Course within His/Her Own Academic Program Form](#) to The Graduate School for evaluation. In such cases, a full-time faculty member must be designated as the graduate student's teaching supervisor and the instructor of record.

Certificate Programs

Certificate Programs are intended for matriculated, degree-seeking students or for non-matriculated students at UNC-Chapel Hill whose objective is the development of specialization in the field of the certificate program. These programs signify

accomplishment, specialization, and achievement.

Students may be interested in gaining both a graduate degree and a certificate credential. Students must be admitted to both programs. Academic credits for both credentials must be discrete. The following transfer guidelines will apply.

Transfer to Certificate Programs

- The student's director of graduate studies and the director of the certificate program sponsoring unit have discretion in allowing course credit transfer within these guidelines.
- All students must apply and be accepted to certificate programs. Certificates will not be awarded "after the fact".
- Students may be working toward a certificate and degree concurrently, but the total number of academic credits transferred shall not exceed 40 percent of the total required for a certificate. Total credits allowed to transfer may be less as determined by the certificate program.
- The courses to be transferred must be graduate level courses taken at UNC-Chapel Hill using the regular graduate grading scale: H, P, L.
- All grades earned in the transferred courses will be included in the calculation of academic eligibility in the certificate program.
- Transferred credit shall not be included in the residence credit calculation, if required by the certificate program.

Transfer to Degrees

- The student's director of graduate studies and the director of the certificate program sponsoring unit have discretion in allowing course credit transfer within these guidelines.
- All students must participate in and be accepted through a competitive application and admissions process to the degree program.
- The total number of academic credits transferred shall not exceed 40 percent of the total required for a certificate. Total credits allowed to transfer may be less as determined by the degree program.
- Courses must be taken as part of an approved, formal certificate program.

- The courses to be transferred must be graduate level courses taken at UNC-Chapel Hill using the regular graduate grading scale: H, P, L.
- All grades earned in the transferred courses will be included in the calculation of academic eligibility in the degree program.
- Transferred credit shall not be included in the residence credit calculation.

Students wishing to earn more than one certificate must be aware of the transfer restrictions, i.e., no certificate course can be counted more than once and discrete academic credits for each individual credential must be earned.

Students are encouraged to discuss their plans with their certificate program director(s) and their degree program director of graduate studies as early as possible to ensure all requirements for their degree and certificate(s) can be met.

For additional information on graduate certificate programs, please see [Graduate Certificates](#).

Dual Degree Programs

The Graduate School encourages the development of programs in graduate education that are responsive to changing disciplinary, professional, economic, and social circumstances. Only academic programs have the authority to propose and receive approval for new dual degree programs. Programs should reference the [Policy on Transdisciplinary Programs of Study](#).

Dual degree programs must balance structural efficiency with individual program integrity. They result in the awarding of two degrees from two different disciplines with coordination across the degrees, generally at the master's degree level (exceptions: JD, MD, and MD/PhD programs). Note that a master's degree student continuing on for a PhD in the same academic program is not considered a dual degree student under these guidelines.

Students must apply to and be accepted by both programs individually before beginning in the dual degree program. In a practical sense, this means that students should apply to both academic programs at the same time, or apply to the second program no later than during their first year of the first program. Dual degrees will

not be awarded after the curricular requirements have already been met without initial application.

Course credit transfers allowed above the normal [20 Percent Rule](#) are specified in the dual degree program approvals from The Graduate School. Students who do not apply to both programs before beginning the curricular requirements will be subject to the [20 Percent Rule](#).

Students in officially recognized dual degree programs, other than the MD-PhD program, must apply to graduate for both degrees at the same time, even if the requirements for one degree are completed sooner than the second degree. Dual degree students should ensure they have successfully submitted an application to graduate for each of their intended degree programs.

Academic programs are asked to provide flexibility so students may be able to walk ceremoniously with their cohort even if they do not earn the degree that semester. See [Graduation](#) for additional information.

These policies apply only to officially recognized dual degree programs. Students desiring to earn more than one degree simultaneously must meet the requirements of each degree, including admission, transfer credit, and graduation requirements. Students are encouraged to discuss their plans with their degree program director(s) of graduate studies as early as possible to ensure all requirements for their intended degrees can be met within policy.

Degree Requirements

Master's Degree Requirements

Credit and Residence Requirements

The Graduate School requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of graduate course credit, 24 of which must be taken in residence. Individual

program credit hour requirements may be higher and must be satisfied.

Master's students are required to complete a minimum program residence credit of two full semesters either by full-time registration or by part-time registration over several semesters.

See [Residence Credit](#).

Transfer Credit

Please refer to the general guidelines for [Transferring Course Credit](#) and the [20 Percent Rule](#) for Master's students.

Major Course Requirements

Course requirements in the major field must be fulfilled as specified by the student's academic program. The student is expected to complete a program of study that will provide mastery of the field, with at least 18 course credit hours in the major field. It is recommended that at least half of the courses taken for a graduate degree be numbered 700 and above.

Major courses must also include a minimum of three credit hours of thesis substitute (992) or thesis (993) registration.

Electing a Minor

With the approval of the major and minor academic programs, a student may elect to declare a formal minor in any program that offers a graduate degree. The student should submit an approved [Minor Declaration Form](#) to The Graduate School.

The minor must comprise at least nine credit hours beyond the major. All credits must be for courses listed (or cross-listed) in programs other than that of the major and cannot also be counted toward the major. A minor may consist of a set of related courses, some of which are listed by one program and some of which are listed by another. In most cases, the minor would not include courses from more than two programs. Only one program name will be listed as granting the minor, and the director of graduate studies in the minor program must agree to accept any courses from outside the minor program offerings.

The minor must be approved in advance by the director of graduate studies in both the major

and minor programs. When a satisfactory minor has been planned and approved by both programs, a copy of the proposed minor course of study should be signed by the director of graduate studies in the major and minor programs and sent to The Graduate School to become a permanent part of the student's record.

Foreign Language or Research Requirement

Language and research skill requirements differ for each academic program. Students must acquire competence in those foreign languages needed for research or teaching in their disciplines. At an early stage, a student should consult the academic program advisor concerning what foreign languages, if any, will be required.

Graduate students must satisfy the foreign language requirement from a list of acceptable languages other than English as approved by their academic program.

Foreign Language Proficiency Assessments are offered as an alternative to special language courses offered on campus. For more information, see [Foreign Language Proficiency Assessment](#).

Each academic program determines at what point a student must fulfill language or research skill requirements, provided that all such requirements are satisfied before a student graduates. The student's director of graduate studies will need to certify on the [Program Certification of Degree Requirements form](#) that all such requirements have been met.

Examinations

A written or an oral examination (or both) is required for degree completion. Only academic programs have the authority to request approved substitutes in meeting these requirements, normally within the guidelines of field or accreditation requirements. Programs should reference the [Academic Policy Regarding Approved Substitutes for Master's Degree Comprehensive Exam Requirements](#).

The definition of "comprehensive" varies by academic program, but here means an examination whose thoroughness in all ways

conforms to the best accepted practices within the discipline.

Neither examination may be taken until all courses are completed or until the final courses are in progress. The examination(s) must be scheduled in conformance with deadlines shown in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#).

Registration Requirement

Students must be registered during the semester(s) in which exams are taken.

See [Required Registration](#).

Examining Committee

A student passes an examination only after the approval of at least two-thirds of the examining committee members. The Graduate School considers the examining committee's vote to be final. Signatures of the committee chair (or director of graduate studies/program director as appropriate) should be submitted on the [Master's Comprehensive Exam or Approved Substitute Form](#). Typically, the examining committee is the same as the student's [thesis committee](#).

Final Oral Defense

If a thesis is required, a final oral defense may be required in addition to the examination(s) or as part of an oral examination. If a final oral defense is required, it should be held only after all members of the committee have had adequate opportunity to review a draft of the master's thesis. The thesis advisor is responsible for determining that the draft is in an appropriate form for committee evaluation. If substantial revisions are necessary, they should be completed before the final oral defense is scheduled.

All committee members are expected to be present at the defense. When necessary, participation via distance-based capabilities is appropriate and should be mutually agreeable to the student and other committee members.

The final oral defense may be open to the public or limited in attendance to the candidate and the committee. Questions that relate the thesis to the field are appropriate. A thesis is accepted only after the approval of at least two-thirds of the committee members. At the conclusion of the final oral defense, all committee members

should sign Part III, and, if appropriate, Part IV, of the [Master's Comprehensive Exam or Approved Substitute Form](#).

At the time of the final oral defense, but no later than the oral, the committee may require alterations and corrections, but these should constitute relatively minor changes agreed to by a majority of the committee members. The thesis advisor is responsible for verifying that the changes required by the committee have been made. If not done already, all committee members should sign Part IV of the [Master's Comprehensive Exam or Approved Substitute Form](#). When all changes have been verified, the committee chair should initial Part IV.

The student should submit the thesis in final form designed to meet the standards as defined in the Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). The program should submit the [Master's Comprehensive Exam or Approved Substitute Form](#) to The Graduate School for final processing.

Failure of Examinations

A graduate student who fails either a written or oral examination may not take the examination a second time until at least three months after the first attempt. The student should work with the academic program to identify areas needing additional emphasis and to establish an action plan to prepare for taking the exam a second time.

A student who fails an examination for the second time becomes academically ineligible to continue in The Graduate School. See [Academic Eligibility](#).

Rescheduled or Remote Examinations

The Graduate School permits examinations to be rescheduled or held via distance-based capabilities in cases of extreme hardship. This applies both to course examinations and to written and oral examinations.

Before scheduling remote examinations, the student and program should consider the logistics, technology, and back-up plans for the event, including how final approval signatures will be obtained.

The Honor Code remains in effect for any examination taken outside the regularly scheduled time or off campus.

The student and faculty should work together to find a mutually agreeable time for the examination and ensure all participants are in agreement with the chosen format.

Thesis or Approved Substitute Requirements

For the master's degree, a thesis or an approved substitute is required. A minimum of three credit hours of thesis substitute (992) or thesis (993) registration is required. A maximum of six such credit hours may be counted as part of the required 30 credit hour minimum for the degree.

Only academic programs have the authority to request approved substitutes in meeting these requirements, normally within the guidelines of its field or accreditation requirements. Programs should reference the [Academic Policy Regarding Approved Substitutes for Master's Degree Thesis Requirements](#). Once a student completes the approved substitute, the academic program must submit the [Report of Approved Substitute for a Master's Thesis Form](#) to The Graduate School.

Registration Requirement

Students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of thesis (993) or thesis substitute (992) during the semester in which they propose and defend the thesis or complete the thesis substitute. Once students successfully defend their thesis or complete their thesis substitute, no further enrollments are necessary or permissible, and graduation should not be delayed.

See [Required Registration](#) and [Graduation Enrollment](#).

Committee Composition

A committee of at least three members approves any thesis required and administers any oral examination that may be given. A majority of the persons signing a master's thesis must be regular members of the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate Faculty from the student's major academic program. Other members may be special appointees to the Graduate Faculty. The

committee is approved by the academic program's director of graduate studies, after consultation with the student.

A student should have a faculty research advisor and a committee chair. One individual faculty member may serve in both roles if approved by the academic program. Both roles should be filled by regular members of the Graduate Faculty in the student's major academic program; however, at the request of the program and approval of The Graduate School, they may be fixed-term graduate faculty members or from another UNC-Chapel Hill program.

The *advisor* typically oversees the research progress and serves as the primary mentor. A student may elect to have co-advisors as long as one is from the student's major academic program.

The committee *chair* typically oversees committee meetings and the associated documentation.

If the student has a minor field of study, at least one member of the committee must represent the minor field. In the case of a joint minor involving two academic programs, one faculty representative on the committee for both minors is sufficient, provided that both minor programs agree that the faculty member can adequately represent each minor course of study.

Preparation

The Graduate School will accept only theses and dissertations produced according to the standards in The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). Documents must be prepared in a form consistent with approved methods of scholarly writing and research. On matters of form, the student should also consult published manuals of style. Sample draft pages of the document may be pre-approved by Graduate School staff before the submission deadline, but final approvals will occur only after the student has submitted the final document.

The document is expected to be written in English. In special cases, languages other than English may be used; the substitution is not permitted for the student's convenience but may be allowed when the student has sufficient skill at composition and has a topic that is, in the advisor's judgment, especially suited to

treatment in the second language. Approval to use a language other than English must be obtained in advance from The Graduate School, and a title page must be submitted in English.

Submission of Theses

Theses must be submitted to The Graduate School according to the schedule in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#) in final form designed to meet the standards defined in The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). Documents submitted electronically will not require front page signatures.

It is strongly suggested that every document be submitted well before the deadline to ensure ample time for format revisions.

Publication

The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#) should be reviewed for all publication and submission matters, including formatting requirements, copyright questions, a checklist of submission steps, and sample pages. Students may also find this [thesis and dissertation website](#) useful.

Permission to Proceed

A student admitted to The Graduate School to pursue a master's degree in an academic program where doctoral studies are available is not automatically advanced to doctoral-level studies upon completion of the requirements for a master's degree. Upon completion of all requirements for a master's degree, the academic program must evaluate each student and submit the [Recommendation to Proceed Beyond Master's Degree Form](#) to The Graduate School for each student who is considered qualified and recommended for doctoral study.

Upon award of the master's degree, the student's eight-year doctoral time limit begins.

Time Limits

A master's student has five calendar years from the date of first registration in the master's program to complete the master's degree (e.g., if the date of first registration is August 2014, the five-year time limit expires August 2019). [Reapplication](#) is required to continue pursuit of the degree if the five-year limit expires.

Extension of the Time Limit

When extenuating circumstances warrant, a student in good academic standing may request one extension of the degree time limit for a definite, stated period of time (up to one year). The student must first complete the [Request for Extension of Time Form](#) and receive approval from their academic program, after which time the program's director of graduate studies should forward a petition for extension to The Graduate School. Ordinarily, an extension of the degree time limit may not be extended.

Interruption of Study

If graduate study is interrupted by active military service, or service in the Peace Corps, VISTA, or the equivalent, as much as two years of that time will not count toward the time limit for the degree. In such an event, an official letter from the appropriate agency should be sent to The Graduate School to document the interruption.

Leave of Absence

Within the five-year limit, a student may request one leave of absence from graduate study for a definite, stated period of time (up to two full upcoming terms inclusive of summer as needed) during which the student does not plan to make academic progress. To be eligible for a leave of absence, a student should not have received an extension of the degree time limit and cannot have temporary grades of IN or AB on record for courses taken.

In advance of the first term of leave, the student must complete and submit a [Request for Leave of Absence Form](#) to The Graduate School. This form requires approval by the academic program. If The Graduate School approves the leave of absence, the time of that leave will not count against the total time allowed for the degree.

Please note that an approved leave of absence request does not withdraw a student from the current term nor cancel future enrollments. When appropriate, these actions should be requested per normal processes, along with a leave request for subsequent terms as needed.

Students should be able to return and register for classes for the term following the approved leave period; readmission is not required. Ordinarily, a leave of absence may not be renewed.

Students should be aware that while on leave no progress towards their graduate degree should be made. When on an approved leave of absence, they cannot be considered enrolled students and therefore will not have access to many campus services and benefits afforded to enrolled students, including eligibility for holding student employment positions (e.g., TA or RA) or student health insurance, among other services. Students on an approved leave of absence will retain access to their student email during the leave period.

Students taking advantage of the [Parental Leave Policy](#) do not need to file a separate Leave of Absence request unless they are planning not to make degree progress for a full semester or more.

Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements

Credit and Residence Requirements

Individual program credit hour requirements are established by the student's academic program and must be satisfied. Doctoral students are required to complete a minimum program residence credit of four full semesters, either by full-time registration, or by part-time registration over several semesters. At least two of the required four semesters of residence must be earned in contiguous registration of no fewer than six credit hours at UNC-Chapel Hill. While summer session registration is not required to maintain consecutive registration, any credits of three to six hours per session will be computed on the usual basis as part of the required two-semester contiguity.

See [Residence Credit](#).

Transfer Credit

Please refer to the general guidelines for [Transferring Course Credit](#) and [Doctoral degree guidelines](#).

Major Course Requirements

Course requirements in the major field must be fulfilled as specified by the student's academic

program. The student is expected to complete a program of courses that will provide mastery of the field. Major courses must also include a minimum of six credit hours of dissertation (994) registration.

Electing a Minor

With the approval of the major and minor programs, a student may elect to declare a formal minor in any program that offers a graduate degree. The student should submit an approved [Minor Declaration Form](#) to The Graduate School.

The minor must comprise at least 15 credit hours. All credits must be for courses listed (or cross-listed) in programs other than that of the major, and cannot also be counted toward the major. A minor may consist of a set of related courses, some of which are listed by one program and some of which are listed by another. In most cases, the minor would not include courses from more than two programs. Only one program name will be listed as granting the minor, and the director of graduate studies in the minor program must agree to accept any courses from outside the minor program offerings.

The minor must be approved in advance by the director of graduate studies in both the major and minor programs. When a satisfactory minor has been planned and approved by both programs, a copy of the proposed minor course of study should be signed by the director of graduate studies in the major and minor programs and sent to The Graduate School to become a permanent part of the student's record.

Foreign Language or Research Requirement

Language and research skill requirements differ for each academic program. Students must acquire competence in those foreign languages needed for research or teaching in their disciplines. At an early stage, a student should consult the academic program advisor concerning what foreign languages, if any, will be required.

Graduate students must satisfy the foreign language requirement from a list of acceptable

languages other than English as approved by their academic program.

Foreign Language Proficiency Assessments are offered as an alternative to special language courses offered on campus. For more information, see [Foreign Language Proficiency Assessment](#).

Each academic program determines at what point a student must fulfill language or research skill requirements, provided that all such requirements are satisfied before a student is admitted to candidacy. The student's director of graduate studies will need to certify on the [Program Certification of Degree Requirements form](#) that all such requirements have been met.

Examinations

A doctoral written examination, a doctoral oral examination, and a final oral examination covering the dissertation and other topics as required by the examining committee are required for doctoral degree completion.

The first two items together constitute a comprehensive examination of the student's command of the field. If the student declares a minor, the student will be examined on the minor in at least one of the two doctoral examinations. Together they should:

- assess the extent and currency of the candidate's knowledge in a manner that is as comprehensive and searching as the best practices of that field require;
- test the candidate's knowledge of all transferred courses;
- discover any weaknesses in the candidate's knowledge that need to be remedied by additional courses or other instruction; and
- determine the candidate's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate.

The final oral examination is primarily a true defense of the dissertation. It may be open to the public, limited in attendance to the candidate and the committee, or a combination of the two. Questions that relate the dissertation to the field are appropriate.

Registration Requirement

Students must be registered during the semester(s) in which exams are taken.

See [Required Registration](#).

Examining Committee

A student passes an examination only after the approval of a majority of the examining committee members. The Graduate School considers the examining committee's vote to be final. Signatures of the committee chair (or director of graduate studies/program director as appropriate) should be submitted on the [Report of Doctoral Committee Composition Form](#). Typically, the examining committee is the same as the student's [dissertation committee](#).

Exam Order

Academic programs determine the order of doctoral written and oral examinations. In general, it is desirable that only a short interval separates the two examinations. If the second doctoral examination involves the examination of the dissertation prospectus, the [Report of Doctoral Committee Composition Form](#) must be submitted to and approved by The Graduate School before the examination. This form may be submitted any time prior to the second doctoral examination.

Immediately after each examination has been given, results should be sent to The Graduate School on the [Doctoral Exam Report Form](#). If the report of the first doctoral oral shows that the dissertation prospectus has not been examined or that it has been considered but not accepted, a separate report must be filed with The Graduate School as soon as the prospectus is approved.

Final Oral Defense

The final oral defense will be held only after all members of the committee have had adequate opportunity to review a draft of the doctoral dissertation. The dissertation advisor is responsible for determining that the draft is in an appropriate form for committee evaluation. If substantial revisions are necessary, they should be completed before the final oral defense is scheduled.

All committee members are expected to be present at the defense. When necessary, participation via distance-based capabilities is appropriate and should be mutually agreeable to the student and other committee members.

The final oral defense may be open to the public or limited in attendance to the candidate and the committee. Questions that relate the dissertation to the field are appropriate. A dissertation is accepted only after the approval of a majority of the committee members. At the conclusion of the final oral defense, all committee members should sign Part III, and, if appropriate, Part IV, of the [Doctoral Exam Report Form](#).

At the time of the final oral defense, but no later than the oral, the committee may require alterations and corrections, but these should constitute relatively minor changes agreed to by a majority of the committee members. The dissertation advisor is responsible for verifying that the changes required by the committee have been made. If not done already, all committee members should sign Part IV of the [Doctoral Exam Report Form](#). When all changes have been verified, the committee chair should initial Part IV.

The student should submit the dissertation in final form designed to meet the standards as defined in the Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). The program should submit the [Doctoral Exam Report Form](#) to The Graduate School for final processing.

Failure of Examinations

A graduate student who fails either a written or oral examination may not take the examination a second time until at least three months after the first attempt. The student should work with the academic program to identify areas needing additional emphasis and to establish an action plan to prepare for taking the exam a second time.

A student who fails an examination for the second time becomes academically ineligible to continue in The Graduate School. See [Academic Eligibility](#).

Rescheduled or Remote Examinations

The Graduate School permits examinations to be rescheduled or held via distance-based capabilities in cases of extreme hardship. This applies both to course examinations and to written and oral examinations.

Before scheduling remote examinations, the student and program should consider the

logistics, technology, and back-up plans for the event, including how final approval signatures will be obtained.

The Honor Code remains in effect for any examination taken outside the regularly scheduled time or off campus.

The student and faculty should work together to find a mutually agreeable time for the examination and ensure all participants are in agreement with the chosen format.

Application for Admission to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy recognizes the achievement of a significant milestone in the career of a doctoral student and signifies that the only outstanding requirement for the degree is the dissertation. The student is then designated ABD—all but dissertation. Students will be designated as ABD after they have passed both the doctoral written and oral examinations, have submitted an acceptable dissertation prospectus, have completed all courses required by the major and minor programs, and have satisfied any foreign language or language substitute requirements. Academic programs should submit corresponding documentation to The Graduate School as soon as the above requirements have been satisfied so the ABD Milestone can be completed for the student.

For more information about Milestones, see [Graduation Clearance](#).

The transcripts for students admitted to candidacy will contain the statement “Advanced to Candidacy for Doctorate” at the end of the term in which posted. Note that this remark does not in any way confer additional time to earn the degree or remove registration requirements. See [Time Limits](#) and [Registration](#).

Degree Level Changes

Doctoral students considering changing their degree level should consult with their academic program and The Graduate School about options. See [Admissions and Matriculation](#) for more information.

Dissertation Requirements

A dissertation is required, with a minimum of six credit hours of dissertation (994) registration.

Registration Requirement

Students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of dissertation (994) during the semester in which the dissertation prospectus/proposal is approved (if the dissertation topic was not approved at the time of the second doctoral examination), and the semester in which the dissertation is defended. Once students successfully defend their dissertation, no further enrollments are necessary or permissible, and graduation should not be delayed.

See [Required Registration](#) and [Graduation Enrollment](#).

Committee Composition

A committee of at least five members is required. A majority of the members of a doctoral committee (and a majority of the people passing the student on an examination or approving a doctoral dissertation) must be regular members of the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate Faculty from the student's major academic program. Other members may be special appointees to the Graduate Faculty. Doctoral programs are encouraged to include scholars from outside the program to serve as members of doctoral committees. The outside members may be selected from among scholars from other academic programs or from other institutions where scholarly work is conducted. The committee is approved by the academic program's director of graduate studies, after consultation with the student.

A student should have a faculty research advisor and a committee chair. One individual faculty member may serve in both roles if approved by the academic program. Both roles should be filled by regular members of the Graduate Faculty in the student's major academic program; however, at the request of the program and approval of The Graduate School, they may be fixed-term graduate faculty members or from another UNC-Chapel Hill program.

The *advisor* typically oversees the research progress and serves as the primary mentor. A student may elect to have co-advisors as long

as one is from the student's major academic program.

The committee *chair* typically oversees committee meetings and the associated documentation.

This committee examines the prospectus, either as part of the first doctoral oral examination or subsequent to it, consults with the student throughout the progress of the research, and participates in the final oral examination. Each doctoral student is expected to consult with members of the dissertation committee at frequent intervals throughout the progress of research and will be required to submit a progress report to each member of the committee at least once a year. The [Report of Doctoral Committee Composition and Report of Approved Dissertation Project Form](#) should be submitted to The Graduate School before or filed concurrently with any action reflecting prospectus approval.

If the student has a minor field of study, at least one member of the committee must represent the minor field. In the case of a joint minor involving two academic programs, one faculty representative on the committee for both minors is sufficient, provided that both minor programs agree that the faculty member can adequately represent each minor course of study.

Preparation

The Graduate School will accept only theses and dissertations produced according to the standards in The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). Documents must be prepared in a form consistent with approved methods of scholarly writing and research. On matters of form, the student should also consult published manuals of style. Sample draft pages of the document may be pre-approved by Graduate School staff before the submission deadline, but final approvals will occur only after the student has submitted the final document.

The document is expected to be written in English. In special cases, languages other than English may be used; the substitution is not permitted for the student's convenience but may be allowed when the student has sufficient skill at composition and has a topic that is, in the advisor's judgment, especially suited to treatment in the second language. Approval to

use a language other than English must be obtained in advance from The Graduate School, and a title page must be submitted in English.

Submission of Dissertations

Dissertations must be submitted to The Graduate School according to the schedule in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#) in final form designed to meet the standards defined in The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). Documents submitted electronically will not require front page signatures.

It is strongly suggested that every document be submitted well before the deadline to ensure ample time for format revisions.

Publication

The Graduate School's [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#) should be reviewed for all publication and submission matters, including formatting requirements, copyright questions, a checklist of submission steps, and sample pages. Students may also find this [thesis and dissertation website](#) useful.

Time Limits

A doctoral student has eight calendar years from the date of first registration in the doctoral program to complete the doctoral degree (e.g., if the date of first registration is August 2012, the eight-year time limit expires August 2020). A student admitted to a master's program and later given formal permission to proceed to the doctoral degree has eight calendar years from the date of receipt of the master's degree to complete the doctoral degree. [Reapplication](#) is required to continue pursuit of the degree if the eight-year limit expires.

Extension of the Time Limit

When extenuating circumstances warrant, a student in good academic standing may request one extension of the degree time limit for a definite, stated period of time (up to one year). The student must first complete the [Request for Extension of Time Form](#) and receive approval from their academic program, after which time the program's director of graduate studies should forward a petition for extension to The Graduate School. Ordinarily, an extension of the degree time limit may not be extended.

Interruption of Study

If graduate study is interrupted by active military service, or service in the Peace Corps, VISTA, or the equivalent, as much as two years of that time will not count toward the time limit for the degree. In such an event, an official letter from the appropriate agency should be sent to The Graduate School to document the interruption.

Leave of Absence

Within the eight-year limit, a student may request one leave of absence from graduate study for a definite, stated period of time (up to two full upcoming terms inclusive of summer as needed) during which the student does not plan to make academic progress. To be eligible for a leave of absence, a student should not have received an extension of the degree time limit and cannot have temporary grades of IN or AB on record for courses taken.

In advance of the first term of leave, the student must complete and submit a [Request for Leave of Absence Form](#) to The Graduate School. This form requires approval by the academic program. If The Graduate School approves the leave of absence, the time of that leave will not count against the total time allowed for the degree.

Please note that an approved leave of absence request does not withdraw a student from the current term nor cancel future enrollments. When appropriate, these actions should be requested per normal processes, along with a leave request for subsequent terms as needed.

Students should be able to return and register for classes for the term following the approved leave period; readmission is not required. Ordinarily, a leave of absence may not be renewed.

Students should be aware that while on leave no progress towards their graduate degree should be made. When on an approved leave of absence, they cannot be considered enrolled students and therefore will not have access to many campus services and benefits afforded to enrolled students, including eligibility for holding student employment positions (e.g., TA or RA) or student health insurance, among other services. Students on an approved leave of absence will retain access to their student email during the leave period.

Students taking advantage of the [Parental Leave Policy](#) do not need to file a separate Leave of Absence request unless they are planning not to make degree progress for a full semester or more.