DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

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Residence Requirement

A major purpose of the residence requirements for graduate degrees is to ensure that the student has an opportunity to benefit from the advantages of a university environment. These advantages include accessibility of library, laboratory and other physical facilities, and also the opportunity to participate in seminars and a variety of cultural activities. Equally important to the graduate student are the advantages of becoming acquainted with the faculty and other students on a personal and a professional basis.

A student “in residence” is expected to devote most of his or her time and energy to graduate studies under the direction of the student’s advisory committee chair and the advisory committee. Another major purpose of the residence requirements for graduate degrees is to ensure that the faculty have the opportunity to properly evaluate the student and his or her development, to guide and direct his or her studies, and to determine competency.

The minimum time required to qualify for an advanced degree varies with the ability and preparation of the student. A student may find it necessary to extend his/her studies beyond the minimum requirements. For specific minimum residence requirements, a student should check the additional requirements for the degree which he/she is pursuing.

Degree Plan

A graduate student must file a degree plan which includes those courses to be applied toward a particular degree and formally establishes the advisory committee. Courses previously used for another degree are not acceptable for degree plan credit.

Lower division undergraduate coursework (100- and 200-level) may not be used for credit toward a graduate degree. Coursework applied to a previous degree may not be used toward a graduate degree. Coursework may not be used to satisfy requirements for more than one degree.

Additional coursework may be added to the approved degree plan by the student’s advisory committee if such additional coursework is needed to correct deficiencies in the student’s academic preparation. Specific details and requirements for each degree program may be obtained from the student’s academic department or the specific degree program requirements provided in the catalog. No changes can be made to the degree plan once the student’s Request for Final Examination or Request for Final Examination Exemption is approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Changes in the approved degree plan may be made by petition to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. A student should submit the degree plan and petitions using the online Document Processing Submission System located on the website at https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu.

Courses listed on the degree plan are subject to degree program time limits. Please refer to the Time Limits section in each degree program section in which the student is presently enrolled.

Petitions

Graduate students may use petitions to

1. request a change of major, degree or department;
2. request changes to the coursework or committee membership as established by the degree plan;
3. request a leave of absence;
4. request extensions to time limits; or
5. request exceptions to published rules.

Each petition will be considered on its own merit by the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies. The student should make such requests by submitting either a Major, Degree, or Department petition (MDD) or a Long Form petition. The petition will be routed for the required approval by the members of the student’s advisory committee, if appointed, and the department head, or his or her designee (or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if appropriate).

Limitations on the Use of Transfer, Extension and Certain Other Courses, Master’s Degree

Some departments may have more restrictive requirements for transfer work. If otherwise acceptable, certain courses may be used toward meeting credit-hour requirements for the master’s degree under the following limitations.

1. The maximum number of credit hours which may be considered for transfer credit is the greater of 12 hours or one-third (1/3) of the total hours of a degree plan. The following restrictions apply:

   • Graduate and/or upper-level undergraduate courses taken in residence at an accredited U.S. institution, or approved international institution with a final grade of B or greater will be considered for transfer credit if, at the time the courses were completed, the student was in degree-seeking status at Texas A&M University, or the student was in degree-seeking status at the institution at which the courses were taken; and if the courses would be accepted for credit toward a similar degree for a student in degree-seeking status at the host institution.

   • Courses previously used for another degree are not acceptable for degree plan credit.

2. The maximum number of credit hours taken in post-baccalaureate non-degree (G6) classification at Texas A&M
University which may be considered for application to the degree plan is 12.

3. Not more than 12 hours may be used in any combination of the following categories:
   - Not more than 8 hours in the combination of 691 (research), 684 (Professional Internship) or SOPH 680 may be used.
   - Not more than 8 hours of 685 (Directed Studies) may be used.
   - Not more than 3 hours of 690 (Theory of Research) may be used.
   - Not more than 3 hours of 695 (Frontiers in Research) may be used.

4. A maximum of 2 hours of Seminar (681).

5. A maximum of 9 hours of advanced undergraduate courses (300- or 400-level).

6. For graduate courses of three weeks’ duration or less, taken at other institutions, up to 1 hour of credit may be obtained for each five-day week of coursework. Each week of coursework must include at least 15 contact hours.

7. Continuing education courses may not be used for graduate credit.

8. Extension courses are not acceptable for credit.

Exceptions will be permitted only in unusual cases and when petitioned by the student’s advisory committee and approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Transfer of Credit for Doctoral Degrees

Courses for which transfer credits are sought must have been completed with a grade of B or greater and must be approved by the student’s advisory committee and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. These courses must not have been used previously for another degree. Except for officially approved cooperative doctoral programs, credit for thesis or dissertation research or the equivalent is not transferable. Credit for “internship” coursework in any form is not transferable. Courses taken in residence at an accredited U.S. institution or approved international institution with a final grade of B or greater will be considered for transfer credit if, at the time the courses were completed, the courses would be accepted for credit toward a similar degree for a student in degree-seeking status at the host institution. Credit for coursework taken by extension is not transferable. Coursework in which no formal grades are given or in which grades other than letter grades (A or B) are earned (for example, CR, P, S, U, H, etc.) is not accepted for transfer credit. Credit for coursework submitted for transfer from any college or university must be shown in semester credit hours, or equated to semester credit hours.

Courses used toward a degree at another institution may not be applied for graduate credit. If the course to be transferred was taken prior to the conferral of a degree at the transfer institution, a letter from the registrar at that institution stating that the course was not applied for credit toward the degree must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Grades for courses completed at other institutions are not included in computing the GPR. An official transcript from the university at which transfer courses are taken must be sent directly to the Office of Admissions.

Preliminary Examination For Doctoral Students

The student’s major department (or chair of the interdisciplinary degree program, if applicable) and his or her advisory committee may require qualifying, cumulative or other types of examinations at any time deemed desirable. These examinations are entirely at the discretion of the department and the student’s advisory committee.

The preliminary examination is required. The preliminary examination for a doctoral student shall be given no earlier than a date at which the student is within 6 credit hours of completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan (i.e., all coursework on the degree plan except 681, 684, 690, 691, 692, 693, 695, 697, 791, or other graduate courses specifically designated as S/U in the course catalog). The student should complete the Preliminary Examination no later than the end of the semester following the completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan.

Preliminary Examination Format

The objective of preliminary examination is to evaluate whether the student has demonstrated the following qualifications:

a. a mastery of the subject matter of all fields in the program;

b. an adequate knowledge of the literature in these fields and an ability to carry out bibliographical research;

c. an understanding of the research problem and the appropriate methodological approaches.

The format of the preliminary examination shall be determined by the student’s department (or interdisciplinary degree program, if applicable) and advisory committee, and communicated to the student in advance of the examination. The exam may consist of a written component, oral component, or combination of written and oral components.

The preliminary exam may be administered by the advisory committee or a departmental committee; herein referred to as the examination committee.

Regardless of exam format, a student will receive an overall preliminary exam result of pass or fail. The department (or interdisciplinary degree program, if applicable) will determine how the overall pass or fail result is determined based on the exam structure and internal department procedures. If the exam is administered by the advisory committee, each advisory committee member will provide a pass or fail evaluation decision.

Only one advisory committee substitution is allowed to provide an evaluation decision for a student’s preliminary exam, and it cannot be the committee chair.

If a student is required to take, as a part of the preliminary examination, a written component administered by a department or interdisciplinary degree program, the department or interdisciplinary degree program faculty must:

a. offer the examination at least once every six months. The departmental or interdisciplinary degree program examination should be announced at least 30 days prior to the scheduled examination date.
b. assume the responsibility for marking the examination satisfactory or unsatisfactory, or otherwise graded, and in the case of unsatisfactory, stating specifically the reasons for such a mark.

c. forward the marked examination to the chair of the student’s advisory committee within one week after the examination.

Preliminary Examination Scheduling
Prior to commencing any component of the preliminary examination, a departmental representative or the advisory committee chair will review the eligibility criteria with the student, using the Preliminary Examination Checklist to ensure the student is eligible for the preliminary examination. The following list of eligibility requirements applies.

- Student is registered at Texas A&M University for a minimum of one semester credit hour in the long semester or summer term during which any component of the preliminary examination is held. If the entire examination is held between semesters, then the student must be registered for the term immediately preceding the examination.
- An approved degree plan is on file with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies prior to commencing the first component of the examination.
- Student’s cumulative GPR is at least 3.000.
- Student’s degree plan GPR is at least 3.000.
- All English language proficiency requirements are satisfied.
- At the end of the semester in which at least the first component of the exam is given, there are no more than 6 hours of coursework remaining on the degree plan (except 681, 684, 690, 691, 692, 693, 695, 697, 791, or other graduate courses specifically designated as S/U in the course catalog). The head of the student’s department (or Chair of the Interdisciplinary Degree Program, if applicable) has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion.

Report of Preliminary Examination
Credit for the preliminary examination is not transferable in cases where a student changes degree programs after passing a preliminary exam.

If a written component precedes an oral component of the preliminary exam, the chair of the student’s examination committee is responsible for making all written examinations available to all members of the committee. A positive evaluation of the preliminary exam by all members of a student’s examination committee with at most one dissension is required to pass a student on his or her preliminary exam.

The student’s department will promptly report the results of the Preliminary Examination to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies via the Report of Doctoral Preliminary Examination form. The Preliminary Examination checklist form must also be submitted. These forms should be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies within 10 working days of completion of the preliminary examination.

The Report of the Preliminary Examination form must be submitted with original signatures of the approved examination committee members. If an approved examination committee member substitution (one only) has been made, that signature must also be included, in place of the committee member, on the form submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The original signature of the department head is also required on the form.

After passing the required preliminary examination for the doctoral degree, the student must complete the final examination for the degree within four calendar years. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the preliminary examination.

Retake of Failed Preliminary Examination
Upon approval of the student’s examination committee, with no more than one member dissenting, and approval of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, a student who has failed the preliminary examination may be given one re-examination. Adequate time must be given to permit the student to address the inadequacies emerging from the first preliminary examination. The examination committee must agree upon and communicate in writing to the student, an adequate time-frame from the first examination (normally six months) to retest, as well as a detailed explanation of the inadequacies emerging from the examination. The student and the committee should jointly negotiate a mutually acceptable date for this retest. When providing feedback on inadequacies, the committee should clearly document expected improvements that the student must be able to exhibit in order to retake the exam. The examination committee will document and communicate the time-frame and feedback within 10 working days of the exam that was not passed.

Research Proposal
Thesis-option master’s degrees and all doctoral degrees require a research proposal. The proposal must be approved by the advisory committee and the head of the major department or chair of the intercollegiate faculty, if applicable. This proposal must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 20 working days prior to the submission of the request for the final examination. All research proposals are routed to the Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety for review and approval by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies prior to final approval.

Compliance issues must be addressed if a graduate student is performing research involving human subjects, animals, infectious biohazards and recombinant DNA. A student involved in these types of research should check with the Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety at (979) 458-1467 to address questions about all research compliance responsibilities. Additional information can also be obtained on the website http://rcb.tamu.edu.

Admission to Candidacy
To be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must have:

1. completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690 and 691, 692, 791 or other graduate courses specifically designated as S/U in the course catalog,
2. a 3.0 Graduate GPA and a Degree Plan GPA of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan,
3. passed the preliminary examination,
4. submitted an approved dissertation proposal,
5. met the residence requirements.

The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

Final Examination for Doctoral Students
The candidate for the doctoral degree must pass a final examination by deadline dates announced in the “Office of Graduate and Professional
Studies Calendar” each semester. The doctoral student is allowed only one opportunity to take the final examination.

No unabsolved grades of D, F, or U for any course can be listed on the degree plan. The student must be registered for any remaining hours of 681, 684, 690, 691, 692, 791 or other graduate courses specifically designated as S/U in the course catalog during the semester of the final exam. No student may be given a final examination until they have been admitted to candidacy and their current official cumulative and degree plan GPAs are 3.00 or better.

To be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must have:

1. completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690 and 691, 692 (Professional Study), 791 or other graduate courses specifically designated as S/U in the course catalog,
2. a 3.0 Graduate GPA and a Degree Plan GPA of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan,
3. passed the preliminary examination,
4. submitted an approved dissertation proposal,
5. met the residence requirements.

The request to hold and announce the final examination must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies a minimum of 10 working days in advance of the scheduled date. Any changes to the degree plan must be approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies prior to the submission of the request for final examination.

The student’s advisory committee will conduct this examination. The final examination is not to be administered until the dissertation or record of study is available in substantially final form to the student’s advisory committee, and all concerned have had adequate time to review the document. Whereas the final examination may cover the broad field of the candidate’s training, it is presumed that the major portion of the time will be devoted to the dissertation and closely allied topics. Persons other than members of the graduate faculty may, with mutual consent of the candidate and the chair of the advisory committee, be invited to attend a final examination for an advanced degree. A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee with at most one dissension is required to pass a student on his or her exam. A department can have a stricter requirement provided there is consistency within all degree programs within a department. Upon completion of the questioning of the candidate, all visitors must excuse themselves from the proceedings.

Report of Final Examination

The student’s department will promptly report the results of the Final Examination to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies via the Report of Doctoral Final Examination form. These forms should be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies within 10 working days of completion of the final examination. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies must be notified in writing of any cancellations.

A positive evaluation of the final exam by all members of a student’s advisory committee with at most one dissension is required to pass a student on his or her final exam. The Report of the Final Examination Form must be submitted with original signatures of only the committee members approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. If necessary, multiple copies of the form may be submitted with different committee member original signatures. If an approved committee member substitution (1 only) has been made, his/her signature must be included on the form submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Final Examination for Masters Students

For thesis option students, the final examination covers the thesis and all work taken on the degree plan and at the option of the committee may be written or oral or both. The final examination may not be administered before the thesis is available to all members of the student’s advisory committee in substantially final form, and all members have had adequate time to review the document. The examination is conducted by the student’s advisory committee. A thesis option student must be registered in the University in the semester or summer term in which the final examination is taken. Persons other than members of the graduate faculty may, with mutual consent of the candidate and the major professor, attend final examinations for advanced degrees. Upon completion of the questioning of the candidate, all visitors must excuse themselves from the proceedings. A student shall be given only one opportunity to repeat the final examination for the master’s degree and that must be within a time period that does not extend beyond the end of the next regular semester (summer terms are excluded). A department can have a stricter requirement provided there is consistency within all degree programs within a department.

A thesis option candidate may petition to be exempt from his/her final examination provided their degree plan GPA is 3.00 or greater and they have approval of the advisory committee, the head of the student’s department and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. It is recommended that the petition for exemption be submitted the same semester the student intends to submit the thesis.

For non-thesis option students, a final comprehensive examination may be required. The final exam cannot be held prior to the mid-point of the semester if questions on the exam are based on courses in which the student is currently enrolled. If a student has completed all required degree plan coursework, the student is not required to be registered for classes in the semester the final examination is administered (unless he/she holds an assistantship). For specific final examination requirements, a student should check the program requirements for the degree which he/she is pursuing.

A positive evaluation by all members of the graduate committee with at most one dissension is required to pass a student on his or her exam. The Report of the Final Examination Form must be submitted with original signatures of only the committee members approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. If an approved committee member substitution (1 only) has been made, his/her signature must also be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. If necessary, multiple copies of the form may be submitted with different committee member original signatures. If an approved committee member substitution (1 only) has been made, his/her signature must be included on the form submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Thesis, Dissertation and Record of Study

The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies is responsible for reviewing each thesis, dissertation and record of study to ensure that the format requirements of the University are met. Guidelines and electronic templates for the preparation of the manuscript are available in the Thesis and Dissertation Manual and online at http://ogaps.tamu.edu. All manuscripts must be submitted electronically.
Pre-Defense Publication of Thesis, Dissertation, or Record of Study Material

A graduate student may publish material that subsequently will be used as part of the thesis, dissertation or record of study.

A student should be aware of the copyright agreement that is signed when a journal (hard copy or electronic) accepts an article for publication. At that time, the student generally assigns rights to the journal as publisher. If the student has not retained the right to use the material in the thesis, dissertation, or record of study, he/she must then obtain written permission from the copyright holder to include the material in the manuscript. If such permission is not obtained, or rights have not been retained, the copyrighted material cannot be included in the thesis, dissertation, or record of study.

Use of Classified and Proprietary Information in Thesis, Dissertation, or Record of Study

Committee chairs are cautioned against allowing a student to use classified or proprietary information in electronic theses, dissertations, and records of study (ETDs), because these documents become available to the public upon submission to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The research conducted at Texas A&M University, as a Texas public institution, is ultimately for the benefit of the public. All ETDs are available on the Internet via the Texas A&M University Libraries. In addition, dissertations are published electronically by ProQuest (UMI) and are available from that source. A temporary embargo, or delay in public release, is possible.

Graduation

A graduate degree is conferred at the close of each regular semester and 10-week summer semester. A candidate for an advanced degree who expects to complete his/her work at the end of a given semester must apply for graduation by submitting the electronic application for degree to the Office of the Registrar and by paying the required graduation fee to Student Business Services no later than the Friday of the fifth week of the fall or spring semester or the Friday of the first week of the second summer term. The electronic application can be accessed via the Howdy (https://howdy.tamu.edu) portal. A cancellation made after the application deadline will not result in a refund of the diploma fee. Graduate degree candidates who have completed all degree requirements will not be allowed to cancel their graduation application without approval from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. A student should check the website of the Office of the Registrar at http://graduation.tamu.edu to determine the date and time of his/her graduation ceremony.

Letter of Completion

The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies may issue a letter of completion for an individual student upon written request from the student. The letter of completion certifies that the student has completed all academic requirements for the degree and states the date the degree will be awarded. International students should contact International Student Services prior to requesting a letter of completion to determine how receiving it could affect the student’s visa status.

This letter may be requested anytime from the point the student has completed all requirements for the awarding of the degree and until five days prior to commencement. A student in a master’s thesis option or a doctoral program must have completed all degree requirements, including final clearance from Thesis and Dissertation Services, to be eligible to request this letter. For a student in master’s non-thesis option programs, requests for a letter will be accepted only if the student has completed all degree plan coursework and the final examination results, if applicable, have been approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Letter of Intent

Graduate students completing a graduate degree who wish to continue to enroll in pursuit of another graduate degree at Texas A&M should investigate the process of filing a letter of intent with the admitting department for the subsequent graduate degree. Letters of Intent are common when students are applying to pursue a subsequent degree within the same department and college, but may not be acceptable for students applying for a subsequent degree in a varying discipline from their current degree. A letter of intent which has been approved by the head of the department (or chair of the intercollegiate faculty) in which the student intends to study will be viewed by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies as an admission to the program specified in the letter. A student must use the letter of intent form which is available on the website at http://ogaps.tamu.edu.

If a student wishes to enroll in a department where a letter of intent is not the accepted practice, the admitting department should consult with the Office of Graduate Admissions and The Office of Graduate Studies to pursue an alternate process for admission.

If a break in enrollment occurs for one academic year or longer following graduation, the student must apply for admission to the other graduate degree program through Graduate Admissions before enrolling in the other graduate degree program.

Professional Internship

In those programs in which a professional internship is used (see individual programs), a student will spend an appropriate period of time under the supervision of a practicing professional in industry, business, an educational institution or a government agency. The objectives of the internship are two-fold:

1. to enable the student to demonstrate the ability to apply technical training and knowledge by making an identifiable contribution in an area of practical concern to the industry or organization in which the internship is served, and
2. to enable the student to function in a non-academic environment in a position in which he or she will become aware of the organizational approach to problems in addition to those traditional approaches with which the student is familiar.

These may include, but are in no way limited to, problems of management, labor relations, public relations, environmental protection, economics, etc.

Internship agreements should be negotiated between the appropriate organization or industry and the appropriate academic department. The organization of the internship, the internship supervisor and the nature of the internship will be determined by mutual consent of the student, the head of the student’s major department, the student’s advisory committee and the supervising organization prior to the commencement of the internship period. The internship experience should be at a level commensurate with the particular degree objective.

An internship report should be prepared by the student in accordance with guidelines established by the student’s major department, the
student’s advisory committee or other appropriate body. The report should be submitted to the advisory committee and to any other organization which may be specified for specific programs. The internship report must be the original work of the student.

An internship, if utilized as part of a student’s degree requirements, should be undertaken near the end of the student’s educational program, after the student has had the opportunity to establish a solid theoretical base for the internship experience.