

**TEMPLATE FOR A
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**The Graduate School
University of Georgia**

I. INTRODUCTION (effective date and applicable cohort)

Academic Unit Overview/Organization

- Unit goals/mission
- Listing of faculty and staff including contact information and links to faculty research info
- How unit fits into College/School structure

Program Description/Overview

- Importance of program to unit and university mission
- Program goals/expected learning/career outcomes for its graduates
- Program administration

Global expectations of all students:

- Professional standards of behavior
 - **Suggested minimum language:** *‘Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior while enrolled in the graduate program and to act in a manner that demonstrates integrity and respect for others and the campus environment.’*
 - In setting expectations for professional behavior, units are encouraged to set standards based upon current disciplinary standards as well as those mandated by external accrediting bodies that may govern the discipline. If appropriate include ethics or professional statements from main professional associations.
- Adherence to university policies governing research and academic conduct, non-discrimination and anti-harassment, and workplace violence ([include links to Academic Honesty, NDAH and WPV policies](#))
- Accreditation/certification standards
- Academic standards (e.g. [maintain a 3.0 in all required coursework, attendance at seminars, meeting presentations, etc](#))
- Students Rights and Responsibilities

Description of Program Components/Options

- Degree levels, thesis/non-thesis/areas of emphasis/concentrations
- Certificate programs
- Accelerated programs
- Dual degree programs

Admissions Requirements

- Grad School application/minimums ([link to Grad School site](#))
- Additional academic/entrance exam score requirements above Grad School minimums
- Supplemental materials
- Professional experience/creative works
- Special deadlines; interviews

II. ACADEMIC / CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Specific Program Degree Requirements

- For each degree level:
 - Prerequisite coursework
 - Lab rotations
 - Required coursework/credit hours
 - Internships/apprenticeships
 - Required examinations/published or creative works
 - Time limits
 - **(useful to have a checklist of required steps and milestones for quick reference)**

Enrollment Requirements and Time Limits

- Minimum Enrollment

All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Georgia must register for a minimum of 3 hours of credit during any semester in which they use University facilities and/or faculty/staff time. This includes semesters in which they are completing comprehensive examinations and defending their thesis or dissertation.

- Continuous Enrollment Policy

All enrolled graduate students must maintain continuous enrollment from matriculation until completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registering for a minimum of three (3) credits in at least two semesters per academic year (Fall, Spring, Summer) until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated.

Doctoral students must maintain enrollment during fall and spring semesters (breaking only for summer semesters) until the residency requirement has been met.

All students must be enrolled for at least three graduate credits in the semester in which degree requirements are completed.

- Residence Credit Requirement

The residency requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree and the Doctor of Public Health degree is interpreted as 30 hours of consecutive graduate course work that is included on the approved program of study (20 hours for EdD and DMA degrees).

There is no residency requirement for master's or EdS degree programs.

- Leave of Absence

A leave of absence provides a mechanism for students experiencing unusual circumstance to be exempt temporarily from the continuous enrollment policy. A leave of absence requires approval of the graduate program coordinator and the dean of Graduate School. A leave of absence will be granted only for good cause such as serious medical and health-related issues, major financial and employment issues; pregnancy, childbirth, child care, elder care, and other significant family issues; and other major personal circumstances that interfere with the ability to undertake graduate study. An approved leave of absence does not stop the clock unless the

leave is granted for pregnancy, childbirth or adoption (see below): time on leave counts toward any University, Graduate School, or program time limits pertaining to the degree being sought.

- **Time Limits**

Master's degree students must complete all degree requirements, including all coursework on their approved program of study and defend their thesis (if applicable) within **six years** of matriculation.

Doctoral students must complete all course work on their approved program of study and be admitted to candidacy within **six-years** of matriculation.

For all degrees the six-year limit begins with the semester the student matriculated into the program and ends with the last semester before the beginning of the sixth year.

For doctoral students, the time limit to complete the dissertation and qualify for graduation is **five years** following admission to candidacy. After this time, the student's candidacy will be considered expired and the student must retake the comprehensive exams and be re-admitted to candidacy in order to defend the dissertation and qualify for graduation. If a doctoral student's candidacy expires after the first week of classes in the final semester of the fifth year, the student is granted the remainder of the semester to complete degree requirements without special permission of the dean of the Graduate School.

- **Extension of Time**

A special request for an extension of time on the six-year expiration of coursework or the five year expiration of candidacy may be made to the dean of the Graduate School. This request must include specific reasons that the student did not complete requirements in the time allotted by Graduate School policy. A petition of this type must include 1) a specific timeline for the completion of requirements, 2) an approved advisory committee form, if required for the degree, 3) an approved program of study and a letter of support from both the program graduate coordinator and the major professor.

Selection of Major Professor/Thesis/Dissertation Advisor (For Each Degree Level)

- Unit policy on who can serve as major professor/thesis/dissertation advisor
- Role and responsibilities of advisor
- Unit philosophy on student-mentor relationship

Sample language:

- Student responsibility for identifying a mentor

Sample language: *'It is very important that new students become acquainted with the faculty, particularly in their area of interest, as soon as possible. All faculty are willing to talk with new students about their career interests and possible research topics. During the first semester graduate students should meet with faculty members beyond those they have for courses, so that they can select an Advisory Committee and a Major Professor.'*

'It is the student's responsibility to identify a graduate faculty member willing to serve as their major professor by the end of their first year. Students who do not have a major professor may be dismissed from the program. No faculty member is required to serve as the major professor for any student.'

- Process of selection/approval?
- Timeline
- Policy on replacement/switching advisors in the event that a faculty member leaves the institution or when student and advisor can no longer work together

Selection of Advisory Committee

- Role/responsibilities of the committee
Sample language: 'The advisory committee along with the major professor share responsibilities to monitor graduate student progress and guide the student toward timely completion of their degree program. The advisory committee is charged with framing and approving programs of study, advising students on required research skills, directing and approving the comprehensive examinations, guiding the design of thesis/dissertation research projects, reading and approving the final thesis/dissertation document and approving the final oral examination (defense).'
- Guidance to student on how to select committee members
 Programs should develop policies that ensure selection is done in a timely manner and that the selection of members is conducive to a successful academic and graduate training experience.
- Number, composition, role, timeline
 Is there a requirement/recommendation for an outside member (not affiliated with your unit)?
- Include link to grad school requirements and forms
- Process for changes to committee
- Submission of forms to Graduate Coordinator (and then to Graduate School)

Final Program of Study Approval

For the Doctor of Philosophy degree an approved program of study must carry a minimum of 30 hours of graduate course work, three hours of which must be dissertation writing (9300). The program of study for Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees must contain a minimum of 30 hours of graduate course work, three hours of which must be thesis writing (7300) for programs that require a thesis.

- Expected timeline
- Meet with committee to design preliminary program of study
- How are required course substitutions handled?
- Committee signatures on final program of study
- Submission of forms to Graduate Coordinator (and then to Graduate School) by required deadline

Masters Students:

Capstone Project
 Portfolio
 Exit Exam

Doctoral Students: Comprehensive Examinations (Qualifying exams, Preliminary exams)

- Expected Timeline

- Process
- Student Responsibilities
- Components/format/rules of the written exams
- Components/format/rules of the oral exams
- Scheduling/Announcement of Oral exams
- Composition of examining committee (may be same as advisory or different; if different, who appoints committee)
- Retake policy/procedures/deadlines
[Advisement of students who fail exams and exhaust retake opportunities: Master's degree? Thesis or non-thesis requirement? Transfer to a different program?](#)
- Submission of signed forms to Graduate Coordinator (and then to Graduate School)

Doctoral Students: Candidacy

- Expected Timeline
- Prospectus required?
- Publications or other products?
- Submission of signed forms to Graduate Coordinator (and then to Graduate School) by required deadline

Other Milestones

- Internship/Practicum
- Selection of internship/practicum site
- [Expectations for professional behavior at internship site](#)

Thesis/Dissertation Submission and Final Oral Examination

For Each Degree Level:

- What is the unit's preferred or required format?
- If multiple students share a research project what is the process for assigning first authorship and inclusion in thesis/dissertation?
- Does the unit recommend or require faculty readers or external reviewers?
- Timeline for submission to dissertation committee
- Include link to Graduate School site for format check/deadlines

Graduation

- Application for graduation submitted by deadline; late filing application fee
[No summer commencement ceremony so plan accordingly if desire to walk and be hooded.](#)

Students who have not completed degree requirements as determined by the Graduate School and by published deadlines will not be allowed to walk in the ceremony but may return to walk in a subsequent commencement event. [There are NO exceptions to this policy.](#)

III. INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Compliance training if applicable:

- SecureUGA
- Teaching Assistant Orientation and completion of GRSC 7770
- Institutional Review Board (IRB; human subjects)
- Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
- Right to Know, Lab Safety (Chemical Specific/Hazardous Waste), BioSafety, Radiation Safety

IV. EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC / RESEARCH PROGRESS

Describe expectations

- What is considered acceptable academic standing for your program?(e.g. no grades below B, no grades of I in core coursework). Be sure to state expectations for completion of 'I'ncomplete grades.
- What is considered making satisfactory progress? (e.g. completing coursework and passing comprehensive exams within a certain time frame; submission of manuscript, grant application or creative work for peer review; presentations at conferences, etc)

Annual review process of students (advisor; committee)

- Annual meetings with committee/ advisor? Are there any required evaluation materials to be submitted by students for review? Deadlines?

Written progress/evaluation report signed by advisor and student and copy provided to student

- Report should detail findings/deficiencies, expectations for remediation/next steps and potential outcomes if expectations are not met (e.g. dismissal from program). Report should include your appeal process

Annual evaluation response/appeal process for students

Grade Appeals

- What is the process for appealing grades in your unit?

Dismissal

- Include activities or lack thereof that may lead to dismissal by the department
- Dismissal process/notification
- Dismissal by Graduate School (include link to Graduate School policy)
- What is the appeal process for a departmental dismissal?
- Graduate School dismissal appeal process

Grievance Process

- Unit's process, including a timeline for resolving conflicts and handling student grievances against major professor, advisory committee or assistantship supervisor
- Conflicts between students?

V. FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Assistantships

- Types of assistantships available (RA, TA, GA)
Eligibility, length of appointment

- Award criteria/priority
- Roles and Responsibilities (GSRC 7770 for TAs, etc)
- Enrollment requirement
- Vacation/annual leave policy/other absences (medical, bereavement, etc)
- Expectations for acceptable performance; Evaluation process
Include a sample letter of offer; should follow the template provided by the Graduate School Business Office
- Deadlines
- Renewal policy (e.g. academic standing, job performance, professionalism)
- Termination (reasons that may lead to loss of assistantship including lack of professionalism)

Travel Awards

- Unit policy on eligibility/availability of travel funds for graduate students to attend meetings/conferences
- Link to Grad School travel award program

Professional Development Opportunities (see Graduate School website for details)

- Three Minute Thesis (3MT)
- Emerging Leaders
- Teaching Portfolio
- Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)

VI. APPENDICES

Sample documents to include:

A sample advisory committee form
 A sample program of study for each degree program/level
 A sample annual evaluation report
 A sample assistantship offer letter
 A sample dismissal letter

OTHER POTENTIAL SECTIONS to INCLUDE IN HANDBOOK or on WEBSITE under RESOURCES:

Discipline-Specific Resources for Students

- Links to relevant professional journals
- Links to relevant professional associations/student associations
- Program-specific student association
- Program-specific conferences (whether on campus or not)

UGA Graduate School Resources for Students (Links to Our Website)

- Dissertation Completion Grants
- Scholarships and Fellowships

UGA Resources For Students (more of a general list for all graduate students)

- Graduate Student Organizations: GPSA, GAPS, GRADS
- Career Services
- Alumni office
- Libraries
- Health Center
- CAPS
- Parking
- Registrar
- Bursar
- Where to rent technology
- Financial Education / ASPIRE Clinic
- Office of International Education (OIE)
- International Student Life
- Writing Center