

# AP.6 GRADUATE POLICIES

## AP.6 Graduate Policies

At the graduate level, Mason offers certificates and master's and doctoral degrees. There are also a number of combined bachelor's and accelerated master's degree programs for academically-strong undergraduates with a commitment to research.

### AP.6.1 Student Classification

Students may access graduate classes and programs according to their status as nondegree or enrolled degree students. For more information, see Graduate Admissions.

### AP.6.2 Full-Time Classification

Graduate students are considered full time if they are enrolled in at least 9 graduate credits per semester or hold a full-time assistantship (total 20 hours a week) and are enrolled in at least 6 graduate credits per semester.

Master's students may enroll in 1 credit of 799 and be considered full time only if they have completed 3 credits of 799 and the student along with their advisor and department chair certify each semester that the student is working full time on the thesis. See AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis for more information regarding 799.

Doctoral students who are enrolled in dissertation credits (either 998 or 999) are considered full time if they are enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester, regardless of whether they hold an assistantship. Doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy and have completed the minimum number of credits required by the university and their degree program, including the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999, are considered full time if they are registered for at least 1 credit of 999 and the student along with their advisor and department chair certify and communicate to the Office of the University Registrar each semester that they are working full time on the dissertation. See AP.6.10.6 Dissertation Registration for more information regarding 998 and 999.

To be considered as full time under the aforementioned clauses, a student must complete and submit the appropriate forms to the Office of the University Registrar prior to the first day of classes for the semester.

Different requirements for full-time status may apply for tuition, verification, loan deferral, and financial aid. Contact Student Accounts (<http://studentaccounts.gmu.edu>), the Office of the University Registrar (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>), and Student Financial Aid (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid>), respectively, for more information. Note that the official designation of time status for all students is determined by the Office of the University Registrar.

### AP.6.3 Academic Advising

When a student is admitted to graduate study, the student is assigned a faculty advisor by the academic program responsible for the student's program of study. Registration for newly admitted graduate students, as well as continuing students, begins with a visit to the student's academic advisor. There, the student can obtain information about specific courses and degree requirements and develop an individual program of study. Progress in an approved program of study is the shared responsibility of the student and the advisor. The graduate student is responsible for compliance with the policies and procedures of the college, school, or institute, and all applicable departmental requirements that govern the

individual program of study. Students should consult with their advisors before registration each semester.

## AP.6.4 Student Status

### AP.6.4.1 Change from Nondegree Status

A student admitted for graduate study in nondegree status may apply to obtain degree status within the same program. All admission requirements (as defined by the student's program for degree status) must be met, including official transcripts and letters of recommendation. If the student intends to use credits earned in nondegree status toward a degree, the credits must be approved on the Graduate Transfer of Credit Request form. The credit must have been earned within six years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the specific certificate or degree program, and a minimum grade of B (3.00) must have been earned. There is a limit on the number of credits that can be transferred when changing from nondegree to degree status; please see the applicable degree program for specific information.

### AP.6.4.2 Removing Provisional Qualifier

For policies concerning students admitted provisionally, see Graduate Admission Policies.

### AP.6.4.3 Permission to Re-Enroll

Permission to re-enroll in a program must be obtained by all graduate certificate, master's and doctoral degree students who have failed to enroll in at least 1 credit of coursework for two or more consecutive semesters at Mason. A program may allow a student to petition to graduate under any catalog in effect while the student was enrolled. All program components, including concentrations, must appear in the catalog for the year selected. The final decision as to catalog year rests with the unit dean or director. The Graduate Re-enrollment form is available here (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms>).

### AP.6.4.4 Voluntary Resignation from Graduate Academic Program

Degree-seeking students may officially resign from their academic program with the approval of their department or program chair and their dean. The Voluntary Resignation form must be approved by the student's program and Student Accounts, then submitted to the Office of the University Registrar for notation on the transcript. Resignations after the drop period will result in grades of W on the student's transcript for that semester and removal from any future registered courses. Program resignation is final.

## AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Reduction or Transfer

### AP.6.5.1 Credit by External Exam

Degree credit for satisfactory completion of an external exam is limited to those exams and achievement levels specifically approved by the Graduate Council.

### AP.6.5.2 Reduction of Credits

All students must meet the university residency requirement; however, the number of credits required by a doctoral, or master's program may be reduced on the basis of a relevant post-baccalaureate degree earned prior to admission. Reduction of credits requires the approval of the program director and the dean or director of the school, college, or institute. They determine whether the credits are applicable to the degree program and the number of credits to be reduced.

### Doctoral Programs

The maximum reduction for doctoral programs derives from the total credits required by the program and the university requirements for institutional, resident, and unique credits. For a 72-credit program, the maximum reduction is 30 credits. Programs that require more than 72 credits may be reduced by more than 30 credits provided that the student meets the aforementioned university requirements. Doctoral students earning a secondary master's degree at Mason do not receive a reduction of credits and should indicate on their program of study which courses apply to the doctoral degree. Because individual doctoral programs may have more restrictive policies, make sure to consult with the program and/or academic unit to learn of their reduction of credit policies.

### Masters Programs

The maximum reduction for master's programs derives from the total credits required by the program and the university requirements for institutional, resident, and unique credits. Because individual masters programs may have more restrictive policies, make sure to consult with the program and/or academic unit to learn of their reduction of credit policies.

Students requesting a reduction of credits must supply official transcripts. For transcripts from outside the United States, students must supply an official transcript evaluation and an official translation for transcripts not in English if these documents were not supplied in the admission process. Reduction of credits requests from students who are admitted provisionally are not considered until the students have fulfilled the conditions of their admission and had the provisional qualifier removed from their records.

Credits used in reduction of credits are not subject to time limits, and the credits must have been applied to a previous degree. The credits used in the reduction may include transfer credit used for a previously earned degree but may not include credits that are applied to both an undergraduate and graduate degree in a joint bachelor's/master's program or in Mason's Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Programs. Reduction of credits may not be requested for more credits than were applied to the previous degree. Excess thesis credits beyond those allowed by the previous degree may not be applied to a reduction of credits.

Coursework applied to a reduction must have received a minimum grade of B. Courses graded 'pass/fail' or 'satisfactory/no credit' may be applied to a reduction of credits provided that is the standard grade mode for the course and that it can be reasonably interpreted as a B or better according to the home institution's grading system. Graduate degrees that follow a non-standard format will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

#### AP.6.5.3 Transfer of Credit

Graduate credit earned prior to admission to a certificate, master's, or doctoral program may be eligible to be transferred into the program and applied to the certificate or degree. Transfer of credit requires the approval of the program director and dean or director of the school, college, or institute. They will determine whether the credit is eligible for transfer and applicable to the specific certificate or degree program. Note that credits accepted for transfer do not compute into any Mason GPA. Limits on the number of credits that can be transferred derive from the degree requirements given below.

Credit is usually considered for transfer at the student's request at the time of initial registration as a degree-seeking student. Students must supply official transcripts. For transcripts from outside the United States, students must supply an official transcript evaluation and an official

translation for transcripts not in English if these documents were not supplied in the admission process. Credit transfer requests from students who are admitted provisionally are not considered until they have fulfilled the conditions of their admission and the provisional qualifier has been removed from their records.

To be eligible for transfer credit, the credit must be graduate credit earned at another accredited university, earned at another institution and recommended for graduate credit in the American Council on Education guidebook, or earned at Mason while in a nondegree status. The credit must have been earned within six years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the specific certificate or degree program, and a minimum grade of B (3.00) must have been earned. The course must be applicable toward a degree at the institution offering the course. Extension and in-service courses that are not intended by the institution offering the courses to be applied to a degree program are not eligible for transfer credit to Mason. The credits cannot have been previously applied toward a degree at another institution or Mason; however, up to 3 credits previously applied to a degree program at another institution may be transferred into a certificate program at Mason.

#### AP.6.5.4 Permission to Study Elsewhere

Students enrolled in a degree program may take graduate courses at another accredited institution and apply these credits to a master's or doctoral degree with prior approval. Approval must be secured in writing from the director of the graduate program and the dean or director of the school, college, or institute, and submitted to Mason's Office of the University Registrar before registering at the other institution. Upon completion of the course, students must arrange for an official transcript to be submitted to Mason so that the credits may be transferred into their Mason degree program. These credits are subject to all the other conditions given above for transfer credit, including limits on numbers of credits that can be taken elsewhere. Note that credits accepted for transfer do not compute into any Mason GPA. Permission to take a course elsewhere does not exempt a graduate student from satisfying the degree requirements given below.

Enrolled, degree-seeking graduate students may be eligible to take a limited number of courses through the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. See AP.1.4.2 Permission to Study Elsewhere for more information. Credits earned through the consortium are considered resident, not transfer, credits, and are therefore not subject to transfer of credit conditions or limitations.

### AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing

#### AP.6.6.1 Academic Warning

A notation of academic warning is entered on the transcript of a graduate student who receives a grade of C or F in a graduate course or while a grade of IN is in effect.

#### AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination

A degree-seeking graduate student may be terminated for the reasons listed below. Non-degree graduate students may be terminated for unsatisfactory academic performance as described below. These are minimum standards of academic performance; some programs have higher standards. Note that the university reserves the right to terminate any student based on cancellation (by the testing administrator) of any test score required for admission.

### **Students May be Terminated for Any One of the Following Reasons Fully-Admitted Graduate Students Enrolled in Degree and/or Certificate Program**

1. Fail to make satisfactory progress toward degree as determined by the academic unit.
2. Accumulate grades of F in two graduate courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades in graduate courses.

### **Provisionally-Admitted Degree Seeking Graduate Students**

1. Fail to meet conditions of admission within time limits.
2. Fail to make satisfactory progress toward the degree, as determined by the academic unit.
3. Accumulate 12 credits of unsatisfactory grades in undergraduate courses.
4. Accumulate grades of F in two graduate courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades in graduate courses.

NOTE: undergraduate and graduate course grades are not combined to reach the termination threshold; they are considered separately.

### **Non-Degree Graduate Students**

1. Accumulate 12 credits of unsatisfactory grades in undergraduate courses.
2. Accumulate grades of F in two graduate courses or 9 credit of unsatisfactory grades in graduate courses.

NOTE: undergraduate and graduate course grades are not combined to reach the termination threshold; they are considered separately.

Although the university will make every effort to notify students when their performance reaches the threshold for termination, each student is responsible for knowing the termination criteria, for knowing when their grades have met the standard and for initiating any appeal to their dean. Once the appeal period has expired, or the student's appeal has been denied, a letter of termination is sent by the dean or director of the school, college, or institute, and notification of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record.

### **AP.6.6.3 Readmission to Graduate Study at Mason**

Former graduate students who have been terminated, dismissed or have resigned from a Mason graduate program are not permitted to re-enroll in the program and are not eligible to take any additional coursework at Mason unless a new graduate program application has been submitted and the applicant has been admitted to a graduate program. Time limits for the degree begin with the date of admission to the new program. Academic units and programs may have additional restrictions concerning re-admission. If so, those restrictions apply.

## **AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees**

The university offers a number of Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Programs for academically strong Mason undergraduates with a commitment to research or graduate or professional studies. Applicants receive a waiver of the graduate application fee and admitted students may obtain both a bachelor's and a master's degree after satisfactory completion of 144 - 150 credits (number of required credits depends on the graduate program).

### **AP.6.7.1 Application and Admission**

Application to accelerated master's degree programs should be made once the student has earned between 75 and 100 credits. Individual colleges, schools and programs may set more specific requirements for earned hours prior to application. Admission is competitive and must be approved by the faculty director of the student's undergraduate program,

the faculty director of the intended graduate program, and the relevant graduate dean or designee.

### **AP.6.7.2 Coursework Requirements**

After admission and having earned 90 undergraduate credits, accelerated master's students complete 3 to 6 credits of graduate coursework in their field of study (with a 3.00 GPA or better in each course), specified by their undergraduate and graduate advisors. These credits will apply to the undergraduate degree and provide the student advanced standing in the related Mason master's program. All graduate course prerequisites must be completed prior to enrollment. While still in undergraduate status, a maximum of 6 additional graduate credits may be taken as reserve graduate credit and applied to the master's program. Reserve graduate credits do not apply to the undergraduate degree. See AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates.

Students in an accelerated degree program must fulfill all university requirements for the master's degree, including a minimum of 18 applicable graduate credits taken after the bachelor's degree has been completed and posted to the student's academic record.

### **AP.6.7.3 Timeline Requirements**

Accelerated master's students must graduate from their undergraduate program in the semester specified on their application to the accelerated degree program. Changes to the timeline for conferral of the undergraduate degree must receive written approval by the graduate program director. Students are also required to enroll in the related master's program in the fall or spring semester that immediately follows the term of undergraduate degree conferral. Some programs may allow a deferral of no more than one year from time of admittance to graduate status. Students must abide by all timelines outlined in each specific program. Failure to enter the graduate program in accordance with specified timelines will result in forfeiture of graduate advanced standing courses earned in undergraduate status.

### **AP.6.7.4 Instructions for International Students**

F-1 and J-1 students must request a change of program level and an I-20/DS-2019 extension at the time they move from the undergraduate to graduate level of study. Funding for the additional time in F-1 or J-1 status also must be documented as required by federal immigration regulations.

## **AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates**

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university requirements and all requirements established by the graduate certificate program faculty. Individual departmental graduate certificate requirements are listed under their academic departments in this catalog. Note that the following are university minimum requirements; individual programs may have higher standards and/or more restrictive requirements.

- Graduate certificate programs require a minimum of 12 graduate credits.
- Only graduate courses may apply toward the graduate certificate.
- A maximum of 3 graduate credits taken at another institution can be transferred into a graduate certificate program. See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam.
- In the case of a certificate offered through consortial arrangement, at least one-third of the credit applied to the certificate must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in coursework presented on the certificate application, which may include no more

than 3 credits of C. (Grades of C+, C-, and D do not apply to graduate courses.) The GPA calculation excludes transfer credits.

- Certificate students are subject to graduate termination policies.

### AP.6.8.1 Students in Master's or Doctoral Programs also Pursuing Graduate Certificates

#### Admission

Students must be admitted to the master's or doctoral program in degree status. They must also be admitted to the graduate certificate program at least one semester before completion of certificate requirements.

#### Coursework in Degree Status

More than half of the credits required for the certificate program must be taken in degree status for the master's or doctoral degree.

#### Time Limits

The time limits coincide with the six-year time limit for master's degrees or the six-year time limit for advancement to candidacy in a doctoral degree. Master's and doctoral time limit rules apply.

#### Multiple Programs

Students may be enrolled in one graduate certificate program while they pursue a master's or doctoral degree. Students who have completed a graduate certificate may subsequently be approved to apply many of the credit hours for that one certificate to a graduate degree, as long as they were taken within six years of official enrollment into the degree program. There is no limitation on the sharing of credits between the graduate degree and one certificate.

### AP.6.8.2 Students in Graduate Certificate Programs Only

#### Admission

Students pursuing graduate certificates must be admitted to Mason in degree-seeking status. Failure to make satisfactory progress (as determined by the academic unit) toward certificate requirements may result in termination from the certificate program.

#### Coursework After Admission

More than half of the credits required for the graduate certificate program must be taken after admission to that program.

#### Time Limits

The time limit for completion is six years from the date of admission to the graduate certificate program. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information. The time limit is not extended because of an absence and subsequent re-enrollment into the graduate certificate program. Failure to meet the time limit or to secure an extension request may result in termination from the program.

#### Multiple Programs

Students not admitted to any graduate degree program (master's or doctoral) may be admitted to two graduate certificate programs at the same time. The graduation application for each graduate certificate must include a minimum of 12 credits that apply only to that certificate and not to another. (Credits from only one certificate may be subsequently applied to a future degree program, subject to program approval and time limit.)

### AP.6.8.3 Financial Aid for Students in Certificate Programs Only

Not all certificate programs are eligible for Federal financial aid. A list of the eligible graduate certificates can be found in Financial Aid.

## AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the master's program faculty.

Individual departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective master's programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- **Admission.** Candidates must have been officially admitted into degree status.
- **Credit Hours.** Candidates must earn a minimum of 30 graduate credits.
- **Credit Level.** Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- **Institutional Credit.** The majority of the credits applied to the degree must be earned at Mason or, in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions. At least one-third of the credits applied to the master's degree must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- **Residency.** A minimum of 18 credits must be taken in degree status, after admission to the degree program.
- **Thesis/Project Limits.** A maximum of 6 credits of master's thesis research (799) or master's project may be applied to the degree.
- **Quality.** Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in coursework presented on the degree application, which may include no more than 6 credits of C. (Grades of C+, C-, or D do not apply to graduate courses. The GPA calculation excludes all transfer courses and Mason nondegree studies credits not formally approved for the degree.)

### AP.6.9.1 Thesis Options

Requirements regarding a thesis vary with the degree program. A number of master's programs offer both thesis and nonthesis options. The same quality of work is expected of students regardless of their chosen option. For more information, consult the section on degree requirements under each degree program.

### AP.6.9.2 Time Limit

Master's degree students have six years from the time of first enrollment as a degree-seeking student to complete their degrees. Individual master's programs may have stricter time limits, which are published in this catalog. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information. Students who are given permission to re-enroll following an absence from Mason may not count the six-year time limit as beginning on the date of re-enrollment. Students who will not meet published time limits because of circumstances beyond their control may petition for an extension. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program. See detailed information (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit>) regarding how to determine the initial deadline.

### AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis

When a thesis proposal has been approved by the appropriate department, the department chair sends the collegiate dean or director a copy of the thesis proposal, including the approval signatures of the master's thesis committee members. Students may enroll in thesis research (799) at the beginning of the next semester. Students must register for a minimum of three credit hours in their first semester of 799. After that semester, students may enroll for one credit of 799 per semester and be considered full time, if the following requirement is met: the student, advisor and department chair must certify each semester that the student is working full time on the thesis. **Please note: Master's students must maintain continuous enrollment in 799 while writing and submitting a thesis.** Students registered in 799 are graded IP until work is complete; at that time they are graded S/NC, and previous IP grades are

updated by the Office of the University Registrar to reflect the final S or NC grade. Graduation candidates who miss the library deadline for thesis submission but do submit officially before the next semester begins do not have to register for 799 in that next semester, but must stay active to graduate.

The master's thesis committee is composed of at least three members of the graduate faculty, at least two of whom must be from the student's department or program. Faculty who are not members of the graduate faculty or other appropriate persons not affiliated with the university may serve as additional members. Committee members are appointed by the chair or director of the academic unit or program, or designee, after consultation with the student's adviser and the student. Only a member of the graduate faculty with a full-time appointment at George Mason University may serve as the thesis chair.

The thesis committee chair is primarily responsible for directing the candidate's research and writing activities. The student is responsible for keeping all committee members informed of the scope, plan, and progress of the research as well as the writing of the thesis.

Students selecting the thesis option should obtain a copy of Mason's *Thesis, Dissertation, or Project Guide*. Students may register in 799 only after their thesis proposal has been submitted and approved as prescribed in the guide. **Any student not in attendance at Mason who is preparing a thesis under the active supervision of a member of the faculty or wishes to take an exam must maintain continuous registration in 799 for at least 1 credit per semester.**

#### AP.6.9.4 Thesis Submission

On or before the thesis submission deadline for any semester, each student will submit a CD with a complete electronic copy of his/her thesis (signed Signature Sheet through Curriculum Vitae) as a PDF to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS). The PDF will be uploaded into the Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS). At the time of final submission, the student will also turn in completed versions of the Transmittal Sheet, ETD Submission Form, and MARS Agreement.

For degree conferral in a particular semester, the above materials must be submitted to the library by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the last day of class in that semester. (For specific deadlines and more information, please see The Office of the University Registrar (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>.)

Under circumstances determined by the student's school, college, and/or program, a student may petition to embargo all or part of his/her thesis, preventing online access to it for a period of time (6 months, 1 year, or 5 years). A student may choose to embargo his/her work in order to avoid potential contract disputes with future publishers or to protect intellectual property. Not all schools, colleges, and/or programs will permit a student to embargo his/her work, and the both the student's thesis chair and the graduate associate dean of the school/college must approve the student's petition. Upon approval of an embargo, the thesis chair, the graduate associate dean and the student must all sign the embargo approval form. The student must turn in this completed, signed embargo form to UDTS at the time of submission of his/her thesis and all other materials. The UDTS Coordinator will confirm with both the chair/director and the associate dean that they have signed the submitted form. A hard copy of the confirmation will be retained by the UDTS Coordinator.

Only under extreme circumstances will a student's work be considered for an indefinite embargo. A student must have proof that publication of his/her work poses a danger to themselves, national security, or similar

scenario. An indefinite embargo requires the approval of the dissertation chair, graduate associate dean, Graduate Council, and the Provost.

It is the student's responsibility to maintain the embargo; if the student wishes to extend the embargo past the thesis's release date, the student is required to secure the approval of the graduate associate dean at the time of the extension request. If approved, the student must notify UDTS via email ([udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu)) of his/her intention to extend the embargo. The UDTS Coordinator will confirm with the associate dean that the embargo extension has been approved, and will retain copies of both the student's request and the associate dean's confirmation that the embargo can be extended.

Once a student has submitted the final (i.e. defended, formatted, and signed) version of his/her project, thesis, or dissertation to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS), subsequent edits WILL NOT BE ALLOWED EXCEPT under the following circumstances:

1. A formatting error has been introduced into the PDF document when converting from another document type that affects the meaning of the dissertation. For example: in the process of formatting the document into a PDF, all of the ampersands (&) have disappeared and the error is not discovered until after final submission to UDTS. Re-submission would not be allowed to revise margins, fonts, or other non-substantive items.
2. Incidence of fraud or plagiarism. The relevant college/school must conduct a review of the thesis or dissertation and determine an appropriate course of action in accordance with the university catalog and approved by the Dean. If the approved course of action includes allowing the student to resubmit a corrected version of a thesis or dissertation, the UDTS Coordinator must be informed in writing by an appropriate college/school or LAU official.

UDTS will not allow corrections of theses and dissertations for the following:

- Rewording the Dedication, Acknowledgments, Abstract, or Biography.
- Correction of citations or quotations.
- Addition of new text, or deletion of existing text, in the body.
- Correction of misspellings or grammar issues.
- Replacing, adding, or deleting Tables, Figures, or Equations.
- Correction of any other minor errors or omissions.

#### AP.6.9.5 Doctoral Students Also Pursuing a First Master's Degree

Requirements for master's degrees apply with the following exceptions. Residency derives from the doctoral degree requirements. Time limit may derive from the doctoral requirements, although programs may reject coursework that is not sufficiently current. Students must be officially admitted to degree status in the master's program a full semester before the one in which they will complete master's degree requirements, i.e. admitted in fall for graduation the following spring.

#### AP.6.9.6 Individualized Dual Master's Degree Programs

George Mason students have the option to pursue two master's degrees simultaneously. For purposes of administration, if a different rate of tuition is assessed for each program, the student will be assessed at the higher rate. The program with the higher rate will be considered the primary program. The six year time limit for completion of dual master's programs derives from the admission date of the initial program.

Students in dual master's degree programs are not eligible for reduction of credit based on a previously earned relevant post-baccalaureate degree earned prior to admission. Any Reduction of Credits that was

granted upon admission to the initial program will be removed from the student's record upon matriculation into the second program.

Students are not eligible to pursue two master's degrees until they have completed one semester in their initial master's program. Interested students should know:

- A full admissions application must be submitted for both programs.
- Students must apply and be accepted to the second master's degree within one year of matriculation in the initial program.
- A restricted number of credits may be shared across dual degree programs, according to University Policy 3007 (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/dual-degree-program-arrangements>).
- An Individualized Dual Master's Degree Program of Study form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/DMPS.pdf>), approved by directors of both programs, must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>) upon matriculation in the second program. This will determine the maximum number of credits and specific courses that may be shared across programs.
- The Program of Study must include a written statement explaining the intellectual or pedagogical purpose behind the degree program, and the academic symmetries that exist between the underlying fields of study.

### AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the doctoral program faculty. Departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective doctoral programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- **Admission.** Students must have been fully admitted into degree status.
- **Credit Level.** Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- **Credit Hours.** Candidates must earn a minimum of 72 graduate credits, which may be reduced on the basis of a completed master's degree or other suitable, approved transfer work. (See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Reduction or Transfer)
- **Unique Credit.** A minimum of 42 credits must apply only to the doctoral degree.
- **Institutional Credit.** More than half of the required credits (minimum 72) for the doctoral degree must be earned at Mason or in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions.
- **Residency.** More than half of the required credits (minimum 72) must be taken in doctoral degree status, after admission to the degree program.
- **Candidacy.** Candidates must pass a written or oral doctoral candidacy (qualifying) exam, or both.
- **Dissertation.** Candidates must complete a minimum of 12 credits of doctoral proposal (998) and doctoral dissertation research (999), including at least three credits of 999. A maximum of 24 credits of 998 and 999 may be applied to the degree.
- **Defense.** Candidates must pass a final public defense of the doctoral dissertation.
- **Quality.** Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in coursework presented on the degree application, which may include no more than 6 credits of C. (Grades of C+, C-, or D do not apply to graduate courses. The GPA calculation excludes all transfer courses and

Mason extended studies or nondegree credits not formally approved for the degree.)

#### AP.6.10.1 Time Limit

For both full-time and part-time students enrolled in doctoral programs, whether entry is post-baccalaureate or post-master's, the total time to degree will not exceed nine (9) calendar years from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral student. Doctoral students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree and to advance to candidacy within no more than six (6) years, although colleges may set a shorter time limit. Students who do not meet published time limits because of compelling circumstances may petition their dean for a single extension of one calendar year at any point during their program. If such an extension is granted, the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed ten (10) years. Reenrollment following an absence from Mason does not change the student's time limit, which is based on the date of initial admission. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program. Faculty and students share in the responsibility to progress toward completion of degree requirements, and faculty must be actively involved in helping students conform to the nine-year time limit.

Non-immigrant students in F-1 or J-1 status are further limited by the regulations governing their stay in the United States. The University issues visa documents (forms I-20 and DS-2019) that indicate the estimated length of the student's academic program. Students who need extensions beyond the initial period of stay must request them through the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). Documentation of the compelling circumstances necessitating the extension request is required by federal regulations. For further information, please consult with an advisor in OIPS.

#### AP.6.10.2 Doctoral Research Skill Requirements

Some doctoral degree programs require demonstration of proficiency in a research skill, including knowledge of the research literature in a foreign language, computer language, statistical methods, or a research tool specific to the discipline. Research skill requirements are included with the degree requirements for the specific doctoral degree. Where demonstration of research skills is required, certification that this requirement has been met must be completed for advancement to candidacy.

#### AP.6.10.3 Program of Study

Usually before the end of the second year of graduate study but no later than consideration for advancement to candidacy, doctoral students must submit a program of study for approval by the dean or director of the college, school, or institute. The program of study must include major courses and supporting courses to be completed, research skills required, subject areas to be covered by the candidacy exam, and a proposed date for the candidacy exam. Program of Study Forms are available from each program's doctoral coordinator. Any changes in the programs of study must be documented with an amended Program of Study Form.

#### AP.6.10.4 Advancement to Candidacy

Advancement to candidacy implies that a doctoral student has demonstrated both a breadth and a depth of knowledge in the field of study and is capable of exploring problems on the boundaries of knowledge, and has identified a research area that is likely to lead to a successful dissertation. The candidacy exam includes a written part and may include an oral part, depending on the particular doctoral program. Doctoral students should consult the degree requirements for each doctoral program to determine whether an oral portion is required, whether it is judged separately or with the written portion, the number of

times a failed candidacy exam may be repeated and any associated time limits, and any time limits for attempting the candidacy exam.

Before doctoral students may be advanced to candidacy by the unit dean or director, they must have completed all coursework as indicated on the approved program of study, been certified in all doctoral research skills required, passed the candidacy exam, and been recommended by the doctoral supervisory committee or program coordinator. Students advanced to candidacy after the add period for a given semester must wait until the following semester to register for 999 Dissertation Research.

#### **AP.6.10.5 Dissertation Committee**

Before a doctoral student is advanced to candidacy, the dean or director of the school, college, or institute or its designee (as specified by the school/college/institute) appoints a dissertation committee upon recommendation of the student's dissertation chair. Students work collaboratively with the program director and faculty to form the dissertation committee, with the understanding that some areas of research may be impossible to support due to available faculty expertise. Program personnel will facilitate the formation of the dissertation committee to the extent possible, but there can be no guarantee of successful formation.

All dissertation committees must consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty, at least two of whom must be from the student's academic unit or program faculty. The committee consists of a dissertation chair, a member of the graduate faculty from the department or program of the student's field of study and at least two other members of the graduate faculty. Only a member of the graduate faculty with a full-time appointment at George Mason University may serve as dissertation chair. Other Mason faculty, as well as individuals from outside the university, may be appointed as additional members to the committee. Such appointments are made where the additional member's expertise and contribution add value to the dissertation, but appointment does not require graduate faculty status.

Student-initiated changes in the composition of the dissertation committee may occur only with the approval of the dean or director of the school, college, or institute or its designee in consultation with the committee. Faculty may resign from a dissertation committee with appropriate notice by submitting a written resignation.

#### **AP.6.10.6 Dissertation Registration (998, 999)**

Students working on dissertation research (999) must register for a minimum of 3 credits of 999 per semester (excluding summers) until they have completed the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999 required by the university and their degree program. Then, they must register for 1 credit of 999 until the dissertation is complete and has been officially submitted to the library. See AP.6.2 Full-Time Classification for more information. Students registered in 998 or 999 are graded IP until work in 998 or 999, respectively, is complete; at that time they are graded S/NC, and previous IP grades are updated by the Office of the University Registrar to reflect the final S or NC grade.

All registration for doctoral dissertation research (999) must be planned with the dissertation director and approved by the dean or director of the school, college, or institute. Dissertation research (999) is open only to doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy. Once enrolled in 999, students must maintain continuous registration in 999 each semester until graduation, excluding summers. Students who defend in the summer must be registered for at least 1 credit of 999 in the summer. Individual doctoral programs may require continuous registration

beginning with 998. Graduation candidates who miss the library deadline for dissertation submission, but do submit officially before the next semester begins, do not have to register for 999 in that next semester, but must stay active to graduate.

It is the student's responsibility to complete registration for dissertation proposal (998) or research (999) prior to the first day of classes for the semester. If this date is missed, students must still enroll in these courses via Add or Late Schedule Adjustment procedures and are subject to Late Registration fees. Failing to register on time in a particular semester does not alter the requirement for continuous registration in 999.

#### **AP.6.10.7 Doctoral Dissertation**

A dissertation is required for the doctor of philosophy degree and most professional doctoral degrees. The dissertation is a written piece of original thinking that demonstrates doctoral candidates' mastery of subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in their chosen field of study. This is generally achieved through consideration of a problem on the boundaries of knowledge in the discipline.

The director of the dissertation committee is primarily responsible for directing the doctoral candidate's research and guiding the preparation of the written dissertation. After the dissertation committee is appointed, the student should begin discussions with the director to define a suitable problem for the dissertation. Before the student may enroll in doctoral dissertation research (999), the dissertation proposal must be approved by the dissertation committee and evidence of approval sent to the unit dean or director for approval. Before that time, the student may enroll in proposal research (998).

Guidelines for the content and general format of doctoral dissertations are in the *Thesis, Dissertation, or Project Guide*. Consult a doctoral coordinator to determine which additional reference manuals are suitable.

#### **AP.6.10.8 Doctoral Defense**

As soon as all degree requirements have been satisfied, including completion of the doctoral dissertation, the doctoral candidate may request a doctoral defense. Approval for the defense is given by the doctoral dissertation committee, department or program chair, and relevant dean or director of the school, college, or institute. Notice of a defense must be circulated to the university community two weeks before the defense date. The public defense should demonstrate the candidate's maturity of judgment and intellectual command of the chosen branches of the field of study.

At the close of the final defense, the dissertation committee makes final judgments for approving the dissertation. The doctoral candidate is responsible for making all required changes promptly, submitting the original and required copies, and obtaining signatures. Final approval for the dissertation is given by the doctoral dissertation committee, department or program chair, and the relevant dean or director of the school, college, or institute, all of whom must sign the final copy.

For a dissertation to be approved, all members of the committee must sign. If a committee member refuses to do so, the student or any member of the committee may petition the unit dean or director for a review and ruling. The dean or director may seek the advice of outside reviewers to provide an assessment of the work. The final decision is that of the dean or director, and is not subject to appeal.

### AP.6.10.9 Dissertation Submission and Fees

On or before the dissertation submission deadline for any semester, each student will submit a CD with a complete electronic copy of his/her dissertation (signed Signature Sheet through Curriculum Vitae) as a PDF to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS). The PDF will be uploaded into the Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS). At the time of final submission, the student will also turn in completed versions of the Transmittal Sheet, ETD Submission Form, and MARS Agreement.

For degree conferral in a particular semester, the above materials must be submitted to the library by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the last day of class in that semester. (For specific deadlines and more information, please see the University Registrar's website (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>))

Under circumstances determined by the student's school, college, and/or program, a student may petition to delay embargo all or part of his/her dissertation, preventing online access to it for a period of time (6 months, 1 year, or 5 years). A student may choose to embargo his/her work in order to avoid potential contract disputes with future publishers or to protect intellectual property. Not all schools, colleges, and/or programs will permit a student to embargo his/her work, and both the student's dissertation chair and the graduate associate dean of the school/college must approve the student's petition. Upon approval of an embargo, the dissertation chair, the graduate associate dean, and the student must all sign the embargo approval form. The student must turn in the signed embargo form to UDTS at the time of submission of his/her dissertation and all other materials. The UDTS Coordinator will confirm with both the dissertation chair and the graduate associate dean that they signed the submitted form. A hard copy of the confirmation will be retained by the UDTS Coordinator.

Only under extreme circumstances will a student's work be considered for an indefinite embargo. A student must have proof that publication of his/her work poses a danger to themselves, national security, or similar scenario. An indefinite embargo requires the approval of the dissertation chair, graduate associate dean, Graduate Council, and the Provost.

It is the student's responsibility to maintain the embargo; if the student wishes to extend the embargo past the dissertation's release date, the student is required to secure the approval of the graduate associate dean at the time of the extension request. If approved, the student must notify UDTS via email ([udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu)) of his/her intention to extend the embargo. The UDTS Coordinator will confirm with the associate dean that the embargo extension has been approved, and will retain copies of both the student's request and the associate dean's confirmation that the embargo can be extended.

Doctoral students are also required to submit their dissertations to ProQuest through University Microfilms International (UMI). Submission will take place through the UMI Administrator site ([www.etdadmin.com/gmu](http://www.etdadmin.com/gmu)) (<http://www.etdadmin.com/gmu>). Traditional submission, in which the dissertation is available only through ProQuest's subscription service, costs nothing. Open Access submission, in which the dissertation is available through ProQuest's Open Access site, costs \$95. Students can also opt to register their dissertations with the U.S. Copyright Office via the Administrator; doing so costs \$44, payable to ProQuest. Students can also choose to purchase their own bound copies through the Administrator. The student is responsible for any aforementioned fees, which can be paid by credit or debit card. At the time of final submission, the UDTS Coordinator will confirm that the student has uploaded his/her dissertation through the Administrator.

Doctoral students also must complete a Survey of Earned Doctorates. This form must also be turned in to the UDTS Coordinator at the time of final submission.

Once a student has submitted the final (i.e. defended, formatted, and signed) version of his/her project, thesis, or dissertation to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS), subsequent edits WILL NOT BE ALLOWED EXCEPT under the following circumstances:

1. A formatting error has been introduced into the PDF document when converting from another document type that affects the meaning of the dissertation. For example: in the process of formatting the document into a PDF, all of the ampersands (&) have disappeared and the error is not discovered until after final submission to UDTS. Re-submission would not be allowed to revise margins, fonts, or other non-substantive items.
2. Incidence of fraud or plagiarism. The relevant college/school must conduct a review of the thesis or dissertation and determine an appropriate course of action in accordance with the university catalog and approved by the Dean. If the approved course of action includes allowing the student to resubmit a corrected version of a thesis or dissertation, the UDTS Coordinator must be informed in writing by an appropriate college/school or LAU official.

UDTS will not allow corrections of theses and dissertations for the following:

- Rewording the Dedication, Acknowledgments, Abstract, or Biography.
- Correction of citations or quotations.
- Addition of new text, or deletion of existing text, in the body.
- Correction of misspellings or grammar issues.
- Replacing, adding, or deleting Tables, Figures, or Equations.
- Correction of any other minor errors or omissions.

### AP.6.10.10 University Dissertation and Thesis Services

University Dissertation and Thesis Services (UDTS) facilitates completion and submission of dissertations, theses, and graduate-level projects. The program assists Mason students in all stages of production. The UDTS website (<http://thesis.gmu.edu>), provides students with useful tools, including downloadable templates of necessary elements, forms required for the submission process, and links to related web sites. Students completing a thesis or dissertation are required to complete a format review. UDTS is located in Fenwick Library, Special Collections and Archives, Wing 2C. For more information, contact the university dissertation and thesis coordinator at 703-993-2222.

### AP.6.11 Graduate Council

The Graduate Council is an advisory and legislative board on matters of graduate education whose purpose is to promote excellence in all graduate programs. The Council advises the Provost regarding academic policies governing graduate education; approval of new and revised graduate courses, programs and degrees; review and assessment of graduate programs; planning and attainment of graduate education strategic goals; and policies and resources for graduate student support. The Office of the Provost administers university graduate policies for the Graduate Council.

### AP.6.12 Graduate Faculty

The graduate faculty consists of all George Mason University tenured and tenure-track faculty. Other Mason faculty members, as well as individuals

from outside the university, may be appointed to the graduate faculty by the Provost for a specified duration of time.