

# AP.6 GRADUATE POLICIES

## AP.6 Graduate Policies

- **AP.6.1 Student Classification**
  - AP.6.1.5 Institutional Credits
- **AP.6.2 Full-Time and Half-Time Status Classification**
- **AP.6.3 Academic Advising**
- **AP.6.4 Student Status**
  - AP.6.4.1 Non-degree Student Status
  - AP.6.4.2 Removing Provisional Qualifier
  - AP.6.4.3 Permission to Re-Enroll
  - AP.6.4.4 Voluntary Resignation from Graduate Academic Program
  - AP.6.4.5 Graduate Student Parental Leave of Absence
- **AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Reduction or Transfer**
  - AP.6.5.1 Credit by External Exam
  - AP.6.5.2 Reduction of Credits
  - AP.6.5.3 Transfer of Credit
  - AP.6.5.4 Permission to Study Elsewhere
- **AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing**
  - AP.6.6.1 Academic Warning
  - AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination
  - AP.6.6.3 Readmission to Graduate Study at Mason
- **AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees**
  - AP.6.7.1 Application and Admission
  - AP.6.7.2 Coursework Requirements
  - AP.6.7.3 Timeline Requirements
  - AP.6.7.4 Instructions for International Students
- **AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates**
  - AP.6.8.1 Students in Master's or Doctoral Programs also Pursuing Graduate Certificates
  - AP.6.8.2 Students in Graduate Certificate Programs Only
  - AP.6.8.3 Financial Aid for Students in Certificate Programs Only
- **AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees**
  - AP.6.9.1 Thesis Options
  - AP.6.9.2 Time Limit
  - AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis
  - AP.6.9.4 Thesis Submission
  - AP.6.9.5 Doctoral Students Also Pursuing a First Master's Degree
  - AP.6.9.6 Individualized Dual Master's Degree Programs
- **AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees**
  - AP.6.10.1 Time Limit
  - AP.6.10.2 Doctoral Research Skill Requirements
  - AP.6.10.3 Program of Study
  - AP.6.10.4 Advancement to Candidacy
  - AP.6.10.5 Dissertation Committee
  - AP.6.10.6 Dissertation Registration (998, 999)
  - AP.6.10.7 Doctoral Dissertation
  - AP.6.10.8 Doctoral Defense
  - AP.6.10.9 Dissertation Submission and Fees
  - AP.6.10.10 University Dissertation and Thesis Services

- **AP.6.11 Graduate Council**
- **AP.6.12 Graduate Faculty**

At the graduate level, Mason offers certificate programs of study and master's and doctoral degree programs. There are also a number of combined bachelor's and accelerated master's degree programs for academically-strong undergraduates with a commitment to learning advanced skills in a specialized field of study.

### AP.6.1 Student Classification

Students may access graduate classes and programs according to their status as non-degree or enrolled degree students. For more information, see Graduate Admissions (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>).

#### AP.6.1.5 Institutional Credits

Graduate students at Mason are required to successfully complete more than half of the minimum required credits towards their degree program at Mason. See AP.6.5 for Credit by Exam, Reduction of Credit or Transfer of Credit opportunities.

### AP.6.2 Full-Time and Half-Time Status 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. Graduate students are considered half-time if they are enrolled in at least 4.5 graduate credits per semester.

Master's students who are enrolled in thesis credits are considered full-time if they are enrolled in at least three credits of 799 per semester. Master's students may enroll in 1 credit of 799 and be considered in status (either full-time or half-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 or half-time on the thesis. See AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis for more information regarding 799.

Doctoral students, who have completed required coursework and are enrolled in dissertation credits (either 998 or 999), are considered full-time if they are enrolled in at least 3 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 in status (either full-time or half-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 or half-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 (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/graduate/>) to the Office of the University Registrar prior to the first day of classes for the semester. Different requirements for full-time and half-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 Non-degree Student Status

Students may pursue graduate study in non-degree status at Mason. Such students who wish to pursue a degree or certificate program are encouraged to apply for admission to a degree or certificate program at Mason as soon as possible. All program admission requirements must be met, including official transcripts, letters of recommendation and standardized test scores, if applicable. If the student intends to use credits earned in a non-degree status at Mason toward a degree or certificate, the credits must be approved on the appropriate form (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/graduate/>). The credits must have been earned within six years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the specific degree or certificate program, and a minimum grade of B (3.00) must have been earned in each course. A maximum of 12 non-degree credits taken at Mason can be applied toward a degree or certificate program. No credits can be applied to more than two certificates and/or degrees.

#### AP.6.4.2 Removing Provisional Qualifier

For policies concerning students admitted provisionally, see Graduate Admission Policies (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-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 an academic program with the approval of their department chair or program director and the dean or director of the school, college, or institute. The Voluntary Resignation form (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/graduate/>) must then be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar for transcript notation. Students who resign after the drop period may either complete the courses they are currently enrolled in or immediately withdraw, which will result in grades of W on the student's transcript for that semester. All students that have resigned will be removed from any future registered courses. Program resignation is final.

### AP.6.4.5 Graduate Student Parental Leave of Absence

All degree-seeking graduate students actively enrolled for at least one academic year or four consecutive 8-week sessions, as appropriate to the student's academic program calendar, who intend to become parents via birth, adoption, foster or custodial care placement shall have the option, after notice to the Associate Provost for Graduate Education (APGE), of taking a Parental Leave of Absence (PLoA).

#### Purpose:

The PLoA period of time shall not count towards the student's time limit to degree completion as applicable under AP.6.9, and AP.6.10. The student's time limit will be extended to include one semester or two consecutive 8-week sessions, as appropriate to the student's academic program calendar, for an approved PLoA. The PLoA can be taken in either the fall or spring semester or for two consecutive 8-week sessions, as appropriate to the student's academic program calendar. Once the student's approved PLoA expires, the student's time limit to degree completion will resume.

#### Scope:

This policy applies to all graduate students regardless of gender identity, marital status, and whether or not the student is the birth parent or non-birth parent. The approved PLoA time period must be taken in its entirety as one event. The student may schedule the approved PLoA to begin up to six months after the anticipated birth/adoption/placement of the child. A PLoA can only be used once per child. Simultaneous births or placements are treated as one event. The use of this policy does not impact the availability of a non-academic withdrawal outside of the PLoA period, and it may be considered in any future PLoA or time limit to degree completion policy exception requests and appeals.

#### Notification:

Students must request a PLoA at least six weeks prior to the start of the semester or session in which the PLoA will begin. See here (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-parental-leave-absence/>) for information on the procedures for completing a PLoA notification. Upon notification, the APGE shall confirm the upcoming PLoA to the student, University Registrar, the student's respective College/School and local academic unit. A copy of a birth or placement record or equivalent documentation will need to be presented by the student to the APGE once available.

#### Requirements:

Students shall not be responsible for new tuition or fees during the approved PLoA period. A student may not enroll in courses at Mason, nor at any other institution, while on a PLoA. Students are not required nor expected to conduct academic work or research towards degree requirements during the PLoA. Students shall maintain access to their Mason e-mail account and may, under certain circumstances, be eligible to maintain access to Mason student health insurance for up to one academic year. See Student Health Services (<https://shs.gmu.edu/>) for more information. Students are advised that some university services and resources may be limited to registered students and would not be accessible during their PLoA. As applicable, students are exempt from continuous registration requirements under AP.6.10.6 or AP.6.9.3 during the approved PLoA period. Upon the expiration of a PLoA, all academic responsibilities resume.

#### Return:

Faculty, student applicants, and staff are encouraged to work together in order to facilitate the PLoA process and ensure students return to their same time to degree completion status as before the PLoA. Any student on a PLoA may be required by the local academic unit or College/School to advise them of their return prior to their first semester or 8-

week session back as an enrolled student. Any PLoA student who fails to return and register in a timely manner by the add/drop deadline in the semester or 8-week session after a PLoA shall still have their time limit to degree resume and will be required to re-enroll in their graduate program upon their return.

#### **Exception Request:**

The APGE may review and approve student requests for an exception to the requirements of this policy, including requests to extend such leave for one additional semester or a consecutive third and fourth 8-week session, as appropriate to the student's academic program calendar.

The maximum period allowed for a PLoA shall not exceed one academic year (fall, spring) or four consecutive 8-week sessions, as appropriate to the student's academic program. If an exception to this policy is desired, see here (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-academic-exceptions/>) for further information. Should a student's PLoA policy exception request be denied, the student shall have one level of appeal to the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee (GAAC). See here (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-academic-exceptions/>) for more information.

#### **Other Provisions:**

Students receiving financial aid should consult with the Office of Financial Aid (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/>) to determine any financial impact before a PLoA form is submitted. Per university policy, non-enrolled students, including those on a PLoA, may not continue to hold any existing university funded assistantships, fellowships, and/or scholarships. However, they may be rehired upon return at the discretion of the funding authority and in compliance with all applicable university policies and procedures. This policy does not address any employment, scholarships or fellowships that are funded by entities external to the university. Students should consult with relevant faculty, supervisors, and/or departments to address such issues before deciding whether to submit a PLoA.

Students who are neither United States citizens nor permanent residents must first consult with Office of International Programs and Services (<https://oips.gmu.edu/>) to discuss the impact of such a leave on the student's non-immigrant status in the United States.

## **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 institutional credit 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 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.

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.

#### **Masters Programs**

The maximum reduction for master's programs derives from the total credits required by the program and the university requirements for institutional credits. Because individual master's 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 non-degree 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 (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#ap-1-4-2>) 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.

### AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination

A degree-seeking graduate student will be terminated for the reasons listed below unless an academic policy exception is obtained. Non-degree graduate students will be terminated for unsatisfactory performance as described below. These are minimum standards of 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. Once a student has met the criteria for termination, they may only avoid termination by obtaining an academic policy exception, as described below, through the process provided for by their academic unit in conjunction with the Associate Provost for Graduate Education.

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

- Fail to make satisfactory progress toward degree as determined by the academic unit and/or Associate Provost for Graduate Education.
- Accumulate grades of F in two graduate courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades in graduate courses.

#### Provisionally-Admitted Degree Seeking Graduate Students

- Fail to meet provisions of admission within time limits.
- Fail to make satisfactory progress toward the degree, as determined by the academic unit and/or Associate Provost for Graduate Education.
- Accumulate 12 credits of unsatisfactory grades in undergraduate courses.
- 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

- Accumulate 12 credits of unsatisfactory grades in undergraduate courses.
- 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.

The student is responsible for knowing both the termination criteria (including, but not limited to, program time limits and grade requirements) and the process for initiating an academic policy exception request to the dean of their academic unit. In cases of program time limits and grade requirements, the University Registrar will notify the student within two weeks of termination eligibility that the student's performance has reached the threshold for termination, provide notice of the start of the request for exception period, and direct the student to their respective academic unit for information on submitting an academic policy exception request. For all other termination criteria, the academic



unit will notify the student within two weeks of termination eligibility that the student's performance has reached the threshold for termination, provide notice of the start of the request for exception period, and direct the student to information on submitting an academic policy exception request.

Each academic unit, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Education as applicable, shall publish on their respective university web page the process for initiating an academic policy exception request and the criteria used in their respective reviews. Each academic unit and the Associate Provost for Graduate Education shall also publish on their respective university web pages the process for filing an appeal of an academic policy exception denial. The Associate Provost for Graduate Education is responsible for publishing the criteria used by that office and by the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee during their respective appeal reviews. During the review of any request or appeal, the student may register and enroll in classes.

Once an academic policy exception request or appeal period has expired, or when the student's exception request has been denied by the academic unit, the Associate Provost for Graduate Education, or the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee with no further appeal option, a letter of termination signed on letterhead by the dean or director of the student's academic unit will be sent to the student by mail and email within one week, with an electronic copy provided to the University Registrar. A notification of academic termination will be affixed to the graduate student's official record and the student may then be administratively dropped or withdrawn from currently enrolled classes. See AP.1.3 (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#ap-1-3>) for more information.

Should a student continue:

- in the enrolled degree and/or certificate program or non-degree program, **or**
- change programs within a single college without going through an admissions process

any grades of F or unsatisfactory grades shall count toward reaching the termination threshold as described above.

### **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 take any additional coursework at Mason unless a new graduate program application has been submitted and the applicant has been admitted to graduate study. Time limits for the degree begin with the date of admission to the new program. If the student applies and is readmitted to the same graduate program at Mason from which the student was terminated, dismissed, or resigned, any grades of F or unsatisfactory grades accumulated within six years prior to readmission shall count toward reaching the termination threshold.

Academic units and programs may have additional restrictions concerning readmission. If so, those restrictions apply. Any previously earned credit applied to the new graduate program must have been earned within six years prior to enrollment in the new graduate program. Upon full admission to an alternative graduate program at Mason, any grades of F or unsatisfactory grades accumulated in previous graduate programs at Mason will be excluded and shall not count towards reaching the termination threshold as described in AP.6.6.2.

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

The university offers a number of combined bachelor's and accelerated master's degree programs for academically-strong undergraduates with a commitment to advance their education in a specialized field of study. Admitted students may obtain both a bachelor's and a master's degree after satisfactory completion of at least 138 credits (total number of required credits depends on the requirements of both the undergraduate and graduate programs). Once matriculated into the master's program, students are assessed graduate tuition and are subject to all graduate academic policies as detailed in the University Catalog.

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

Application to accelerated master's degree programs should be made once the student has earned at least 60 credits. The graduate application fee is waived. Admission is competitive and must be approved by the designed administrator(s) or equivalent within both the student's undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

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

After admission and successful completion of 75 undergraduate credits, accelerated master's students shall complete 3 to 12 credits of approved advanced standing graduate courses in their field of study. Students must earn a minimum grade of B in each of the approved graduate courses. These approved advanced standing credits apply to both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. All required graduate course prerequisites must be completed prior to enrollment. Moreover, accelerated master's students, may earn up to 6 additional reserve credits of graduate coursework, while still in undergraduate status. These reserve credits apply to the master's degree program, but do not apply to the undergraduate degree program.

Accelerated pathways totaling less than 150 credits must cover all competencies in both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. In cases where pathways allow for the substitution of undergraduate elective credits by graduate level elective credits, the graduate level elective credits must align with the requirements of the graduate level program while maintaining the breadth of knowledge imparted by the undergraduate degree program.

Each pathway must offer a curated list of courses that are consistent with these requirements and that maintain the integrity of both the undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Completion of the bachelor's accelerated master's degree requires that all university requirements for the master's degree are met, including the institutional credit requirement and graduate time limit to degree requirement. For more information on undergraduate students who want to enroll in graduate courses, see AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates.

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

Accelerated master's students must apply to graduate and have their degree conferred from their undergraduate program in the semester during which their final undergraduate degree requirements are fulfilled. Advanced standing and reserve graduate credit courses must be completed by the semester or term of graduation specified on their transition form (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/>) for the accelerated degree program. Students in the accelerated programs must submit their transition form to their undergraduate local academic unit by the last day to add classes of their final undergraduate semester. Transition forms must be approved by the student's intended graduate program. Students should enroll in the related master's program in the academic semester or summer session that immediately follows the term of undergraduate degree conferral. If students elect to delay enrollment in the chosen

master's program, they can defer for up to one semester following the term of undergraduate degree conferral, subject to the constraints of their master's program. Deferrals and changes to the timeline must be approved by the graduate program director. Students must also adhere to all timelines specified in AP.6.5 and AP.6.9.2.

#### **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 and a maximum of 24 graduate credits.
- Only graduate courses may apply toward the graduate certificate.
- A maximum of 3 graduate credits applied towards a conferred degree at another institution can be transferred into a graduate certificate program. See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Reduction or Transfer for further information.
- More than half of the minimum required credits applied to the certificate must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- In the case of a certificate offered through consortia arrangement, at least one-third of the credits 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 for graduation, which may include no more than 3 credits of C. The GPA calculation excludes transfer credits brought in through AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Reduction or Transfer.
- Certificate students are subject to graduate termination policies.
- Certificate students who satisfy the degree requirements of more than one certificate at Mason may apply coursework from multiple certificates towards a Mason master's or doctoral degree program.  
No credits can be applied to more than two certificates and/or degrees. Program acceptance is subject to all applicable admissions requirements.

#### **AP.6.8.1 Students in Master's or Doctoral Programs also Pursuing Graduate Certificates (Secondary Certificate)**

##### **Admission**

Students must be admitted to the master's or doctoral program and enrolled in active degree-seeking status. All master's and doctoral admission requirements apply. In order for both the degree program and graduate certificate to be conferred at the same time, students must be admitted to the graduate certificate program via an approved Secondary Certificate form prior to applying for graduation. The secondary graduate certificate may be conferred prior to the conferral of the master's or doctoral degree.

##### **Time Limits**

The time limit for certificate conferral coincides 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 degree time limit rules still apply.

#### **Multiple Programs**

Students may be enrolled in one graduate certificate program at a time while they pursue a master's or doctoral degree. Students may share coursework between their primary degree program (master's or doctorate) and secondary graduate certificate. However, as applicable, at least 24 credits of the doctoral degree must be applied only to that degree and/or 6 credits of the master's degree must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate. No credits can be applied to more than two certificates and/or degrees.

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

##### **Admission**

Students pursuing graduate certificate programs must be admitted to Mason through the formal admissions process. Failure to make satisfactory progress (as determined by the academic unit and/or Associate Provost for Graduate Education) toward certificate requirements may result in termination from the certificate program.

Certificate students who earn one or more certificates at Mason may apply coursework from multiple certificates toward a Mason master's or doctoral degree program, if admitted through the formal admissions process. In addition, as applicable, at least 6 credits of the master's degree or at least 24 credits of the doctoral degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program. No credits can be applied to more than two certificates and/or degrees. Program acceptance is subject to all applicable admissions requirements.

##### **Time Limits**

Certificate program students have six (6) years from the date of admission to the graduate certificate program. Individual certificate programs may have stricter time limits, which are published in this catalog. 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. 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 compelling circumstances beyond their control may request an exception to this policy by petitioning their dean for a single extension of time prior to the expiration of their time limit. If any extension is granted the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed seven (7) years. Failure to meet the time limit or to secure approval of an exception to this policy through the process described in AP.6.6.2 shall be considered a failure to make satisfactory academic progress and result in termination from the program. This policy does not supersede a student's university-approved disability services accommodations plan.

#### **Multiple Graduate Certificate 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. Or, students may enroll in multiple certificates consecutively. The graduation application for any graduate certificate must include a minimum of 12 credits that apply only to that certificate and not to another certificate.

### 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 (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/tuition-fees/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.** More than half of the required minimum 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.
- **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 non-degree studies credits not formally approved for the degree.)
- **Unique Credit.** At least 6 credits of the master's degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program. This requirement does not apply to doctoral students also pursuing a first master's degree under AP.6.9.5.

### 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 non-thesis 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 (6) years from the time of first enrollment as a degree-seeking student in the program 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 compelling circumstances beyond their control may request an exception to this policy by petitioning their dean for a single extension of up to one calendar year prior to the expiration of their time limit. Students seeking an extension due to a parental leave of absence (PLOA) should refer to AP.6.4.5. If any extension is granted, the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed seven (7) years. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an exception to this policy through the process

described in AP.6.6.2 shall be considered a failure to make satisfactory academic progress and result in termination from the program under AP.6.6.2. See detailed information (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit/>) regarding how to determine the initial deadline. This policy does not supersede a student's university-approved disability services accommodations plan.

### AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis

When a thesis proposal has been approved by the appropriate unit, the program director/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 must enroll for at least one credit of 799 per semester until the thesis is complete and has been successfully submitted to the library. Such students enrolled for one credit of 799 may be considered in status (either full-time or half-time), if the following requirement is met: the student, advisor, and program director/chair must certify each semester that the student is working full-time or half-time on the thesis, using the form provided by the Office of the University Registrar (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/registrar.gmu.edu>) prior to the first day of classes for the semester. See AP.6.2 Full-time and Half-time Status Classification for more information. **Please note: Master's students must maintain continuous enrollment in 799, excluding summers, each semester until the thesis is complete and has been successfully submitted to the library. Students who are completing their thesis in the summer must be registered for at least 1 credit of 799 in the summer. Graduation candidates who miss the library deadline for thesis submission but do submit successfully before the next semester begins do not have to register for 799 in the next semester. Such students must apply for graduation in order to have their degree conferred.** If satisfactory progress is being made, students registered in 799 are graded IP until work is complete; at that time they are graded S/NC. If progress is unsatisfactory in a semester, a grade of NC will be assigned. When the thesis is completed, a final grade of S or NC is assigned, and previous IP grades are updated by the Office of the University Registrar to reflect the final S or NC grade. If the student voluntarily resigns or is terminated due to time limit, the grade of NC will be assigned. NC credits do not count toward minimum program requirements for 799. Insufficient 799 progress in a semester may impact international student eligibility for Optional Practical Training. Students should confirm their local academic unit's policy regarding the impact of an NC on eligibility for termination (See AP 6.6.2).

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.**

### Committee Size & Composition

The master's thesis committee is composed of at least three members of the graduate faculty, at least one of whom must be from the student's department or program. Faculty who are not members of the graduate faculty or other appropriate persons may serve as additional members provided they are affiliate faculty and hold expertise relevant to the student's field or study.

Committee members are appointed by the chair or director of the academic unit or program, or designee, after consultation with the student's advisor and the student.

The committee formation process requires the approval of the student, all committee members, and their department chair or program director. A committee is considered established only after all individuals have accepted their appointments through the approval workflow required by the student's degree program.

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.

#### 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 (2 years, 5 years, or 10 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. At the time the work is uploaded to MARS and/or ProQuest, the author will receive an email notification, with an official PDF attached, stating that the embargo will begin and end on a certain date, and advising the author that it is his/her responsibility to keep track of the embargo lift date. The author will further be advised that it is his/her responsibility to notify the UDTS Coordinator via email ([udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu)) that he/she wants to lift the embargo prior to the termination date, or that he/she wants to renew the embargo (or institute a new limit). In the form, the author will also be advised that he/she should retain this form and place it in the care of his/her attorney, next of kin, or other appropriate designee. In case of death, incapacity, or other similar circumstance, it is up to the author's estate, power of attorney, or other appropriate designee to ensure that the embargo continues.

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 of the student's college/school at the time of the extension request. Students can request a renewal period of 2 years, 5 years, or 10 years. 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.

Theses embargoed for any period will be accessible electronically on-campus in Special Collections UNLESS the student/author can provide evidence that the document should NOT be reviewed for a certain period. Permission to restrict access on-campus for such period or fully may be granted by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education. Only under extreme circumstances will a student's work be considered by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education for such an embargo. A student must have proof that publication of his/her work poses a danger to themselves, national security, or similar scenario.

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. The institutional credits requirement 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 each program component of the dual master's programs derives from the admission date for that program component. A degree for each program component shall be conferred upon completion based upon student application for graduation. Students shall have a degree GPA for each program component.

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. The application 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.
- A restricted number of credits may be shared across dual degree programs. See University Policy 3007 (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/dual-degree-program-arrangements/>) to determine the maximum number of credits that may be shared across component degree programs.
- Credit may be shared across two programs only. Credit may never be applied to three or more programs. See University Policy 3007 for more information on credit-sharing limitations.
- An Individualized Dual Master's Degree Program of Study form (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/DMPS-Dual-Masters-Program-of-Study-May-2021-FINAL.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. Credits that are shared between programs may need an approved Substitution/Waiver form signed by the appropriate Academic Affairs Office.

## 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.** At least 24 credits of the doctoral degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program.

- **Institutional Credit.** More than half of the required minimum credits 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, at least one-third of the credits applied to the doctoral degree must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- **Advancement to Candidacy.** Candidates must meet the written and/or oral doctoral candidacy requirements set by the candidate's degree program.
- **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 non-degree 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 in the program 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 beyond their control may request an exception to this policy by petitioning their dean for a single extension of one calendar year prior to the expiration of the time limit. Students seeking an extension due to parental leave of absence (PLoA) are referred to AP.6.4.5. If any extension is granted, the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed ten (10) years. Any extension of the time limit to advance to candidacy that is granted does not automatically alter the total time limit for degree completion. Re-enrollment 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 exception to this policy through the process described in AP.6.6.2 shall be considered a failure to make satisfactory academic progress and result in termination from the program under AP.6.6.2. See detailed information (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit/>) regarding how to determine the initial deadline. This policy does not supersede a student's university-approved disability services accommodations plan.

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. Advancement to candidacy requires successful completion of a written and/or oral requirement as set by the candidate's degree 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

The Dissertation Committee provides guidance and oversight of the student's dissertation research, writing, and defense. This committee may also function as the program committee, facilitating the design and approval of the student's program of study, conducting required examinations, and regularly assessing the student's progress and accomplishments.

It is expected that all individuals serving on a student's committee will be available throughout the student's degree until completion. Individuals who become unable to serve in their roles should notify the Dissertation Committee Chair, the student, other committee members, and the relevant program director as soon as possible.

Committee selections are initiated by the student after consultation with their proposed Chair. The committee formation process requires the approval of the student, all committee members, and their department chair or program director. A committee is considered established only after all individuals have accepted their appointments through the approval workflow required by the student's degree program.

#### Committee Size and Composition

**Committee Size:** Doctoral candidates must have a Dissertation Committee made up of a Chair and at least two other members (Member #1, Member #2). Active Graduate Faculty status is required at the time of appointment for any position requiring Graduate Faculty status.

**Committee Chairs:** Full-time faculty members at George Mason University may serve as Dissertation Committee Chairs as long as they are members of the Graduate Faculty, they are members of the core faculty for the student's degree program, and they possess expertise relevant to the student's field of study. Full-time term or administrative / professional faculty members at George Mason University may serve as Dissertation Committee Chairs as long as they are members of the Mason Graduate Faculty. Graduate Faculty status is detailed in AP.6.12 Graduate Faculty.

If the Chair of a Dissertation Committee leaves the university, retires, goes on leave (that removes them from full-time status), or becomes otherwise unavailable during the student's course of study, a new Chair must be appointed. It is expected that a new committee will be formed within one semester of a Chair becoming unavailable. The previous individual may continue their committee service as a Co-chair if they hold the necessary status.

**Committee Co-chairs:** Some programs may permit a committee Co-chair. The only requirement for service as Co-Chair is Mason Graduate Faculty Status. The Co-chair designee may count as Member #1 or Member #2 if they meet all requirements.

**Committee Members on Dissertation Committees:** Member #1 of the dissertation committee is required to be full-time Mason Faculty, a member of Mason's Graduate Faculty, and hold expertise and credentials relevant to the student's field of study.

Member #2 of the dissertation committee is required to be a member of Mason's Graduate Faculty and hold expertise and appropriate credentials relevant to the student's field of study.

Member #3, if required by the program, must be a member of Mason's Graduate Faculty, and hold expertise relevant to the student's field of study. It is encouraged for this member to come from outside the program's core faculty.

Additional members may be added to the committee, provided they are affiliate faculty and hold expertise relevant to the student's field of study.

All committee members are required to hold suitable academic training and research experience as well as an appropriate terminal degree. This credentialing is established through the attainment of Graduate Faculty status, detailed in AP.6.12 Graduate Faculty. Only individuals that hold Graduate Faculty status are eligible to approve degree milestones, such as the comprehensive exam, advancement to candidacy, and the final dissertation defense.

**Changes to Dissertation Committee:** Students may request changes to the composition of their Dissertation Committee at any time. Changes involving the chair or co-chair, including moving a committee member into or out of a chair or co-chair role, require the approval of the Program Director and all committee members. Changes only involving committee members other than the Chair or Co-Chair require at least the approval of the committee chair and the Program Director.

If changes in faculty status result in a committee that no longer meets the established minimum requirements for the university or program, no additional degree milestones may be completed or approved until

the Committee has been reformed or membership requirements have otherwise been met.

#### Additional Requirements

Individual programs may have more restrictive policies. If so, those restrictions apply. Students are referred to their degree program for more information.

#### Committee Structure

Membership	Minimum Required Attributes
<b>Chair</b> (required member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time Mason Faculty</li> <li>• Mason Graduate Faculty</li> <li>• Member of the program's core faculty</li> <li>• Expertise related to student's field of study</li> </ul>
<b>Member #1</b> (required member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time Mason Faculty in any Mason LAU</li> <li>• Mason Graduate Faculty</li> <li>• Expertise related to student's field of study</li> </ul>
<b>Member #2</b> (required member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mason Graduate Faculty</li> <li>• Expertise related to student's field of study</li> </ul>
<b>Member #3</b> (if required by program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mason Graduate Faculty</li> <li>• Expertise related to student's field of study</li> </ul>
<b>Co-chair</b> (if present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mason Graduate faculty</li> </ul>
<b>Additional members</b> (if present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mason Affiliate Faculty</li> <li>• Expertise related to student's field of study</li> </ul>

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

Students must register for a minimum of 3 credits of 999 in their first semester (excluding summers) of dissertation research. After that semester, students must enroll for at least one credit of 999 per semester until they have completed the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999 required by the university and their degree program, and the dissertation is complete and has been successfully submitted to the library. See AP.6.2 Full-time and Half-time Classification for more information. If satisfactory progress is being made, 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. If progress is unsatisfactory in a semester, a grade of NC will be assigned. When the dissertation is completed, a final grade of S or NC is assigned, and previous IP grades are updated by the Office of the University Registrar to reflect the final S or NC grade. If the student voluntarily resigns or is terminated due to time limit, the grade of NC will be assigned. NC credits do not count toward minimum program requirements for 999. Insufficient 999 progress in a semester may impact international student eligibility for Optional Practical Training. Students should confirm their local academic unit's policy regarding the impact of an NC on eligibility for termination (see AP 6.6.2).

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 the dissertation is complete and has been successfully submitted to the library, 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 successfully before the next semester begins, do not have to register for 999 in that next semester, but must apply for graduation in order to have their degree conferred.

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 to hold a defense is given by the doctoral dissertation committee, coordinating with the program director/chair. 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 and program director/chair.

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 (2 years, 5 years, or 10 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. At the time the work is uploaded to MARS and/or ProQuest, the author will receive an email notification, with an official PDF attached, stating that the embargo will begin and end on a certain date, and advising the author that it is his/her responsibility to keep track of the embargo lift date. The author will further be advised that it is his/her responsibility to notify the UDTS Coordinator via email ([udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu)) that he/she wants to lift the embargo prior to the termination date, or that he/she wants to renew the embargo (or institute a new limit). In the form, the author will also be advised that he/she should retain this form and place it in the care of his/her attorney, next of kin, or other appropriate designee. In case of death, incapacity, or other similar circumstance, it is up to the author's estate, power of attorney, or other appropriate designee to ensure that the embargo continues.

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 of the student's college/school at the time of the extension request. Students can request a renewal period of 2 years, 5 years, or 10 years. 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.

Dissertations embargoed for any period will be accessible electronically on-campus in Special Collections UNLESS the student/author can provide evidence that the document should NOT be reviewed for a certain period. Permission to restrict access on-campus for such period or fully

may be granted by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education. Only under extreme circumstances will a student's work be considered by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education for such an embargo. A student must have proof that publication of his/her work poses a danger to themselves, national security, or similar scenario.

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/)). 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 body focused on matters of graduate education at George Mason University in compliance with the policies and practices set forth by George Mason University and its relevant governing bodies. It is the purpose of the Graduate Council to promote excellence and ensure quality and consistency across all graduate programs at George Mason University. The Graduate Council, through the Graduate Council Chair, advises and recommends to the Provost academic and admissions policies affecting graduate education at George Mason University including: setting minimum academic and admissions standards for all graduate programs (degrees, certificates) and academic pathways; review and approval of new graduate courses and programs (degrees, certificates) and academic pathways; reviewing and approving modified graduate programs (degrees, certificates) and academic pathways; reviewing and approving discontinued graduate programs (degrees, certificates) and academic pathways; reviewing of modified graduate courses and discontinued graduate courses; planning and facilitating the attainment of graduate education strategic goals; developing practices to enhance the graduate student experience; and ensuring compliance with accreditation requirements in each of the responsibilities named. The Office of the Provost administers university graduate academic and admissions policies.

### AP.6.12 Graduate Faculty

There are two types of graduate faculty at George Mason University, active and legacy, graduate faculty. Individuals attain active graduate status through their rank as tenured or tenure-track Mason faculty members or through a nomination process. Once active, graduate faculty status applies across the institution. A list of active graduate faculty will be maintained by the Office of the Provost.

Mason tenured and tenure-track faculty are automatically granted active graduate faculty status upon employment. They maintain that status throughout their employment as tenure-line faculty, unless explicitly designated otherwise. Administrative service does not affect the active graduate faculty status of tenured or tenure-track faculty.

Each local academic unit that administers graduate degrees may, at its discretion and at any time, nominate individuals that hold a terminal degree for active graduate faculty status. These individuals may be Mason employees or individuals external to the university. Through this process, active graduate faculty status will be granted for a term of three years unless explicitly designated shorter. The process to nominate individuals for active graduate faculty status is coordinated through the Office of the Provost. Individuals, who are within a year or less of their active graduate faculty status expiring, may be renewed through the same process. Local academic units, with approval of their Dean, may rescind graduate faculty status for individuals that they nominated.

If active graduate faculty status lapses due to retirement, separation, or expiration of a term of active graduate faculty status, the individual may move into legacy graduate faculty status. As a legacy graduate faculty member, the individual maintains their ability to serve on student committees on which they are already a member, but they may not be added to new committees (or re-added to existing committees if removed). In cases of separation of tenured and tenure-track faculty, the terms of the separation will indicate if the individual receives legacy graduate faculty status. In cases of individuals nominated for graduate

faculty status, the nominating local academic unit determines their eligibility for legacy graduate faculty status at the time of nomination. Local academic units may impose additional restrictions on eligibility for legacy graduate faculty status.

Individuals may, at any time, resign from graduate faculty status, active or legacy, and such resignations are considered permanent. Individuals in legacy graduate faculty status are removed from status once the students whose committees they serve on have either (i) graduated, (ii) resigned, (iii) been terminated, (iv) become inactive, or (v) have reformed their committees without the individual in question.