

AP.6 GRADUATE POLICIES

AP.6 Graduate Policies

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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.6.1.2 Continuous Registration Requirement

All graduate students in a master's or doctoral degree program must register and pay associated tuition and fees each term, including summer if required by the program, until the degree is awarded. Graduate students who register for one 7.5- or 8-week session within a term fulfill the requirement. Graduate students enrolled in 799 and 999 should refer to AP.6.9.3 and AP.6.10.6 respectively for additional stipulations. All graduate students must have active registration status in the term of graduation. A graduate student is ultimately responsible for registering or requesting the appropriate leave.

A master's or doctoral degree student who does not register and who has not requested and received a Leave of Absence or Permission to Study Elsewhere will be notified by the University Registrar two business weeks before the first day of classes that they must register for the upcoming semester. If the student does not register, they must request permission to re-enroll in accordance with the guidelines outlined in AP.6.4.3.

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 or Transfer 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. In accordance with AP.1.2 (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#ap-1-2>), the maximum number of credits a graduate degree-seeking student may take per semester is 12 while the maximum for a Non-Degree Graduate student is 11. Students must obtain permission from their local academic unit prior to registering for more than the maximum allowable credits

in a semester unless enrolled in a graduate program or pathway that requires registration above the maximum. Graduate degree-seeking and Non-Degree Graduate students in programs or pathways that require registration for more than the maximum allowable credits in one or more semesters are notified of the requirement by the program or pathway in their letter of admission. Graduate programs and pathways that exceed the maximum allowable credits in one or more terms are also noted in the university catalog.

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.

If the student intends to transfer credits earned in a non-degree status toward a Mason degree or certificate, the credits must be approved on a Transfer of Credit form (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/graduate/>). A maximum of 12 non-degree credits can be applied toward a degree or certificate program. However, all students must enroll in at least one credit after admission to the certificate or degree program. Graduate credits taken in non-degree status may not count towards more than two earned Mason certificates and/or degrees. See AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits for further requirements.

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 master's and doctoral degree students who have not enrolled in at least 1 credit for one or more consecutive semesters at Mason and do not have a university approved leave or permission to study elsewhere. Students in a graduate certificate program must obtain permission to re-enroll in a program after not enrolling in at least 1 credit 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 (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/graduate/>) is available from the Office of the University Registrar.

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 semester or two 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-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 the 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.6.4.6 Graduate Student General Leave of Absence

A graduate student may experience life events that negatively impact the student's time and capacity to devote to their educational program. All graduate students in a master's or doctoral degree program who have been registered for at least one term or equivalent for their academic program and are in good standing are eligible to take a General Leave of Absence (GLA) from their program. Students who need to take a leave due to becoming parents should refer to AP.6.4.5 Parental Leave of Absence. Students who need to take a leave due to U.S. military service should refer to the Military Activation Policy (<https://military.gmu.edu/military-mason/military-activation-policy/>). Students who need to take a leave prior to their first term of enrollment should refer to the deferral policy.

Specifications:

A GLA is taken, at a minimum, one term at a time and cannot exceed a total of one year taken over the course of a student's program. Students whose expected leave will extend beyond the maximum time should resign from their program and reapply when capable of returning to active graduate study. A GLA cannot be while in an active term, for a term that has already ended, or in the last term prior to a student's planned degree conferral or time-to-degree deadline. Students needing to leave during an active term should refer to AP.1.5 Withdrawal (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#ap-1-5>). Any time taken for a Medical Leave of Absence or Parental Leave of Absence is counted towards the one-year GLA limit.

The student's time limit to degree completion, as applicable under AP.6.9 and AP.6.10, will be extended to include the length of an approved GLA. Use of this policy may be considered in the review of any exception requests and appeals for the time limit to degree completion policy.

Notification:

The GLA process is initiated by the graduate student submitting a GLA request form to their program contact prior to the start of the term for which they want to take a leave. See here (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-leave-absence/>) for information on the procedures for completing a GLA request. Once the form has been processed, the Office of the University Registrar notifies the student, degree program, and college or school. A graduate student

is not considered to be on an official leave unless they have received the notification from the University Registrar. The student is responsible for any required notification of entities external to Mason, such as fellowship agencies or employer subsidy programs.

Expectations:

A student may not register for any courses at Mason, nor at any other institution, while on a GLA. Students are not required nor expected to conduct academic work or research towards degree requirements during the GLA. 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. Students on a GLA are not registered; therefore, some university services and resources may no longer be available while on leave, including Mason student health insurance. Contact Student Health Services# for more information.

Return:

Any student on a GLA who does not obtain an extension or return and register by the add/drop deadline in the term after the approved time period that a GLA expires should refer to AP6.4.3 for guidance regarding their return. The student will still have their time limit to degree continue, and the continuous registration requirements stated in AP6.1.2 still apply.

Extension Request:

Students wishing to extend their GLA and who have not yet reached the one-year limit must request an extension by completing a new formal request for a GLA a minimum of four weeks prior to the beginning of the term for which they would otherwise return from leave. A student who does not meet the deadline and is still eligible for an extension should consult the G (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-academic-exceptions/>) graduate Academic Exceptions process.

Other Provisions:

Students receiving financial aid should consult with the Mason Student Services Center# to determine any financial impact before a GLA request form is submitted. When contemplating a leave of absence, graduate students are advised to consult with the sources of any funding to determine whether a leave may involve a long-term financial loss. Per university policy, non-enrolled students, including those on a GLA, may not continue to hold any existing university funded assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, or any employment at the university that is dependent on student status. However, they may be rehired upon return at the discretion of the funding authority and in compliance with all applicable university policies and procedures. As academic programs and financial aid packages may be constructed and sequenced over a period of years, individual interruptions to the normal sequence of academic progress and scheduled employment may result in a loss of future funding and a slower time to completion of degree. 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 departments to address such issues before deciding whether to submit a GLA request form.

Students on or applying for a Change of Status to an F-1 or J-1 visa must first consult with the Office of International Programs and Services# to discuss the impact of such a leave on the student's status in the United States.

AP6.4.7 Graduate Student Medical Leave of Absence

A medical leave provides graduate students the time and space to prioritize their physical and mental health in order to manage a medical condition that prevents a student from remaining enrolled. All graduate students in a degree or graduate certificate program are eligible to request a Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA). Students who need to take a leave due to becoming parents should refer to AP6.4.5 Parental Leave of Absence. Students who need to take a leave prior to their first term of enrollment should refer to the deferral (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/#text>) policy.

Specifications:

An MLOA is taken, at a minimum, one term at a time and cannot exceed a total of two years over the course of a student's program. An MLOA that extends beyond an academic year will only be approved in exceptional circumstances; if the absence will exceed a total of two consecutive academic years, the student should resign from the program and reapply when capable of returning to active graduate study. An MLOA cannot be for a term that has already ended. Any time taken for an MLOA is counted towards the one-year limit of a GLA (e.g., one semester of MLOA counts as one semester of GLA).

The student's time limit to degree completion, as applicable under AP6.8, AP6.9, and AP6.10, will be extended to include the length of an approved MLOA. Use of this policy may be considered in the review of any exception requests and appeals for the time limit to degree completion policy.

Notifications:

Requests for an MLOA are initiated by contacting the Graduate Division. See here (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-leave-absence/>) for information on the procedures for completing an MLOA request. Upon completion of the MLOA request process, the Graduate Division will notify the student, University Registrar, the student's college or school, and graduate program. The student is responsible for any required notification of entities external to Mason, such as fellowship agencies or employer subsidy programs.

Expectations:

A student may not register for courses at Mason while on an MLOA. 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. Students on an MLOA are not registered; therefore, some university services and resources may no longer be available while on leave, including Mason student health insurance. Contact Student Health Services# for more information.

Return:

Any student on an MLOA who does not obtain an extension or return and register by the add/drop deadline in the term after the approved time period that an MLOA expires should refer to AP6.4.3 for guidance regarding their return. The student will still have their time limit to degree continue, and the continuous registration requirements stated in AP6.1.2 still apply. Students returning from an MLOA are strongly encouraged to contact the Graduate Division before their return.

Extension Request:

Students wishing to extend their MLOA and who do not require an exception to do so must initiate a formal request for an extension by contacting the Graduate Division a minimum of six weeks prior to the

beginning of the term for which they would otherwise return from leave. A student who does not meet the deadline or requires an exception to extend their MLoA should consult the process for an exception request outlined below.

Exception Request:

The Graduate Division shall review and approve any student requests for an exception to the requirements of this policy, including requests to extend such leave beyond an academic year. If an exception to this policy is desired, see the Graduate Academic Exceptions (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-academic-exceptions/>) web page for further information. Should a student's MLoA policy exception request be denied, the student shall have one level of appeal to the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee (GAAC). See the Graduate Academic Exceptions (<https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-academic-exceptions/>) web page for more information.

Other Provisions:

Students receiving financial aid should consult with the Mason Student Services Center (<https://mssc.gmu.edu/>) to determine any financial impact of the MLoA. When contemplating a leave of absence, graduate students are advised to consult with the sources of their funding to determine whether a leave may involve a long-term financial loss. Per university policy, non-enrolled students, including those on an MLoA, may not continue to hold any existing university funded assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, or any employment at the university that is dependent on student status. However, they may be rehired upon return at the discretion of the funding authority and in compliance with all applicable university policies and procedures. As academic programs and financial aid packages may be constructed and sequenced over a period of years, individual interruptions to the normal sequence of academic progress and scheduled employment may result in a loss of future funding and a slower time to completion of degree. This policy does not address any employment, scholarships, or fellowships that are funded by entities external to the university.

Students on or applying for a Change of Status to an F-1 or J-1 visa must consult with the Office of International Programs and Services (<https://oips.gmu.edu/>) to discuss the impact of such a leave on the student's status in the United States.

AP.6.5 Credit by Exam 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 Transfer of Credits

Relevant graduate credits earned from an institution accredited by a Mason-recognized accrediting agency, earned at another institution and recommended for graduate credit by the American Council on Education, earned as a former Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degree student, or earned at Mason in non-degree graduate student status may be transferred towards doctoral or master's degree or certificate program requirements in accordance with the requirements set forth below. Transferred graduate courses earned at another institution count only as credit hours and are not included in the calculation of the Mason cumulative or degree GPA.

Graduate credits earned at Mason in graduate status can be used to fulfill a subsequent Mason graduate degree or certificate program requirement,

as specified in the University Catalog. If shared with a subsequent graduate program, these credits are included in the calculation of the cumulative and degree GPA, and do not require a transfer of credits. Any request for exclusion of such credits must be submitted by the local academic unit (LAU) within one year of the student's enrollment as an admitted student in the subsequent graduate program. Doctoral students must still provide a program of study. See AP.6.10.3 for further information.

This policy does not supersede the requirements under University Policy Number 3007 Dual Degree Program Arrangements (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/dual-degree-program-arrangements/>) which includes dual master's and dual (secondary) master's/doctoral program arrangements.

Mason undergraduate students attempting to earn Mason graduate course credit for use towards a graduate program are referred to AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees or AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#ap-1-4-4v/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#ap-1-4-4v>), as appropriate.

In all transfer of credit applications:

- graduate credits may not count towards more than two earned Mason degrees and/or certificates.
- no more than 12 graduate credits may count towards both an undergraduate degree and a graduate degree or certificate.
- no more than 12 non-degree credits may count towards a Mason degree or certificate.

AP.6.5.2.1 General Requirements

The credits accepted for transfer may include those used for a previously earned degree or certificate program. In all cases, students must meet the institutional credits requirement and any applicable unique credits requirement for their program.

The transfer credit(s) must have been:

- graduate level courses at the institution where the student took the courses,
- earned as an admitted degree-seeking or as a non-degree status student,
- graded a minimum of B- or higher,
- earned within ten years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the specific certificate or degree program.

Courses graded 'pass/fail' or 'satisfactory/no credit' are acceptable for transfer credit if the grade is pass or satisfactory. Graduate courses from another university that follow another non-standard grading format will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to meet Mason graduate degree requirements.

Any transfer of credits to a Mason graduate degree or certificate should occur no later than:

- One semester after admission to the specific Mason certificate program; or
- One year after admission to the specific master's degree program; or
- Two years after admission to the specific doctoral program.

In all cases, the transfer of credits must be completed prior to the student applying for graduation from the specific graduate certificate or degree

program. Application of transferred graduate credits toward required degree or certificate credits requires the approval of the LAU. The LAU, in compliance with all applicable academic policies, will determine if the credits are relevant and applicable to the current degree program or certificate. Transfer credit can only be given for those credits that are applicable toward a comparable degree or certificate at the institution that offered the courses. Extension and in-service courses not intended by the institution offering the courses to be applied to a degree or certificate program are not eligible for transfer credit toward graduate degree or certificate programs at Mason.

Note that LAUs may have more restrictive policies and requirements. Appeals of transfer of credit decisions are not reviewed beyond the college or school's leadership unit.

AP.6.5.2.2 Transfer of Credits earned at another institution

The number of transferred credits earned at another institution cannot exceed one credit less than half of the maximum number of credits required by the doctoral or master's degree or certificate program.

Students must supply official transcripts and other information as requested. Official transcripts are required before any transfer of credits can be approved by the LAU. 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. The acceptance of transfer credits 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.

AP.6.5.2.3 Other Provisions

All students transferring credits must enroll in at least one credit after admission to the certificate or degree program.

Doctoral students completing a secondary master's degree must indicate on their program of study which courses apply to the doctoral degree.

For further information, as applicable, see AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees, AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees, AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates and/or AP.6.4.1 Non-degree Student Status.

AP.6.5.3 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 ten 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. 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. Students must earn a minimum grade of B- in each approved graduate course, although LAUs may require a higher minimum. Students who earn unsatisfactory grades in any approved graduate course or who fail to attain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average by the time of undergraduate degree conferral may not be admitted to the master's program through the accelerated degree program pathway. Students may file a new admissions application to the master's program and, after admission and enrollment, request a transfer of credits for any graduate coursework previously taken as an undergraduate student. See AP.6.5.2 for further information.

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 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 and timely filing an updated transition form. Such deferrals 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. Students who fail to follow the above timeline requirements shall not be admitted to the master's program through the accelerated degree program pathway. Students may file a new admissions application to the master's program and, after admission and enrollment, request a transfer of credits for any graduate coursework previously taken as an undergraduate student. See AP.6.5.2 for further information.

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.
- Credits can be transferred into a graduate certificate program. See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam 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 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, both full-time and part-time, have six (6) calendar years, from their admit term, to complete their program. Individual certificate programs may have stricter time limits, which are published in this catalog. Time limit calculation is based on the student's admit term plus the applicable number of years. Students are responsible for knowing their time limits. See detailed information (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit/>) regarding how to determine time limits. Absences from Mason do not affect the time limit established by the student's admit term.

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 or director for a single extension up to one calendar year prior to the expiration of their time limit. 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 under AP.6.6.2. AP.6.8.2 does not supersede a student's university-approved disability services accommodations plan.

International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) for information. 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) at least 30 days before the end date of their F or J Certifying Document (forms I-20 or DS-2019) issued by George Mason University. Documentation of the compelling circumstances necessitating the extension request is required by federal regulations. For further information, please consult with an advisor in OIPS.

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.6.8.4 Certificate to Master's Bridge Program Overview

The university offers Certificate to Master's bridge programs for individuals with baccalaureate degrees who need additional preparation to successfully matriculate into a master's program. Admitted students may obtain both a graduate certificate and master's degree after satisfactory completion of certificate program and master's degree requirements.

AP.6.8.4.1 Application and Admission

Application to a bridge program must be made in accordance with all specific graduate certificate program admission timelines (<https://itsapps.gmu.edu/graduate-deadlines-and-requirements/>), requirements, and procedures. Applicants must meet all general university graduate admission eligibility requirements (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/#text>) including having earned a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in baccalaureate study. Individual academic programs may have additional graduate certificate to master's program admission requirements. Please refer to Mason Graduate Admissions (<https://www.gmu.edu/graduate/apply/>) page to determine if an **English Proficiency examination** is required.

Students who are invited to join a Certificate to Master's bridge program will initially be admitted to the respective Certificate program. Upon conferral of the certificate and achievement of the bridge program standards, the student will then be admitted to the Master's degree program of their respective bridge program for the following academic semester. The application form and fee for the Master's degree program is waived. Students currently enrolled in a Master's program at Mason are ineligible for a bridge program and should consult AP.6.8.1 for guidance.

AP.6.8.4.2 Coursework Requirements for Certificate and Master's Components

Bridge program students shall fulfill all program requirements and comply with university policies and procedures in completing the certificate and Master's degree programs. Students must meet all curricular requirements for each component of the bridge program as outlined in AP.6.8 and AP.6.9. Individual programs may have stricter requirements, and students may be required to retake courses in Master's status.

Students may only enroll in one bridge program at a time; however, students may enroll in one additional certificate program while pursuing the certificate component of their bridge program. Credit restriction and curricular requirements outlined in AP.6.8 still apply. Students enrolled in the Master's component of their bridge program who wish to enroll in a certificate program should consult AP.6.8.1 for guidance.

AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements

Bridge program students must apply to graduate (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/graduation/process/>) and have their certificate conferred in the semester during which their final certificate requirements are fulfilled in accordance with all deadlines. Any certificate courses that the student plans to apply towards the Master's component must be completed by the semester or term of graduation specified on their transition form for the bridge program, be graded B- or better, and be aligned with the respective Master's degree program requirements. Students in bridge programs must submit their transition form to their graduate academic affairs office by the deadline to apply to graduate from their certificate program. Students must enroll in the related Master's program in the academic semester or summer session that immediately follows the term of certificate program conferral. Changes to the progression timeline must be approved by the graduate program director. Students must also adhere to all timelines specified in AP.6.5, AP.6.8.2, and AP.6.9.2. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services (<https://oips.gmu.edu/>) for information.

Once matriculated into the Master's program, all students must continue to adhere to all applicable graduate academic policies as detailed in the University Catalog.

Certificate Conferral

Students who successfully complete all program requirements within university time limits will have their certificate conferred for the semester in which they have met all certificate requirements and after completing their application for graduation. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services (<https://oips.gmu.edu/>) for information.

Master's Conferral

Students who have successfully completed all degree requirements within the university time limits will have their Master's conferred after completing their application for graduate. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services (<https://oips.gmu.edu/>) for information.

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, which may be decreased on the basis of suitable, approved transfer work. (See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam or Transfer)
- **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, both full-time and part-time, have six (6) calendar years, from their admit term for the program, to complete their degrees. Individual master's programs may have stricter time limits, which are published in this catalog. Time limit calculation is based on the student's admit term plus the applicable number of years. Students are responsible for knowing their time limits. See detailed information (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit/>) regarding how to determine the initial deadline. Absences from Mason do not affect the time limit established by the student's admit term.

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 or director 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 permitted leave of absence are referred to AP.6.4.5, AP.6.4.6, and AP.6.4.7. Failure to meet the applicable 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. AP.6.9.2 does not supersede a student's university-approved disability services accommodations plan.

International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) for information. 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) at least 30 days before the end date of their F or J Certifying Document (forms I-20 or DS-2019) issued by George Mason University. 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.6.9.3 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, unless on a Leave of Absence, 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 (<https://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, with the exception of terms in which a student is on a Leave of Absence. 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

A thesis student is required to submit their thesis to University Dissertation and Thesis Services (UDTS) for upload to the Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS) and ProQuest. UDTS facilitates completion of requirements and submission of dissertations, theses, and graduate-level projects. All thesis submission procedures related to degree conferral in each semester and consistent with policy are defined by UDTS. This encompasses all stated deadlines including, but not limited to, any for the required format review and final submission. For further information, consult the UDTS website (<https://library.gmu.edu/udts/>).

Once a student has submitted the final (i.e. successfully defended, formatted, and signed) version of their project, thesis, or dissertation to UDTS, subsequent edits will not be allowed except under the following circumstances:

1. A formatting error has been introduced into the document when converting from one document type to another during the UDTS submission process that substantively affects the meaning of the thesis. For example, if equations or special symbols or tables have been deleted or reconfigured in a way that the meaning has been substantively lost or altered, then those corrections alone are permitted.
2. Incidence of fraud or plagiarism is detected. The relevant college/school must conduct a review of the thesis and determine an appropriate course of action in accordance with the university catalog and approved by the Dean or designee of the college/school. The UDTS Coordinator must be informed in writing by the Dean or designee of the college/school of the approved course of action.

Under circumstances determined by the student's school, college, and/or program, a student may, in accordance with University Dissertation and Thesis Services (UDTS) procedures, submit a signed petition to embargo, i.e. delay, all or part of their thesis, preventing online and on-campus access to it for a period of time (2 years, 5 years, or 10 years). All petitions are subject to the policies of the student's college/school and/or program and some may not permit a student to embargo their work. Both the student's thesis chair or program designee, and the graduate associate dean of the school/college must approve the student's petition in writing in accordance with UDTS procedures. Each program and college/school shall publish on their respective university webpage whether they permit a student to embargo their work and, if

so, the criteria used in their respective reviews. Initial embargo request decisions are not reviewed beyond the college or school's leadership unit. All embargo petitions will be retained by UDTS.

If the student wishes to extend the embargo past the thesis's initial release date, the student is required to secure the approval of the graduate associate dean of the student's college/school and the Graduate Division in the Office of the Provost at the time of the extension request. Students can request a renewal period of 2 years, 5 years, or 10 years. Each college/school and the Graduate Division shall publish on their respective university webpage the process for initiating an embargo extension request and the criteria used in their respective reviews. UDTS will retain a copy of the student petition and confirm to the student and graduate associate dean the decision and any applicable new thesis release date. Renewal embargo request decisions are not reviewed beyond the Graduate Division.

Authors who wish to lift an embargo prior to the established termination date must notify the UDTS Coordinator. In the 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.

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 transfer of credits based on a previously earned relevant post-baccalaureate degree earned prior to admission. Any transfer 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 Mason programs only. Credit may never be applied to three or more Mason 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 decreased on the basis of suitable, approved transfer work. (See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam 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 complete their degree will not exceed nine (9) calendar years from the

student's admit term for the program. Individual doctoral programs may have stricter time limits, which are published in this catalog. Doctoral students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree and must advance to candidacy within six (6) calendar years, although colleges and schools may set a shorter time limit. Time limit calculation is based on the semester or summer admit term plus the applicable number of years. Students are responsible for knowing their time limits. See detailed information regarding how to determine all initial deadlines. Absences from Mason do not affect the time limit established by the admit term.

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 or director for a single extension of up to one calendar year prior to the expiration of the applicable time limit. Students seeking an extension due to a permitted leave of absence are referred to AP.6.4.5, AP.6.4.6, and AP.6.4.7. Any extension of the time limit to advance to candidacy that is granted does not automatically alter the total time limit for degree completion. Failure to meet the applicable 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 regarding how to determine the initial deadline. AP.6.10.1 does not supersede a student's university-approved disability services accommodations plan.

International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) for information. 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) at least 30 days before the end date of their F or J Certifying Document (forms I-20 or DS-2019) issued by George Mason University. 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
Chair (required member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time Mason Faculty member
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mason Graduate Faculty
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the program's core faculty
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise related to student's field of study

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

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, unless on a Leave of Absence, 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 and terms in which the student is on a Leave of Absence. 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 Embargo

Doctoral students are required to submit their dissertations to University Dissertation and Thesis Services (UDTS) for upload to the Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS) and ProQuest. Doctoral students must also complete a Survey of Earned Doctorates.

UDTS facilitates completion of requirements and submission of dissertations, theses, and graduate-level projects. All dissertation submission procedures related to degree conferral in each semester and consistent with this policy are defined by UDTS. This encompasses all stated deadlines including, but not limited to, any for the required format

review and final submission. For further information, consult the UDTS website (<https://library.gmu.edu/udts/>).

Once a student has submitted the final (i.e. successfully defended, formatted, and signed) version of their dissertation to UDTS, subsequent edits will not be allowed except under the following circumstances:

1. A formatting error has been introduced into the document when converting from one document type to another during the UDTS submission process that substantively affects the meaning of the dissertation. For example, if equations or special symbols or tables have been deleted or reconfigured in a way that the meaning has been substantively lost or altered then those corrections alone are permitted.
2. Incidence of fraud or plagiarism is detected. The relevant college/school must conduct a review of the dissertation and determine an appropriate course of action in accordance with the university catalog and approved by the Dean or designee of the college/school. The UDTS Coordinator must be informed in writing by the Dean or designee of the college/school of the approved course of action.

Under circumstances determined by the student's school, college, and/or program, a student may, in accordance with University Dissertation and Thesis Services (UDTS) procedures, submit a signed petition to embargo, i.e. delay, all or part of their dissertation, preventing online and on-campus access to it for a period of time (2 years, 5 years, or 10 years). All petitions are subject to the policies of the student's college/school and/or program and some may not permit a student to embargo their work. Both the student's dissertation chair or program designee, and the graduate associate dean of the school/college must approve the student's petition in writing and in accordance with UDTS procedures. Each program and college/school shall publish on their respective university webpage whether they permit a student to embargo their work and, if so, the criteria used in their respective reviews. Initial embargo request decisions are not reviewed beyond the college or school's leadership unit.

All embargo petitions will be retained by UDTS. The student, as well as the college/school's associate dean, will be provided written confirmation of the new dissertation release date by UDTS. Once the embargo period has passed, dissertations will be made available for online access as well as on-campus.

If the student wishes to extend the embargo past the dissertation's initial release date, the student is required to secure the approval of the graduate associate dean of the student's college/school and the Graduate Division in the Office of the Provost. The student must submit a signed renewal request, in accordance with UDTS procedures that may include a stated deadline. Students can request a renewal period of 2 years, 5 years, or 10 years. Each college/school and the Graduate Division shall publish on their respective university webpage the process for initiating and embargo extension request and the criteria used in their respective reviews. The UDTS Coordinator will retain a copy of the student petition and confirm to the student and graduate associate dean the decision and any applicable new dissertation release date. Renewal embargo request decisions are not reviewed beyond the Graduate Division.

Authors who wish to lift an embargo prior to the established termination date must notify the UDTS Coordinator. In the case of an author's death, incapacity, or other similar circumstance, the author's estate, power

of attorney, or other appropriate designee assumes decision-making authority over the embargo.

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.