

**Policy Title:** Graduate Degree and Certificate Requirements

**Policy Type:** Academic                      **New/revised:** Revised

**Old Policy #:** from the graduate catalog; no numbering system exists

**Approval level:**  Board of Trustees  
 President  
 Vice President  
 Other (specify here) not sure what to check here?

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to provide requirements for earning a graduate certificate or degree from ETSU.

**Policy:**

- I. Specific course and other requirements for earning a graduate certificate, master's degree, education specialist degree, or doctoral degree from ETSU can be found by referencing specific requirements in the graduate student's catalog of record.
  - A. Master's degree programs will be offered through two (2) options (not all programs offer both options):
    1. Thesis Option-minimum of 30 credits of graduate coursework (including at least three (3) credits for the thesis).
    2. Non-thesis Option-minimum of 33 credits of graduate coursework including a research requirement to be satisfied by one (1) or more courses which introduce the student to the tools and methods of research and scholarly activities and a writing requirement on a topic in the student's major field which conforms to the style and standards of the discipline.
  - B. All programs of study, research requirements, and writing requirements must be approved by the Graduate Council.
- II. Culminating Experience
  - A. All degree programs should involve a culminating experience that includes an integrating activity and a comprehensive evaluation of the student's performance.
    1. The integrating activity is intended to help students synthesize knowledge and skills acquired throughout the degree curriculum. The form of this activity may vary according to the particular discipline and may or may not involve academic credit. Examples include, but are not limited to, a thesis or dissertation, analytical essay, artistic presentation, practicum, capstone project, professional portfolio, and team consulting project. Graduate programs shall identify in the graduate catalog the integrating activity provided and required in each degree.
    2. A comprehensive evaluation of the student's performance should include a written or oral examination or evaluation to determine whether the student has achieved mastery of the student's discipline. Assessment of a student's performance shall be made by a committee established for that purpose consisting of a minimum of three (3) ETSU graduate faculty members. Experts from outside the university are also permitted to serve on such committees, with approval from the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. The

committee's written assessment of the student's performance shall become a part of the student's permanent academic records.

- B. The student's performance in the final examination or evaluation may be classified into one (1) of three (3) categories. They may (1) pass; (2) fail with no opportunity for re-examination or re-evaluation; or (3) fail with an opportunity for further study and re-examination by the committee. The nature of such further study and a schedule for reexamining or re-evaluating the student's performance will be established by the committee. A second failure by any candidate will result in the student's dismissal from the graduate program.
- C. The format of the final examination and standards for the three (3) categories of performance must be approved by the Graduate Council and should be included in the graduate catalog along with other degree requirements.

### III. Advisory Committee

- A. During the period before candidacy, graduate students are advised by the graduate program coordinator or advisor as assigned at the time of admission.
  - 1. Students in a graduate certificate program usually will not have an advisory committee. Please check information on specific certificate program in the graduate catalog.
  - 2. For master's degree students, students should form the graduate advisory committee no later than the second semester in which coursework is undertaken. For students in a thesis option, the advisory committee also serves as the thesis committee and is responsible for guiding the student through the thesis research and writing, as well as accepting or rejecting the manuscript. The committee will assist the candidate in planning the program of study and research. It must be composed of at least three (3) faculty members who hold ETSU graduate faculty status; the committee chair must hold member or senior member status. In warranted circumstances, a fourth committee member who does not have graduate faculty status may be added if the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies approves the individual for a temporary graduate faculty appointment.

The advisory committee is responsible for administering the comprehensive examination to the master's candidate and certifying that the candidate has completed all requirements in the program for the master's degree.
  - 3. For doctoral degree students, students should form the graduate advisory committee no later than the second semester in which coursework is undertaken. For students in a program requiring a dissertation, the advisory committee also serves as the dissertation committee and is responsible for guiding the student through the dissertation research and writing, as well as accepting or rejecting the manuscript. The committee will assist the candidate in planning the program of study and research. It must be composed of at least three (3) faculty members who hold ETSU graduate faculty status; the committee chair must hold member or senior member status. In warranted circumstances, a fourth committee member who does not have graduate faculty status may be added if the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies approves the individual for a temporary graduate faculty appointment.

The advisory committee is responsible for certifying that the candidate has completed all requirements in the program for the doctoral degree.

- B. If changes in the composition of the advisory committee are needed, an approval form, available at the School of Graduate Studies office or on the website, must be completed. It requires signatures of the retiring member(s), replacement member(s), the committee chair, the graduate program coordinator, and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.

IV. Admission to Candidacy

- A. Admission to the School of Graduate Studies and the approval to pursue a degree program, does not in any way imply that a student is admitted to candidacy for the master's degree. To be admitted to candidacy the student must:
  1. Remove all provisions required at the time of admission by the School of Graduate Studies.
  2. Complete at least one (1) semester (9-12 credits) of study following admission to the School of Graduate Studies.
  3. Meet the specific requirements of the major program. This is especially important for classification of doctoral students as early stage or late stage.
  4. Have an overall GPA of 3.0 and be in good academic standing.
  5. Submit the completed forms for admission to candidacy and an approved program of study to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

V. Approval of the Program of Study

- A. Ideally, the program of study is filed well in advance of the published deadline. When the application for candidacy is approved, the student may be considered a candidate for the graduate degree. When the program of study is filed with the School of Graduate Studies after the published deadline, graduation will be delayed until all program requirements have been verified.
- B. Changes in the planned program of study for candidacy must be approved by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. Forms for program changes are available in the School of Graduate Studies office or through its web site.

VI. Residency Requirements

The residency requirement is primarily to provide doctoral students with significant time for sustained participation with peers and faculty members in scholarly and creative activities. Each doctoral degree program specifies how these residency requirements can be fulfilled. Non-doctoral graduate degree students may be required to complete one or more semesters of full-time study as determined by the degree program. Students should consult program requirements for details on specific residency requirements in their graduate catalog of record.

VII. Thesis or Dissertation Process

- A. All students in a program requiring a thesis or dissertation will register for the appropriate thesis or dissertation course, undertake a research project, and write a thesis or dissertation. The topic will be selected by the candidate with the advice and approval of the thesis or dissertation director and the student's advisory committee. The student must prepare a prospectus describing the research problem, its full limits, and the research methods. A copy of the prospectus will be given to each member of the student's committee. Changes in the prospectus may be made at the committee's discretion, with the consent of the student. After the thesis or dissertation topic has been researched and written, and approved by the advisory committee members, the oral defense must be scheduled with the School of Graduate Studies. Copies of the thesis or dissertation should be distributed to committee members at least one (1) week prior to the oral defense. Following successful completion of the defense, the thesis or dissertation must be prepared in final form, reviewed by the chair of the advisory

committee, and submitted to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for review and approval through the electronic thesis/dissertation website. The chair of the advisory committee will also submit an originality report (e.g. Turnitin) to the Thesis/Dissertation Coordinator at the School of Graduate Studies.

- B. Students must submit theses in the format prescribed at the time of submission. The School of Graduate Studies publishes a Guide to the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations, available on their website. All students submitting theses and dissertations must pay an archiving microfilming fee. More detailed instructions on the electronic submission and review process are available from on the School of Graduate Studies website.
- C. Institutional Review Board (IRB)- All research involving human subjects must be approved by the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board prior to initiation of the research. IRB approval is necessary to protect the rights of human subjects involved in physical, psychological, or social research. Following approval of the proposed research by the review board, the subject involved must be informed of the study and consent to participate. The application forms for research involving human subjects and review of such research projects are available on the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs website.

#### VIII. Graduate Faculty Representation at Thesis or Dissertation Defense

- A. The defense of the thesis or dissertation is a formal gathering at which the degree candidate presents and defends the thesis or dissertation to members of the university community. The defense is a capstone event in the development of graduate students as scholars, professionals, or future teachers and must entail open and fair exchange of scholarly views. A member of the graduate faculty from outside the candidate's committee and department must be present at the defense to monitor the process.
- B. The procedure to be followed in scheduling an oral defense and the format for the graduate faculty representative's narrative report are available in the School of Graduate Studies office and the form is on the School of Graduate Studies website. The defense must be scheduled according to dates specified in the Academic Calendar published in the graduate catalog of records, on the Registrar's website, and on the School of Graduate Studies website.

#### IX. Graduation

- A. Credits Earned Above Requirements for a Degree
  - 1. When students earn credits in addition to those required in the planned program of study, a request may be made to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies to have the extra coursework defined on the transcript as post-degree credit. The request must be made prior to awarding of the degree and cannot be so defined once the degree is awarded. The School of Graduate Studies will not interpret or alter the transcript once the degree is awarded.
- B. Required GPA
  - 1. In order to graduate, students must have a minimum 3.0 grade point average overall and on the program of study for all degrees.
- C. Intent to Graduate
  - 1. Students must file an Intent to Graduate Form with the School of Graduate Studies no later than the end of the second week of the semester in which the student expects to complete the requirements for a graduate degree. If the student does not graduate in that term, a new Intent Form must be

completed and submitted prior to the published deadline for the next term (see Academic Calendar.)

D. Matriculation (Time) Limits

1. The time limit for the use of credit toward a certificate is four (4) to six (6) years from the date of enrollment in the earliest course applied toward the certificate, including transferred courses. (Consult graduate catalog of record for more specific information)
2. The time limit for the master's degree is six (6) years from the date of enrollment in the earliest course applied toward the degree, including transferred courses.
3. For the education specialist degree, the time limit is five (5) years from the date of enrollment in the earliest course applied toward the degree, including transferred courses.
4. The time limit for completion of the Ed.D. Educational Leadership program by a student who holds the Ed.S. degree or equivalent is five (5) years from the date of enrollment in the earliest course applied toward the degree, including transferred courses.
5. The time limit for completion of a doctoral program by students who begin a program after a bachelor's or master's degree is seven (7) years from the date of enrollment in the earliest course applied toward the degree, including transferred courses.

E. Revalidation of ETSU Coursework that Exceeds Matriculation Limits-It is the graduate program's responsibility to recommend to the School of Graduate Studies one of the following actions for revalidating course content in each instance that exceeds the matriculation limits. The department may:

1. Examine the student (orally or in writing) and report the results to the School of Graduate Studies.
2. Design an independent study if no course currently exists by which the student may update course content.
3. Have the student repeat the outdated course.
4. Have the student complete additional coursework.
  - a. This procedure may not be used to revalidate coursework for transfer purposes when the course already exceeds the matriculation limit at the time of application. All Requests for Extension of Time and Revalidation plans must be approved by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.

X. Graduation Instructions

The ETSU Registrar and School of Graduate Studies publishes graduation information for each term on their websites and provides all deadlines and instructions for meeting graduation requirements.