



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Graduate School Admission Policy for Degree and Certificate Seeking Students

Policy Name: Graduate School Admission Policy for Degree and Certificate Seeking Students

Policy Purpose

This policy specifies the admission process for a certificate or degree-seeking graduate student to East Tennessee State University.

Applicability

This policy is applicable to (1) applicants desiring admission as a degree or certificate-seeking student, whether part-time or full-time, to the Graduate School, and (2) applicants who are offered admission to the Graduate School for degree or certificate programs. This policy does not apply to applicants who (1) seek admission exclusively to the Quillen College of Medicine for the M.D. degree or the Gatton College of Pharmacy for the Pharm.D. degree; or (2) seek admission as a non-degree student.

Responsible Official, Office, and Interpretation

The Dean of the Graduate School and Graduate Council are responsible for the review and revision of this policy. For questions about this policy, please contact the Dean of the Graduate School. The Provost in consultation with the Office of University Counsel has the final authority to interpret this policy.

Defined Terms

Application Deadlines

The last day to submit an application to a given program for a particular starting semester. Application deadlines are those published on the Graduate School website.

Approved Agency

A defined agency that accredits institutions of higher education, formerly known as “regional accreditors.” ETSU’s [Approved Agencies](#) policy lists all approved agencies for ETSU.

Centralized Application System (CAS)

Application systems provided by third parties, including some professional associations, to provide a common application process across a profession. Used by some programs in

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addition to the ETSU application. Examples include but are not limited to SOPHAS, PTCAS, CSDCAS

Concentration

A specialization within a graduate program. Concentrations within a program are listed in the Graduate Catalog.

Cumulative GPA

Average of all grades from coursework.

Domestic Applicant

Any individual who applies to ETSU and who is a U.S. citizen or U.S. permanent resident.

International Applicant

Any individual who applies to ETSU and who is not a U.S. citizen or U.S. permanent resident.

Last Day of Classes

The day published on the [Academic Dates Calendar](#) as Last Day of Classes.

Legally Protected Class

Those classes protected under state and federal law including but not limited to race, color, religion, creed, national origin.

Matriculation (Time) Limit

Time limit as defined by the Graduate School [Matriculation \(Time\) Limit Policy](#).

Notice of Decision

A written communication from the Graduate School to a prospective student notifying them of admission or denial to ETSU.

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Offer of Admission

A Notice of Decision that indicates acceptance into the Graduate School and a program.

Official Transcript

A transcript that is sent directly from the issuing institution to the ETSU Graduate School and is sent either electronically or in an original, sealed envelope from the issuing institution. Transcripts may also be delivered by the student in an original sealed envelope. ETSU may also consider as official any transcript sent directly from the issuing institution to a NCAES approved agency for transcript evaluation or to the transcript processing services of a CAS.

Professional Degree Program

Includes but is not limited to: JD, MD, DO, MSN, DDS, DVM.

Program

Individual named degree and concentration (if applicable) or certificate.

Regular Term

Fall or Spring Terms.

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Residency

A prospective student's classification as in-state or out-of-state for tuition purposes will be determined pursuant to ETSU policies, ETSU regulations, federal, and state law.

Rescind

Withdraw or revoke.

Unofficial Transcript

Any transcript that does not meet the requirements of an Official Transcript. For example, a course report from a self-service student portal.

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Students are admitted to a graduate certificate or degree program through a cooperative effort of the Graduate School and the departments and colleges of the University. When the Graduate School receives the student's application materials, an official file is established and reviewed by the Graduate School.

Once all required materials are received and processed, the Graduate School refers the file to the program; graduate faculty in the program review the application file and make a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School sends applicants a Notice of Decision as soon as a decision has been reached. Verbal offers of admission or offers from programs are not official until a written Offer of Admission is extended by the Dean of the Graduate School or designee.

The number of spaces available in various programs is determined faculty, special resources, and disciplinary accreditation standards. The number of spaces in some graduate programs is limited, and only the most highly qualified applicants are offered admission.

Offers of Admission are for a specific entry term. If a student is unable to attend during the first term of admission, they must request a deferral following the Graduate School [Deferral of Admission Policy](#). If a student does not attend during the first term of admission or if the student's deferral request is denied, the Offer of Admission is nullified. Admission for a future term would require a new application.

1. Other Applicable Policies.

Applicants who want to apply as Non-Degree Seeking will follow the requirements in the Graduate School's [Non-Degree Seeking Admission Policy](#). Applicants who qualify for Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Degree admission will follow the Graduate School's [Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Degree Policy](#). Applicants who qualify for Academic Fresh Start will follow the Graduate School's [Academic Fresh Start Policy](#).

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2. Admission Requirements.

2.1. Graduate School Requirements.

The following are the minimum requirements for admission to a Graduate degree or certificate program at ETSU. Programs may set additional and/or higher standards than the minimum. The Graduate School will consider a prospective graduate student for admission as a degree or certificate seeking graduate student at ETSU if prior to the Application Deadline the individual:

- 2.1.1.** Submits a complete admission application that includes all required supporting documents;
- 2.1.2.** Submits transcripts as required in Section 3.2;
- 2.1.3.** Holds a bachelor's degree or equivalent or has a bachelor's degree or equivalent in progress;
- 2.1.4.** Meets all stated Graduate School and program requirements;
- 2.1.5.** Provides proof of English proficiency if an International or Domestic student educated outside of the U.S. in one of the manners approved by the Graduate Council and published by the Graduate School on its website;
- 2.1.6.** Has a minimum undergraduate GPA or graduate GPA of:
 - 2.1.6.1.** Domestic Applicants: 2.5 or higher (on a 4.0 scale); or
 - 2.1.6.2.** International Applicants: 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale)

Graduate-level coursework will be considered in the application review process and may be considered in lieu of, or in addition to, the undergraduate GPA requirements above.

In addition to the requirements listed above, International Applicants must also meet the requirements listed in Section 4 of this policy.

Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree or be in progress of completing a bachelor's degree to be eligible for admission. Some doctoral programs may also require a graduate degree. Prospective students who do not hold or do not have in progress a bachelor's degree, but are currently enrolled in or are graduates of a Professional Degree Program

Policy Effective Date: 06/30/2021 • **Policy Revised Effective Date:** 05/13/2025
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from an ETSU Approved Agency or other institutions may be admitted to the Graduate School without a bachelor's degree at the discretion of the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School.

2.2. Transcript Requirements.

For admission, applicants must submit applications from:

2.2.1. All colleges/universities from which a bachelor's degree or equivalent was earned or is in progress. One transcript must indicate a baccalaureate degree or equivalent was earned or will be earned from an Approved Agency;

2.2.2. Any colleges/universities from which a graduate degree was earned or in progress.

2.2.3. Any colleges/universities from which graduate coursework was taken, regardless of whether a degree was conferred;

2.2.4. Any institution showing relevant courses for a program's prerequisites to meet Program Specific Requirements.

2.2.5. International or Domestic applicants must submit an official full transcript report from a [NACES-accredited evaluation service](#) for each international institution from which a degree or equivalent is in progress or has been conferred and/or where graduate coursework was taken.

2.2.6. Applicants who attend or previously attended East Tennessee State University do not need to provide ETSU transcripts unless applying to a CAS-required program.

2.2.7. For admission purposes, Domestic Applicants may submit Unofficial Transcripts unless applying to a CAS-required program.

2.2.8. Transcripts from Tennessee Centers for Applied Technology (TCAT) or community colleges (even if a degree was conferred) that do not have prerequisite coursework do not need to be submitted.

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2.2.9. Applicants may be asked to submit additional transcripts for admission consideration.

After an Offer of Admission is extended to an applicant, students who submitted unofficial transcripts for admission consideration or who submitted an official transcript with courses in progress must provide a final Official Transcripts from any institution used in the application review. One transcript, or equivalent document, must include proof of a bachelor's degree, approved graduate/professional degree, or equivalent. Applicants do not need to provide official transcripts from ETSU. All Official Transcripts must be received no later than the Last Day of Classes of the first semester of enrollment. If Official Transcripts are not received and the Dean of the Graduate School or designee has not granted an extension of the deadline, the student will be dismissed from the Graduate School and the graduate program.

In rare circumstances, including but not limited to the closure of an institution previously attended by the applicant, the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School at their discretion may approve alternative verification (for official transcripts) or make other appropriate accommodations.

2.3. Program Specific Admission Requirements.

Individual graduate programs may have additional admissions requirements and/or stricter admission standards than the Graduate School admission standards, including but not limited to higher GPA, additional degree, credential, or transcript requirements, which a prospective student must meet to be admitted to the program. These requirements are outlined in the graduate catalogue.

3. International Applicants Additional Requirements.

International Applicants must meet the requirements listed in Section 3 of this policy and must also provide proof of an international degree that is equivalent to a U.S. 4-year bachelor's degree or accepted 3-year Bachelor's degree that is equivalent to a U.S. 4-year bachelor's degree or accepted 3-year Bachelor's degree as approved by the Graduate Council and published by the Graduate School website.

4. Accepting or Declining Offers of Admission.

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Applicants who receive an Offer of Admission to ETSU's Graduate School must indicate that they accept or decline their offer of admission following the instructions in the Offer of Admission.

- 4.1. Accepting the Offer of Admission allows students to register for classes for the specified first term of enrollment in the Notice of Decision, to defer their admission date, and to submit Residency information.
- 4.2. Declining the Offer of Admission indicates that the applicant has decided not to attend ETSU's Graduate School. If a student initially declines the offer of admission, and changes their mind, they must notify the Graduate School no later than 5 business days prior to the start of classes for a given term. If a student requests to change their status from decline to accepted, approval of the request will be subject to space availability in the program and may be approved in the discretion of the Dean of the Graduate School or designee. The decision of the Dean related to such a request is final.

5. Dual Graduate Degree Program Admission.

A student may pursue two graduate programs simultaneously as follows:

- 5.1. Two master's programs;
- 5.2. Two certificate programs;
- 5.3. A master's program and a graduate certificate program;
- 5.4. A doctoral program and a graduate certificate program; or
- 5.5. A doctoral program and a master's program.

Students must apply to each program separately. Approval must be granted by the graduate program coordinator in each program and by the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School to pursue both programs. All admission and program requirements of both programs and the Graduate School, including Matriculation Limits, must be met.

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The Dean of the Graduate School at their discretion can review and approve requests for other combinations of dual admission.

6. Change of Program.

Students seeking to change from one graduate Program to another must formally apply to the new graduate program. Students are responsible for ensuring that all admissions materials required by the new program are received by the Graduate School prior to any program deadlines. Students must notify the Graduate School of their withdrawal from the program in which they are currently enrolled prior to accepting admission into the new program.

7. Change of Concentration.

If a program does not allow a change in concentration, the student must apply to the designated program and concentration and follow all requirements for admission. If a program does permit a change in concentration, the student follows the program's requirements for change in concentration.

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8. Admission of ETSU Faculty and Staff Members as Degree-Seeking Graduate Students.

Faculty and staff may be admitted to the Graduate School and a graduate program at ETSU to pursue a degree or certificate. Faculty and staff who hold graduate faculty status may be able to retain graduate faculty status pending a review of potential conflicts.

Before offering admission into a graduate program as a degree-seeking student, the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School will review any potential conflicts. If a potential conflict of interest exists, the Dean of the Graduate School will confer with the department chair or supervisor of the faculty or staff member's home unit and as necessary with the dean of the college of the program in which the individual plans to enroll. If the conflict is deemed unlikely to cause conflict with the student and faculty roles, the faculty or staff member may maintain graduate faculty status. If the conflict has potential to create conflict with the student and faculty roles, graduate faculty status may be placed on hold while the graduate faculty member is matriculating in a graduate program, and once the degree is completed, they may return to active graduate faculty status by submitting a new graduate faculty application if applicable. Significant potential for conflicts of interest are grounds to deny admission. The decision of the Dean of the Graduate School is final.

9. Readmission for Inactivity.

Any individual who was admitted to the ETSU Graduate School and who has not actively taken courses in a graduate program for more than one Regular Term up to the Matriculation Limits, may apply for readmission. The individual will complete a [Readmission Form](#) with the Graduate School and if applicable, submit Official Transcripts for any courses taken at a higher education institution during their absence from ETSU. The program coordinator and the Dean of the Graduate School, or designee, must approve the request. The decision of the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School is final.

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10. Application Fee.

The Graduate School charges an application fee that must be paid to submit the application. Application fees for admission to the Graduate School may be waived for these applicants:

10.1. McNair Scholars;

10.2. a current student with an offer of admission or enrolled ETSU graduate student, whether admitted as degree-seeking or non-degree seeking, who applies for admission to an additional graduate degree or certificate program; or

10.3. Active duty or honorably discharged members of the U.S. military or National Guard.

On occasion at the discretion of the Dean of the Graduate School, the Graduate School may provide a limited fee waiver as part of a special promotion published on the Graduate School website.

Beyond these exclusions, there are no additional application fee waivers.

11. Application Materials.

All application materials become the property of the university and will not be forwarded or returned.

12. Degrees from Non-Approved Agencies.

Degrees from agencies that are not part of ETSU's Approved Agencies list or from foreign institutions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School.

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13. Rescinding an Offer of Admission.

In rare circumstances, the Graduate School may Rescind an Offer of Admission. The Graduate School reserves the right to Rescind an Offer of Admission for, but not limited to, the following reasons:

13.1. Any part of the application contains misrepresentations or fraud, including plagiarism;

13.2. If the applicant fails to graduate, does not receive a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) by the end of the start of the ETSU program or otherwise will not hold the credentials presented as part of the application;

13.3. If the applicant submits fraudulent documents as part of the admissions or I-20 process;

13.4. If the applicant engages in behavior that brings into serious question their honesty, maturity, and/or professional suitability; and/or

13.5. If the applicant engages in conduct that violates University policy and/or state or federal law.

14. Accommodations.

To the extent possible the Dean of the Graduate School, or their designee, may grant accommodations to this policy and other academic adjustments when necessary.

15. Discrimination.

In accordance with ETSU's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment, ETSU does not discriminate against applicants for admission of a Legally Protected Class.

16. Appeals.

If a prospective student is denied admission to the Graduate School, the individual may qualify to file an appeal as indicated in the [Graduate School Admission Appeals Policy](#). The written Notification of Decision will detail the process by which the prospective student may appeal the decision, if applicable.

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Procedures

Prospective certificate or degree-seeking applicants should review the Graduate School Admissions website before applying to ETSU. The application and review process related to this policy are as follows:

1. Procedure for Applying.

The procedure for a prospective student to apply to the Graduate School is: (1) complete an application with all documentation and transcripts as required by this policy and program-specific requirements; (2) pay the application fee if required; and (3) submit the application by the deadline.

2. Review of Application.

Complete applications submitted by the deadline will be reviewed by a graduate specialist to determine if the Graduate School minimum requirements have been met. Graduate specialists will refer all applications that meet the minimum requirements to the program for review. The graduate program will make an admission recommendation to the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School. The Dean or designee will make a decision based on the program's recommendation and, any additional relevant information (e.g., background check).

3. Notification of Decision.

The Graduate School sends the Notification of Decision to the prospective student.

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Applicable Forms and Websites

[Application for Admission](#)

[Graduate School](#)

[Readmission Form](#)

Authority and Revisions

Authority: TCA § 49-8-203, et seq.

Previous Policy: Graduate School Admission Policy for Degree-seeking Students

The ETSU Board of Trustees is charged with policy making pursuant to TCA § 49-8-203, et seq. On March 24, 2017, the Board delegated its authority to ETSU's President to establish certain policies and procedures for educational program and other operations of the University, including this policy. The delegation of authority and required process for revision to this policy can be found on the [Policy Development and Rule Making Policy webpage](#).

To suggest a revision to this policy, please contact the responsible official indicated in this policy. Before a substantive change to the policy section may take effect, the requested changes must be: (1) approved by the responsible office; (2) reviewed by the Office of University Counsel for legal sufficiency; (3) posted for public comment; (4) approved by either Academic Council or University Council; and (5) approved by ETSU's President.