Rules to Advise By
Updated Fall 2021

While graduate students are asked to read the catalog and know the rules, Directors of Graduate Studies must also know those rules to advise students appropriately. While this list is not comprehensive (that is, there are additional rules in the catalog, additional rules for your own program, and additional rules for your unit), these are basic rules that govern graduate education at the University of Louisville (and rules that are outlined in the Graduate Catalog) that seem to give students and advisors the most trouble. Sometimes (although with good advising we hope it’s not often) it will be necessary to make exceptions to these rules, and the form to request a variance can be found here: https://louisville.edu/graduate/forms/variance-request-form/view.

1) **Admissions rules:** Any student who is to be admitted unconditionally (or in good standing) must have submitted all required credentials and must have at least a 2.75 on a 4.0 scale. If students are missing credentials, but otherwise meet the minimum GPA, they may be admitted “provisionally (PROV),” and they have until the start of the next semester to submit the missing materials. If students have a GPA between 2.5 and 2.75, they must be admitted with “special conditions (SPCO)” that the program must specify (usually this includes attaining a 3.0 in the first term of enrollment, but could also include other conditions). Students must meet the program’s conditions as outlined in the admission letter, or they are subject to academic dismissal from the unit. Provisional and conditional admissions are made by the program director (or the staff person assigned this duty) on the admissions referral form. The catalog specifies that no applicant with a GPA below 2.5 will be admitted to graduate study. In extraordinary cases, the program director may fill out a variance request form and provide a detailed rationale for the variance. We are likely to admit in “provisional probation (PPRB).” (usually this includes attaining a 3.0 in the first term of enrollment, but could also include other conditions).

2) **Provisional/Conditional Admissions:** If you admit a student provisionally or conditionally, it is up to you to follow-up to make sure that the student provides the missing materials or meets the required conditions prior to the start of the next semester.

3) **Application Fees:** Programs **may not waive** application fees for students ($65 for degree program apps, and $40 for apps to certificate programs). Students who fall into the following categories **may request a waiver by calling (502) 852-6495 to determine their eligibility:** applicants in active duty military and active Peace Corp/AmeriCorps; students receiving government public assistance through programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Care (AFDC), Medicaid, Food Stamps, or Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI); students who attend minority serving institutions (application fee waiver is reviewed on case-by-case request); students who participate in Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), TRIO, McNair Scholars, Fulbright Scholars, and UofL Cardinal Covenant; and students who attend the UofL Graduate School sponsored visitation day, held in the spring, and students who attend regional and national recruiting events where they meet with UofL graduate school representatives. Programs that wish to pay application fees for students who attend their own visitation days or for any other reason may do so, but those are not considered waivers and costs are not covered by the Graduate School.

4) **Transfer Credit rules:** Programs can choose to accept up to 6 hours of graduate credit taken at an accredited institution that offers advanced degrees. Programs may submit a variance form to Graduate School on behalf of the student to transfer an additional 6 hours (up to a total of 12
hours), but students will still need to take enough credits at UofL to meet the residency requirements in #5. Likewise, beginning in Fall 2010, transfer credit cannot be older than three years at time of matriculation. Programs that want to allow a student to transfer older credits must file a variance attesting to the currency of the courses.

5) **Residency Requirements**: Residency requirements differ for MA and PhD students. 
   a) **Masters students must take at least 24 hours of coursework at the University of Louisville** to satisfy the residency requirement for the masters degree. 
   b) In order that doctoral students have the opportunity to work closely with faculty, use university resources and facilities, and be immersed in the intellectual life of their disciplines, they must spend at least two years of study at the University of Louisville, and **at least one year in full-time residency**. 

   **Full-time residency for doctoral students is defined as being registered for a minimum of 18 credit hours in a twelve-month period.** Enrollment in candidacy does not fulfill this requirement, although enrollment in research hours does. Advisors need to work with students from the time they enroll to make sure that students meet this requirement while they are still taking courses. All doctoral students must meet the two-year enrollment requirement. Students enrolled in part-time doctoral work may substitute four terms of continuous enrollment (summer terms can be used to meet this requirement) for the full-time residency requirement. Programs that allow part-time and/or off-site participation must provide a rationale to the Dean of the Graduate School, indicating how they ensure that such students have access to an intensive and immersive educational experience.

6) **Time Limitations**: Again, the rules differ for MA and PhD students.
   a) **Masters students must complete the degree within six years of beginning the program of study.**
   b) **Doctoral students must complete all requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy within four calendar years after passing qualifying exams.** Additionally, doctoral students must be admitted to candidacy at least nine months before receiving the degree. If students will not meet the time limits for their degree, the program director must submit a variance to SIGS with a detailed rationale for extending the time limitation.

7) **Grades of C**: The program can (but does not have to) approve up to 6 hours of coursework in which a C+, C, or C- was earned. The program can submit a variance request to Graduate School to accept an additional 3 hours of “C” work; in no case can more than 9 hours of “C” work be counted toward a graduate degree. Students still must have a 3.0 to earn a graduate degree.

8) **Overloads**: Unless a program requires a larger number of hours for all full-time students, the maximum number of hours that may be taken in a regular semester is 12; the maximum in the summer is 12 (across all terms). The graduate catalog gives the unit dean the responsibility for approving a student’s request to be permitted to enroll in more than 12 hours. The Unit Dean can approve a maximum of 15 credit hours, if a student is requesting more than 15 credit hours in a semester, they must submit a variance for the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies to approve.

9) **Candidacy**: There are two ways in which we use “candidacy” in graduate education:
   a) When students (masters or doctoral) complete all course requirements and co-curricular requirements (including comprehensive exams) with the exception of the final project, thesis, or dissertation, they become “degree candidates” and enter “candidacy.” Students in candidacy typically are not permitted to take additional coursework because they are assumed to be working full-time on their research projects; if a specialized course, such as one offered by a visiting or new faculty member, is approved by the program director as necessary or useful to the student’s program, a student may be given permission
to enroll while in candidacy, but both the candidacy fee and tuition for the course must be paid by the student or their assistantship. The program director must submit a variance to be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

b) “Masters Candidacy” and “Doctoral Candidacy” are also registration/enrollment categories designed to allow students to remain registered and able to access the university’s resources (libraries, laboratories, faculty, etc.) while they complete the thesis or dissertation. Once enrolled in either masters or doctoral candidacy, students must enroll continuously (Fall, Spring, and Summer) until the degree is completed. Doctoral students may not enter candidacy until after they have passed their qualifying exams.

10) Qualifying Exams: The applicant for a Doctor of Philosophy degree MUST pass a qualifying examination, oral or written, or both, and they may not register for candidacy until they have successfully passed this requirement. To be eligible for the qualifying exam, students must have completed the major portion of the coursework and must have met the foreign language requirements of the program. Program directors must let us know when doctoral students pass their required qualifying exams by filling out the form found at https://louisville.edu/graduate/forms/results-of-ph.d.-qualifying-comps-exam-form. You will have to log in with your ID and password to fill out this form. Doctoral students will be unable to enroll in “Doctoral Candidacy” (see 7b) if you do not fill out this form.

11) Leaves of Absence: Students who have been accepted into a graduate program are expected to remain in continuous enrollment, either full-time or part-time, throughout their matriculation. Students who fail to enroll for a period of more than 12 months will be considered to have withdrawn from the program. However, if circumstances arise that necessitate an interruption in a student’s graduate studies, that student, with the support of the graduate program director, may request a leave of absence from the unit dean. A requested leave cannot exceed one year, but in extreme circumstances, a subsequent request for a second year may be requested through the variance process and submitted to Graduate School for the approval of the Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs.

12) Continuous Enrollment: Continuous enrollment is defined as being registered in both Fall and Spring if registering for course work. If a student has been admitted to either masters or doctoral degree candidacy, continuous enrollment in candidacy status is required for the Fall, Spring and Summer terms (only one term of registration is required in summer terms). Students must be enrolled during the semester in which they wish to graduate.

13) International Students: Please do not send letters of admittance to international students until we have coordinated with the International Center (Graduate School continues to do this on behalf of programs). A federal regulation (i.e., this is not a Graduate School policy) mandates that international students who are non-immigrant F or J visa holders may take no more than the equivalent of one class, or three credits per semester, of distance education that does not require the student’s physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to the completion of the class. Student (F1) visas for new students can be issued up to 120 days in advance of the start date for a course of study, which is based on the start of classes as determined by the academic calendar, or for funded students, on the start of their assistantship duties; students will not be allowed to enter the United States on their student visa more than 30 days before the start date.