




DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES: RULES TO ADVISE BY

While graduate students are asked to read the catalog and know the rules, Directors of Graduate Studies must also know those rules in order 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 the 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 it will be necessary to file a variance to ask for an exception to these rules (although with good advising we hope it's not often), and the form to request a variance can be found here:


[Variance Request Form \(PDF\)](#)

- 1. Admission rules:** Any student who is to be admitted unconditionally (or in good standing) must have submitted all required credentials and must meet the unit's minimum GPA requirement as published in your unit's Guidelines for Graduate Education. If students are missing credentials, but otherwise meet the minimum GPA, they may be admitted "provisionally," and they have until the start of the next semester to submit the missing materials. If students have a GPA between 2.5 and the unit's minimum GPA, they must be admitted "special conditions" and the program must specify what conditions the student must meet to be moved to good standing (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. The student may be admitted on provisional probation in this case. The Dean of Graduate School and the Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs must both approve this variance.
- 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 missing materials are provided and/or conditions have been met prior to the start of the next semester. Once conditions are met, units are required to submit an Admissions Status Change form to the Graduate School. Failure to meet the conditions of their admissions may result in a hold being placed on the student's record. Students admitted on provisional probation will be monitored by the Graduate School.
- 3. 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 the Graduate School on behalf of the student to transfer an additional 6 credit hours (up to a total of 12 credit hours), but students will still need to earn enough credits at the University of Louisville to meet the residency requirements in #4. Likewise, transfer credit cannot be older than three years at the time of matriculation. Programs that want to allow a student to transfer older credits must file a variance. Transfer credits will not be posted to a transcript until the student has completed at least one semester of coursework at UofL.

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4. **Residency requirements:** Residency requirements differ for MA and PhD students. a) Master's students must take at least 24 credit hours of coursework at the University of Louisville to satisfy the residency requirement for the master's 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 or on-line 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.

5. **Time Limitations:** Again, the rules differ for MA and PhD students:
- Master's students must complete the degree within six years of beginning the program of study. Leaves of absence do not count as part of the six years.**
 - Doctoral students must complete all requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Education 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 Graduate School with a **detailed rationale** for extending the time limitation.
6. **Grade Requirements:** All students must earn a 3.0 to receive a graduate certificate, a master's degree or a doctoral degree. **There are no exceptions or variances to this requirement.** The program can (but does not have to) approve up to 6 credit hours of coursework in which a C+, C, or C- was earned, although the student must still have an overall 3.0 or better. The program can submit a variance request to Graduate School to accept an additional 3 credit hours of "C" work; in no case can more than 9 credit hours of "C" work be counted toward a graduate degree.
7. **Overloads:** Unless a program requires a larger number of hours for all full-time students, the maximum number of credit 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. Unit Dean can approve up to 15 credit hours, if the student is requesting additional credit hours, a variance must be submitted and approved by the Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs.
8. **Candidacy:** There are two ways in which we use "candidacy" in graduate education:
- When students (master's 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 do not take additional coursework because they are assumed to be working full-time on their research projects. Candidates who are funded as graduate assistants must receive permission from the Graduate School to enroll in any courses after they have entered candidacy.


- b. “Master’s 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 master’s 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. Students enrolled in candidacy are considered full-time students.

9. Qualifying Exams: The applicant for a Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Education 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. The guidelines for this exam are established by the academic programs. 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 [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 8b) if you do not fill out this form.**

10. 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 (funded students must be full-time). 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 by submitting a variance. 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. Leaves of absences extend the timeline to degree by the amount of time of the leave of absence.

11. 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 master’s 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. Funded students must be enrolled full-time in all semesters for which they receive funding.**

12. International Students: Letters of admission are sent directly from the Graduate School. Upon admission, the student works directly with the International Center to provide the financial documentation for the issuance of their immigration documentation. 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/online education that does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to the completion of the class.

- 13. Funded Students:** Students who receive Graduate Assistantships (whether in teaching, research, or service) are expected to work on average no more than 20 hours per week for their assistantships, which provide stipends, tuition, and health insurance. The students are considered full-time students and must be enrolled as full-time students when they are receiving support (12-month GAs must take 9 credit hours in both Spring and Fall and 6 credit hours in the summer, while 10-month GAs are not required to take courses in the summer). "Master's Candidacy" and "Doctoral Candidacy" are also considered full-time enrollment, and once registered for candidacy, students must maintain continuous registration until they graduate.

Students may be eligible to work no more than an additional 9 hours per week with the possibility to earn income for the work if the DGS files a workload waiver with the Graduate School and the Graduate Dean approves. Graduate students are first and foremost students, and the additional work must provide professional development for the student. The duration of the additional work is typically within one semester, and waivers must be filed every semester the student seeks additional work. Typically, funded students in their first year of their academic program are NOT eligible for work-load waivers because they must establish they are making progress toward their degree before asking to take on additional work. F1 VISA holders are eligible for work-load waivers after their first year but must also file for Curricular Practical Training with the International Center to abide by federal regulations.

- 14. Requirements for Graduate Certificate Programs:** Graduate certificate programs must require at least nine (9) credit hours of graduate coursework at the 500 level or above. Students must achieve a 3.0 or better cumulative grade point average and be in satisfactory standing to be awarded a certificate. Students may apply course credit earned from one or more graduate certificate programs towards a master's or doctoral degree, but they must submit an application to the degree program prior to beginning a second certificate that will count toward the degree. Use of credit from certificates is subject to admission to the degree-granting program and must be consistent with both curricular and residency requirements of the degree program.