

# THE GRADUATE POLICY MANUAL

For Doctoral, Master's, and  
Post-Baccalaureate Programs

Revised September 1, 2017

THE **GRADUATE** SCHOOL

## **Introduction**

The policy development mission of The Graduate School (TGS) is to provide an authoritative, accessible and current repository for policies that impact the members of the University community across all graduate programs. These policies have broad application throughout the University to help ensure coordinated compliance with applicable laws and regulations, promote operational efficiency or reduce institutional risk. Individual schools, departments and programs reserve the right to maintain policies particular to their units. However, unit-specific policies do not override University-wide policies. Policies duplicated on other websites or in print may not be the most current version. TGS recommends that graduate programs link to the Graduate Policy Manual rather than creating their own pages with University policies. This will help ensure that everyone is referencing the most current versions of University policies.

Note that the Graduate Policy Manual specifies basic policies for all graduate programs across the University. Therefore, individual programs may have additional requirements, which are more stringent than those outlined in this manual. Please consult your Graduate Program Coordinator (master's-level and certificate programs) or Doctoral Program Director (doctoral-level programs) to identify those unit-specific policies that are more stringent than those described in this manual.

This manual represents a joint initiative between The Graduate School and the University's Graduate Council. The Graduate Council is the primary all-University advisory body responsible for the development and review of Graduate School policy and the review of graduate curriculum. The Graduate Council reviews this manual throughout the academic year and a revised version is published by The Graduate School prior to the start of each academic year.

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**Section I**  
**APPLICATION/ADMISSION**

## **I. APPLICATION/ADMISSION**

### **A. General Admissions Requirements to Master's Degree Programs**

Applicants for master's degree programs will be referred by The Graduate School to Graduate Program Coordinators when the applicant completes all of the following (international students must also meet additional guidelines described below):

#### **1. Determination of admissions criteria**

- a. Each program will determine the admissions criteria that are appropriate for evaluating applicants' potential for success for that field of study. The criteria that a program uses must be transparent and available to students as well as being communicated to The Graduate School.
- b. Just as programs will engage in periodic review of their curriculum, so, too, programs are encouraged to periodically review their admissions criteria. Programs are encouraged to include information about admissions criteria when they submit a proposal for a new program and to consider whether modifications to their admissions criteria might be appropriate when they submit a program alteration.
- c. The Graduate School will review changes to program admissions criteria and monitor the availability of admissions information for applicants.

#### **2. Standardized Tests**

- a. Standardized tests (such as the GRE, GMAT, etc.) are one possible criterion that programs can use for evaluating applicants.
- b. The program will determine an acceptable standardized test score and consider this score in relation to the other admissions criteria.
- c. Only test scores from within the last five years will be accepted.

#### **3. Letters of Reference**

Programs generally require a minimum of two letters of reference. This requirement is program-specific.

#### **4. Interviews**

Interviews are not required by The Graduate School but may be considered required for some graduate programs.

#### **5. Statement of Purpose and/or Research Interest**

Students must write a Statement of Purpose to be submitted with their application. This statement shall detail the applicant's reasons for applying to the specific program and suitability of the student for advanced study.

## **B. General Admissions Requirements to Doctoral Degree Programs**

### **1. Standardized Tests**

- a. Standardized tests are one criterion that programs are to use for evaluating applicants. Doctoral programs will require official GRE scores (those generated by Educational Testing Services) except if The Graduate School has approved a program's proposal for an alternate test more appropriate for predicting success in its specific field of study.
- b. Only GRE scores or scores from an approved alternate test taken within the last five years will be accepted.
- c. Programs will determine how to most effectively utilize the GRE scores submitted.

### **2. GPA Requirements**

Each doctoral program will determine the minimum GPA that is appropriate for evaluating an applicant's potential for success for that field of study.

### **3. Transcripts**

- a. Official transcripts which include all bachelor's- and master's-level coursework must be sent directly to The Graduate School from each degree-granting institution. Official transcripts of all other non-degree coursework should also be submitted. Applicants with non-US credentials must have their transcripts evaluated by World Education Services (WES).
- b. Official transcripts showing a student in the final semester of coursework for a degree will be accepted for admissions purposes. A final transcript, showing conferral of the degree, will be required.
- c. Where applicable, the applicant must also provide evidence of an appropriate undergraduate background and other departmental requirements.

### **4. Letters of Reference**

Three academic and/or professional letters of reference are required.

### **5. Interviews**

Interviews are not required by The Graduate School but may be considered required for some graduate programs.

### **6. Statement of Purpose and/or Research Interest**

Students must write a Statement of Purpose to be submitted with the doctoral application. This statement shall detail the applicant's reasons for applying to the specific doctoral program and suitability of the student for doctoral study. Some

doctoral programs may also require a Statement of Research Interest that would address the student's commitment to study and conduct research and/or indicate current areas of interest or inquiry, which may lead to doctoral research.

## **C. Exceptions and Appeals of Admissions Decisions**

### **1. Exceptions**

Exceptions to any of the admissions policies can be made only by the Dean of The Graduate School in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director.

### **2. Appeals**

Appeals regarding the admission decisions must be presented in writing to the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean, in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director, will review the appeal. Once they have reached a decision, the Graduate Dean will send an official notification of the decision to the applicant.

## **D. Guidelines for Admission to Non-Degree Programs**

### **1. Non-Degree, General**

Students admitted with this status are uncertain about program choice or have an incomplete application and may enroll for no more than one semester and a maximum of six credits of coursework provided prerequisites are met. The six credits earned in this status may be transferred into the degree program, if applicable to that program and approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator. Students must maintain a GPA of 2.5 to continue in non-degree general status.

To be admitted students must:

- a. Submit an application.
- b. Submit an official transcript providing evidence of receipt of a baccalaureate degree or higher degree from an accredited college or university.
- c. Have an overall undergraduate GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4-point scale.
- d. International students must also meet requirements outlined in section I-E.

Note: International students holding an F-1 (student) visa are not eligible for non-degree status. Those holding a J-1 (exchange) visa are eligible for non-degree status.

## 2. Post-Baccalaureate Certification, Post-Master's Certification, & Certificate Programs

Students admitted with this program status are seeking to complete requirements stipulated by an external agency and to be recommended by Montclair State University to that external agency for certification and/or licensure.

### a. Post-Baccalaureate Certification

Students seeking a post-baccalaureate certification must have completed a bachelor's degree program.

To be admitted, students must:

- 1) Submit an application.
- 2) Submit an official transcript providing evidence of receipt of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
- 3) Submit copies of other certifications they currently hold when seeking a certification endorsement.
- 4) International students must also meet requirements outlined in section I-E.

It is up to programs to determine what undergraduate GPA and/or graduate GPA (if an applicant has taken graduate-level courses) would be appropriate for evaluating student potential for success in the field of study.

### b. Post-Master's Certification

Students seeking a post-master's certification must either have completed a master's degree program or be concurrently matriculated in a master's degree program at Montclair State University.

To be admitted, students must:

- 1) Submit an application.
- 2) Submit an official transcript providing evidence of receipt of a master's degree from an accredited college or university as well as a transcript of baccalaureate work.
- 3) Submit copies of other certifications they currently hold when seeking a certification endorsement.
- 4) International students must also meet requirements outlined in section I-E.

Note: Students currently in a master's degree program at Montclair State University need only submit an application (item 1) and do not need to submit transcripts or prior certifications.

It is up to programs to determine what undergraduate GPA and/or graduate GPA (if an applicant has taken graduate-level courses) would be appropriate for evaluating student potential for success in the field of study.

c. Certificate Programs

Students admitted with this status are seeking to complete a defined program of study and to be awarded a document verifying achievement of a specialized set of knowledge and skills. Students must have completed a bachelor's degree program. Some programs may also require prior completion of a master's degree program or that students be concurrently matriculated in a master's degree program at Montclair State University.

To be admitted, students must:

- 1) Submit an application.
- 2) Submit an official transcript providing evidence of receipt of a baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited college or university.
- 3) Meet any other specific certificate program requirements.
- 4) International students must also meet requirements outlined in section I-E.

Note: Students currently in a master's degree program at Montclair State University need only submit an application (item 1) and do not need to submit transcripts or prior certifications.

It is up to programs to determine what undergraduate GPA and/or graduate GPA (if an applicant has taken graduate-level courses) would be appropriate for evaluating student potential for success in that field of study.

## **E. Requirements for International Applicants and Students**

### **1. Course Evaluation**

International applicants who earned undergraduate degrees outside the United States must submit a course-by-course evaluation of all previous college and university records from the World Education Services (WES) or another member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to establish that the degree is equivalent to a U.S. baccalaureate degree.

### **2. Documentation of Proficiency in English**

International applicants must provide evidence of proficiency in English. For international applicants who graduated from institutions where English is not the language of instruction, or who earned undergraduate or graduate degrees in a country where English is not the official language, or who have not earned at least 24 non-remedial credits from an accredited U.S. college or university, you must have the following minimum score:

- a. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), computer-based test (cBT): 213
- b. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), internet-based test (iBT): 83
- c. International English Language Testing System (IELTS): 6.5

Applicants to online-only degree or certificate programs must have the following minimum score:

- a. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), computer-based test (cBT): 230
- b. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), internet-based test (iBT): 87
- c. International English Language Testing System (IELTS): 6.8

Applicants who hold a bachelor's or a master's degree from an institution where English was the language of instruction may be exempt. Applicants who attended institutions where English was not the language of instruction but whose native language is English may also be exempt.

### **3. English as a Second Language (ESL) Placement Test**

International students who earned undergraduate (or graduate) degrees in a country where English is not the official language are required to take the MSU ESL placement test and score higher than level IV. Students who do not place at this level will be provided with a list of ESL courses needed to reach the acceptable level of English proficiency. These courses will be added to the student's program of study, and at least one course **MUST** be taken in the first semester of graduate study. While all students will be required to take the MSU ESL test, only degree seeking students will be required to register for ESL coursework. Additionally, some Graduate Program Coordinators may decide to require all ESL courses be taken by their students. Please note that students may not register for classes until they take the ESL placement test.

### **4. INS Policies**

International students must comply with U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as well as with Montclair State University policies. Students must contact the MSU Office of International Student Services in order to ensure compliance with all policies and regulations.

## **F. General Deadlines for Submitting Applications/Application Deadlines**

1. Applications and all supporting materials, including the application fee, must be received by the deadline prescribed by the individual department and/or program of study.
2. Applications received after the prescribed deadline may be considered on a space-available basis.

**Section II**  
**MATRICULATION STATUS**



## **II. MATRICULATION STATUS**

### **A. Matriculation and Admission Categories**

#### **1. Regular Admission/Full Matriculation**

Regular admission and full matriculation will be granted to applicants when the following conditions have been met:

- a. Meeting minimum criteria for admission as set forth by the program.
- b. Interview by Graduate Program Coordinator or designee, if applicable.
- c. Acceptance by the graduate program as entered electronically by the Graduate Program Coordinator, Doctoral Program Director or designee.

#### **2. Deferred Matriculation**

Deferred matriculation is for students who meet the minimum criteria for full matriculation, but have been judged to have insufficient academic background for the program to which they applied. Requirements for full matriculation will be specified by the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director and approved by The Graduate School.

- a. Matriculation will be deferred until courses taken to overcome the academic background insufficiency (usually undergraduate courses) are completed with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Any graduate courses may be considered for credit toward the degree.
- b. The terms of the deferment must be completed within three semesters (excluding summer sessions) of the date on which the deferred status was granted.
- c. In order to be fully matriculated, the student files a Petition for Reclassification with The Graduate School. The petition is forwarded to the appropriate department chairperson or Graduate Program Coordinator who forwards the decision to The Graduate School.

#### **3. Conditional Admission**

- a. Conditional admission is granted to a student who holds a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, but who, in the judgment of the Graduate Program Coordinator, should not be granted full matriculation for any or all of the conditions listed below.
  - 1) The student's undergraduate grades overall or in specific courses are marginal.
  - 2) The student's scores on the GRE or other examinations are marginal.
  - 3) The program wishes to assess the student's level of competency prior to recommending full matriculation.

- 4) The student was dismissed from another graduate program at Montclair State University.

b. **Reclassification from Conditional Admission**

The reclassification from conditional admission to full matriculation will be granted when the following conditions are met:

- 1) The student fulfills all conditions for admission. This may include retaking the GRE or other examinations, taking prescribed courses to establish an acceptable GPA and/or completing other requirements specified by the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- 2) The student achieves a minimum of 3.0 in all courses taken as part of the condition.
- 3) The student fulfills the terms of the conditional admission within three semesters (excluding summer sessions) of the date when the conditional status was granted.
- 4) The student files a Petition for Reclassification with The Graduate School. The petition is forwarded to the appropriate department chairperson or Graduate Program Coordinator who forwards the decision to The Graduate School.

**B. Time Limitation for Completion of Program of Study**

**1. Completion of a Master's Degree Program**

All requirements for the master's degree must be completed within six years of the date of matriculation, excluding any approved leaves of absence.

**2. Completion of Post-Baccalaureate/Post-Master's Degree Certification Program**

All requirements for post-baccalaureate/post-master's certification programs must be completed within five years of the date of matriculation, excluding any approved leaves of absence.

**3. Completion of Certificate Program**

All requirements for certificate programs must be completed within three years, excluding any approved leaves of absence.

**4. Completion of Doctoral Degree Program**

- a. Post-Master's: Students who enter with a master's degree will have seven years from the date of matriculation, excluding any approved leaves of absence, to complete their degree.

- b. Post-Bachelor's: Students who enter with a baccalaureate degree will have 10 years from the date of matriculation to complete their degree, excluding any approved leaves of absence. Students who have a master's degree in a different field of study and whose work programs, therefore, include additional credits, may be classified as post-baccalaureate status.

Note: Students must be made aware that by enrolling for only the minimum number of credits, they may not be able to complete their degree program within the specified time allotted.

### **C. Time Extensions for Students**

If a time extension is necessary, a request for the extension must be filed with the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean, in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director, will review the student's progress. Following this review, a decision regarding the extension will be reached. The Graduate School will notify the student and the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director of the decision.

### **D. Leave of Absence**

Students in doctoral, master's and certificate programs may request one leave of absence for the duration of the graduate program. The leave of absence will be excluded from the time limit for completion of the graduate program. Programs may submit a request to The Graduate School for an exception that allows additional leaves of absence.

Requests for a leave of absence must be submitted to The Graduate School by the end of the second week of the semester. The student will receive confirmation of the leave of absence from The Graduate School. Students are not required to disclose the reason for requesting a leave of absence. The leave of absence policy applies only to students who have matriculated and cannot be used in lieu of a request to postpone matriculation. The leave of absence will not be granted retroactively.

It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw from courses in which they are registered. Students will be held responsible for all tuition and fees incurred for registered courses.

The leave of absence policy will apply to fall and spring semesters. Programs that require an alternative leave of absence policy that applies to a summer session and/or that does not apply to fall and/or spring semesters may submit a request for a policy change to the Graduate Council Policy Subcommittee.

#### **1. Exemptions to the Leave of Absence Limit**

Although rare, there exist circumstances that prohibit a student from attending classes and successfully completing coursework during a semester. The University has a

Medical Leave Policy and an Exemption from Course Withdrawal Policy that are administered through the Dean of Students. Leaves and withdrawals that are granted through these policies are excluded from the time limit for completion of a master's degree program. The policies and procedures are available through the Dean of Students.

## **E. Continuous Matriculation**

Continuous matriculation provides a mechanism for keeping track of students. This enables programs to monitor student progress and promotes timely completion of degree requirements. Although there is no limit on the number of times students can enroll for continuous matriculation, registration for continuous matriculation does not add to the time allowed for students to complete the program.

### **1. Continuous Matriculation Prior to Completion of Course Requirements**

Students in a graduate program must be continuously enrolled in the fall and spring semesters until completion of all requirements for graduation in order to be considered continuously matriculated.

Students who do not register for a credit-bearing course or who have not been granted an approved leave of absence in either the fall or spring semesters must register for a zero-credit Continuous Matriculation course (GRADMC for master's/certificate programs, GRADDC for doctoral programs) in that semester and pay a continuous enrollment fee. This course is not part of the degree program, does not carry credit, and is not assigned a grade. Students must register for the Continuous Matriculation course by the end of the Add/Drop period (the second week of the semester). Students who do not register for this course by the deadline will have a registration hold placed on their account.

Please consult the *Registration holds for failure to register* section of this manual.

The continuous matriculation policy will apply to fall and spring semesters. Programs that require an alternative leave of absence policy that applies to a summer session and/or that does not apply to fall and/or spring semesters may submit a request for a policy change to the Graduate Council Policy Subcommittee.

### **2. Continuous Matriculation After Coursework Completion**

Students who have completed coursework, but have not yet completed their comprehensive experience or are not actively engaged in dissertation work, must also maintain continuous matriculation.

## **F. Students Completing a Master's Thesis**

Students who do not complete their thesis during the semester in which they were enrolled in the thesis course (698) must register for a 1-credit thesis extension course (699) each fall and spring semester until the thesis is completed.

## **G. Students Completing a Doctoral Dissertation**

Students who do not complete their dissertation during the semester in which they were enrolled in last remaining credits of their Dissertation Advisement (900) coursework must register for a 1-credit Dissertation Advisement extension course (901) each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed.

## **H. Doctoral Students Qualifying Examination**

In order to be considered continuously enrolled during the semester in which students are scheduled to take their qualifying examinations, if prohibited by department policy from taking additional coursework, students register for XXXX 920—Qualifying Examination Enrollment. The student will continue to count as “active” in their program of study. This course may only be taken one time. Students will be charged the existing rate for the continuous matriculation fee, and the course will not carry credit.

## **I. Programs Requiring a Credit-Bearing Comprehensive Experience Course**

Master's degree-seeking students who do not complete the comprehensive experience during the semester in which they are enrolled in the comprehensive experience course must register for a one-credit comprehensive experience extension course each fall and spring semester until the comprehensive experience project is completed.

## **J. Programs Requiring a Comprehensive Examination or Other Non-Credit Comprehensive Experience**

Master's degree seeking-students who have completed all coursework in the program of study prior to completing the comprehensive experience must register for the zero-credit Comprehensive Exam course. Students who need to retake a comprehensive examination must register for the Comprehensive Exam course until the requirement has been fulfilled. Master's students may repeat this up to two times. Doctoral students may repeat this one time.

## **K. Simultaneous Matriculation in Two Programs**

1. A student may matriculate in up to two master's degree programs simultaneously at Montclair State University. To do this, a student must petition the Graduate Dean. The Dean will consult with Graduate Program Coordinators and/or the Program Directors in the colleges/schools in which the programs reside. When all parties are

agreed, permission to matriculate in both programs will be issued by The Graduate School.

2. Doctoral students may not matriculate in two degree programs simultaneously.

**L. Full- or Half-Time Equivalency**

1. University policy states that full-time status is nine credits per semester, therefore half-time status is four-and-a-half credits per semester.
2. Students registered for thesis (698/699) or dissertation (900/901) are considered full-time regardless of the number of credits for which they are registered. See Table 1 for additional information on Thesis and Dissertation Courses.
3. If a student registered for 698/699 or 900/901 would like to purchase the University-sponsored health insurance plan based on their Full-Time Equivalency, it is the student's responsibility to opt-in to the University-sponsored health insurance by communicating directly with the office of Student Accounts.

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Table 1. Thesis and Dissertation

Students in these courses are considered full-time status regardless of the number of credits for which they are registered.

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Course	Description
XXXX-698 Thesis	In order to register for the thesis course, XXXX-698, students must submit the <i>Approval for Writing a Master's Thesis</i> form.
XXXX-699 Thesis Extension	Students who do not complete their thesis during the semester in which they were enrolled in the thesis course must register for a 1-credit thesis extension course XXXX-699 each fall and spring semester until the thesis is completed. Students must complete the <i>Thesis Extension Application</i> form to register for this course.
XXXX-900 Dissertation Advisement Minimum three credits	Students register for XXXX-900 until they have completed the required number of dissertation credits in their program of study. If a student does not complete the dissertation after the requisite number of credits, they must register for XXXX-901. Students must complete <i>Form G/H – Dissertation Advisement or Advisement Extension Application</i> to register for this course.
XXXX-901 Dissertation Advisement Extension One credit	Students register for XXXX-901 once they have completed the required number of dissertation credits in their program of study but are still <b>actively working</b> on the dissertation and <b>receiving mentoring</b> . Students must complete <i>Form G/H – Dissertation Advisement or Advisement Extension Application</i> to register for this course.

*Note: All forms referenced in this table are available on the Forms page of The Graduate School's website (<http://www.montclair.edu/graduate/current-students/forms/>).*

### **M. Revocation of Matriculation**

The Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director, in consultation with the Graduate Dean, may recommend to the Provost (Vice President for Academic Affairs) the revocation of matriculated status after it has been established that there is evidence of serious unprofessional conduct on the part of the student. In such cases, the Provost will send the notification letter. A copy of the dismissal letter will be forwarded to the Graduate Program Coordinator and to The Graduate School for termination of matriculation in University systems and for official record-keeping purposes. Revocation of matriculation may also occur due to an academic dismissal.

## **N. Withdrawal and Registration Holds**

### **1. Voluntary Withdrawal**

A student may choose to withdraw from a degree program by notifying The Graduate School by submitting the appropriate form. The Graduate School will then change the student's status, terminate the student's matriculation and send a letter to the student confirming the withdrawal. A copy of the confirmation will be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw from any courses in which they are registered. Students will be held responsible for all tuition and fees incurred for registered courses.

### **2. Registration Holds for Failure to Register**

In the first fall or spring semester that students fail to register for either a credit-bearing or continuous-matriculation course, a deactivation registration hold will be placed on their account. A deactivation fee will be applied. Failure to register in two consecutive semesters will be treated as a withdrawal from the graduate program.

### **3. Withdrawal After Failing to Register for Two Semesters**

Failure to register and maintain continuous matriculation will not be considered as a leave of absence. Failure to register for either a credit-bearing course or the continuous-matriculation course for two consecutive semesters will be considered as a withdrawal from the graduate program. The Graduate School will then change the student's status and send a letter to the student confirming the withdrawal.

### **4. Readmission After Withdrawal**

Students who have withdrawn voluntarily or who were withdrawn due to failure to register will have to apply for readmission and pay an application fee, with no guarantee that the student will be readmitted into the program. Students who are readmitted after withdrawal will be given readmit status. This means that all previous semesters, including the non-registration semester(s), will be counted toward the time for completing the graduate program and that any previously granted leave of absence will count toward the total of permissible leaves of absence.



**Section III**  
**REGISTRATION**

### **III. REGISTRATION**

#### **A. Registration Eligibility**

Registration privileges will only be granted to graduate students when:

1. An application is complete;
2. The Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director has entered acceptance electronically;
3. The admission decision has been processed by The Graduate School.

#### **B. Time Limitation for Enrollment Following Acceptance**

Graduate students must enroll for courses within one year of the date of acceptance. This includes summer sessions if the program allows students to start in the summer. Accepted students may request a deferment for up to one year by submitting the appropriate form. Deferment will be automatically granted by The Graduate School except for programs that have requested to review deferment requests. Confirmation approving the deferment will be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director.

##### **1. Warnings and Withdrawal of Acceptance After Failure to Enroll**

In the first semester that students do not enroll or request a deferment, a warning will be sent by The Graduate School. If a student fails to register or request a deferment for two consecutive semesters, program acceptance will be withdrawn, and the student will have to reapply and pay an application fee.

##### **2. Reapplication After Failure to Enroll**

Students whose acceptance was withdrawn due to failure to enroll will have to reapply for admission and pay another application fee with no guarantee that the student will be admitted into the program again. The student may use the prior application with any new materials to update the application or may submit a new application. For programs requiring a deposit, the student will lose the original deposit and will have to pay an additional deposit after acceptance.

#### **C. Suspension of Registration Privileges**

Registration privileges will be suspended for one or more of the following reasons:

1. A student accepted directly from an undergraduate program fails to submit the official final transcript during their first semester.

2. A student with a general non-degree admission status has earned six credits but has not been accepted into a program.
3. A student with a deferred or conditional matriculation status has not completed the conditions of the deferment within three semesters (excluding summer sessions).

**Section IV**

**PROGRAM/COURSE/CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

## **IV. PROGRAM/COURSE/CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Semester Hour Requirements**

1. Though individual programs vary, master's degree programs require a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate-level coursework and all doctoral degrees require a minimum of 48 semester hours of graduate-level credit beyond the master's or 72 graduate-level credits beyond the bachelor's. Students are required to complete the minimum number of credits for their particular program.
2. Certificate programs require a minimum of nine semester hours of graduate-level coursework. Individual programs may have semester-hour requirements in excess of nine credits.
3. The requirements for certification programs are stipulated by the external agency conferring certification and/or licensure and may include both bachelor's and graduate-level coursework.

### **B. Course Numbering**

Generally, doctoral-level courses are numbered from 700 to 999. Master's-level courses are numbered from 500 to 699. Courses numbered from 400 to 499 are senior/undergraduate courses.

### **C. Use of 400-Level Courses**

1. A 400-level course cannot be used to fulfill requirements for master's or doctoral degree programs, certification programs or graduate certificate programs.
2. Courses at the 400 level may continue to be used to fulfill prerequisite requirements that a student must take apart from a graduate degree, certificate or certification program. The 400-level courses will not be counted toward the GPA.

Note: The student will be charged graduate tuition if a 400-level course is taken as a prerequisite requirement for a graduate program.

### **D. Course Contact Hours**

All graduate classes must meet for the time equivalency of 15 weeks. Three semester hours is equivalent to 150 minutes per week of class time.

### **E. Semester Hour Load for Students**

Full-time study is defined as a minimum of nine semester hours per semester, but no more than 16 semester hours of coursework each semester (this cap may be exceeded with approval from The Graduate School). Students registered for a minimum of nine

billable credits will automatically be enrolled in the University's health insurance plan. Students must actively opt-out in order to prevent being billed by Student Accounts.

## **F. Graduate Assistants**

Students participating in the assistantship program (Graduate Assistants, Teaching Assistants, Doctoral Assistants, Doctoral Teaching Assistants, and Doctoral Fellows) are considered full-time students, are required to register for a minimum of nine semester hours of coursework each semester, unless otherwise indicated or approved. Assistants are not permitted to register for more than 12 semester hours in any one semester unless permission is granted, in writing, prior to enrolling by both the faculty adviser and The Graduate School. Standard Assistantships *may* carry a modest stipend and cover tuition for up to 12 credits for any one semester and up to 24 credits for the year unless program permission is provided by The Graduate School. Specific compensation packages vary and are determined by The Graduate School.

## **G. Summer Session Course Load**

Graduate students are limited to 12 semester hours of coursework within any combination of summer sessions. A student may take only three semester hours of coursework within a pre- or post-session. Additional credits beyond this must be granted approval by the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director.

## **H. Transfer Credit for Degree Programs**

For a student to have credit transferred to the program of study, approval must be granted by the Graduate Program Coordinator and processed by the Office of the Registrar. Note that it is University policy that transferred credits do not receive a grade and are not factored into the student's GPA (See specific program requirements regarding the permissibility of transfer credits).

### **1. Number of Transfer Credits for Master's Degree and Certification Programs**

- a. A maximum of six semester hours of graduate-level credit may be accepted for transfer from any accredited college or university including Montclair State University prior to full matriculation. The exception is for students enrolled in a certificate program at Montclair State University.
- b. A maximum of six semester hours of graduate-level credit completed at another institution may be transferred after matriculation. Written approval must be obtained from the Graduate Program Coordinator prior to taking any course for transfer credit. The total number of transfer credits prior to or after matriculation cannot exceed a six credits.

### **2. Number of Transfer Credits for Doctoral Degree Programs**

- a. Students entering a post-baccalaureate program may transfer a maximum of 24 graduate-level semester hours into their doctoral program if this is approved by the Doctoral Program Director.
- b. Students entering a post-master's program may transfer a maximum of 18 graduate-level semester hours from a program not inclusive of the master's degree into their doctoral program if this is approved by the Doctoral Program Director.

#### **I. Transfer Credits for Certificate Programs**

A maximum of six semester hours or one-third of the total credits, whichever is fewer, may be accepted for transfer from any accredited college or university including Montclair State University. Individual programs may have more stringent requirements, allowing fewer transfer credits.

#### **J. Criteria for Acceptance of Transfer Credit**

1. The official transcript of the issuing college or university must state that the credit earned is graduate credit or would receive graduate credit toward a degree at that institution.
2. For doctoral programs, the course must be equivalent to a Montclair State University doctoral-level course.
3. The grades earned must be "B" or better (Transfer grades are not used in computing the student's GPA at Montclair State University).
4. Credit will not be given for doctoral, master's degree, certification or certificate program requirements for courses taken 10 years prior to the student's date of matriculation.
5. The request is made at the time of matriculation.
6. The Doctoral Program Director recommends the transfer of credit to the Graduate Dean as appropriate to the work program.

Note: Credit will not be given for courses that were used within another degree program.

#### **K. Transfer of Pass/Fail courses**

Transfer credit will be accepted for courses graded on a pass/fail (P/F) or satisfactory/fail (S/F) basis from colleges and universities whose grading system is solely of this type provided a student receives a "pass" or "satisfactory" grade. Transfer credit will not be accepted for "P" or "S" grades if the college or university also uses a traditional grading system.

## **L. Substitution for Course Taken at Another Institution**

A student matriculated into a degree program may substitute a course given at another institution only with prior approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director. The form for making this request must be completed and approved by both the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director and the Graduate Dean in the semester prior to enrolling in the course.

## **M. Applicability of Courses from MSU Certificate Programs**

Degree students who have completed a certificate program at Montclair State University may apply to use those courses for credit in a doctoral or master's degree program to which they have been accepted. The credits must be approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator and processed by The Graduate School.

## **N. Credit for Workshops**

Graduate credit for a workshop offered by Montclair State University may only be granted if the workshop was approved by departmental and college/school graduate curriculum committees and the Graduate Council. Permission must be obtained from the Graduate Program Coordinator prior to registration if this credit is to be used toward a degree and approved by the Graduate Dean.

## **O. Credit by Examination**

Credit by Examination is not permitted for graduate courses.

## **P. Credit for Independent Study**

### **1. Requirements for Students to Take an Independent Study**

- a. Students must have a GPA of at least 3.0.
- b. Students must have completed at least 12 credits toward the degree being pursued. Post-master's doctoral students must have completed at least six credits toward the degree being pursued.
- c. Students may register for independent study in the fall, spring or summer.
- d. Students must have permission from the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director in order to register for an independent study that will be taken during the same semester in which that course is offered.

### **2. Independent Study During Fall and Spring Semesters**

Students may register for independent study with the permission of the Graduate Program Coordinator. One of two methods may be used:

- a. An existing approved course may be taken on an independent study basis.



- b. An area of study not within an approved course may be developed.

### **3. Independent Study During Summer Session**

- a. Students may register for independent study by arrangement with a faculty member and department chairperson. The *Independent Study Application* form, available in the respective academic department offices or Registrar's office, must be completed fully as specified in the directions and must be signed by the student, instructor and department chairperson. The completed form is submitted in person by the student to the Office of the Registrar at the time of registration.
- b. Independent study is not available for a course that is scheduled anytime throughout the summer sessions.
- c. Independent study assignments are expected to be completed by the end of the session specified on the *Independent Study Application* form.

### **4. Application for Independent Study**

The *Independent Study Application* form should be completed and submitted in person by the student to the Office of the Registrar at the time of registration. The student and the faculty member will develop a written statement describing the conduct of the independent study.

## **Q. Audited Courses**

### **1. Auditing a Course**

To “audit” a course is to attend class regularly, but without the obligation of participating in class discussions, laboratory work, examinations, performances or any class activity other than listening. Audited courses do not carry academic credit. Graduate School attendance policy applies to audited courses.

### **2. Conditions for Taking an Audited Course in Addition to Other Courses**

- a. Students auditing a course must establish eligibility for admission and registration and must pay the required tuition and fees.
- b. Students must file an *Audit Application* with the Office of the Registrar by the required deadline.
- c. A course can be audited only in accordance with the deadlines for application listed in the course schedule booklet.
- d. Audited courses are considered to be part of the student’s course load, which may not exceed the maximum number of semester hours.
- e. An “audit” may not be changed to a “for credit” course after the first three weeks of the semester in which the course is taken.
- f. A student who has audited a course may take the course for credit at a later date.

### **3. Conditions for Students Taking Only Audited Courses**

- a. All conditions a. through e. in section 2 above apply.
- b. In addition, students approved to take only audited courses in a given semester (that is who are not taking any courses for credit in that semester) may not change to a “for credit” status during the semester of enrollment.

### **4. Grade for Audited Course**

The student’s record will show a grade of “AU” for the course when the instructor certifies that the prescribed conditions for the audit were met.

## **R. Undergraduates Enrolling in Graduate Courses**

Qualified undergraduate students may be permitted to enroll in certain 500-level courses for a maximum of six credits. These credits may be used toward undergraduate or graduate programs. The following conditions apply:

1. A student must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 and have completed 105 semester hours of coursework as verified by the Office of the Registrar.
2. Students must submit the appropriate form to The Graduate School with the signature of the course instructor and the Department Chairperson (in which the course is offered) and specifying whether the course is being taken for graduate or undergraduate credit. If the student takes the course for graduate credit, graduate tuition rates apply.
3. These requirements do not apply to students in a combined BA/MA (BS/MS) program for graduate courses, which are approved in their program of study.

Admission of undergraduates to graduate courses does not guarantee future acceptance into a graduate program.

## **S. Enrollment in Doctoral-Level Courses by Non-Matriculated Students**

1. Undergraduates cannot be enrolled in doctoral-level courses (700 level and above).
2. Master’s-level students matriculated in programs at MSU may enroll in up to six credits of 700- and 800-level courses with appropriate prerequisites as determined by the program and with the permission of the Doctoral Program Director.
3. Non-degree, post-master’s students may enroll in up to six credits of 700- and 800-level courses with appropriate prerequisites as determined by the program and with the permission of the Doctoral Program Director.

## **T. Attendance Requirements**

Students are expected to fulfill all course requirements, including attendance, if mandated by the instructor. Instructors should notify students, in writing, as to the nature of the attendance requirements. Instructors may penalize students for failure to meet specified attendance.

## **U. Rescheduling of Classes Cancelled for Inclement Weather**

Classes cancelled as a result of inclement weather may be rescheduled at the discretion of the instructor.

## **V. Registration for Courses with a Time Overlap (Registrar's Policy)**

Students may not register for courses that overlap in time. Should such a circumstance occur, the University reserves the right to withdraw a student from one of the conflicting courses.

In the case where a laboratory or studio course is involved, in unusual circumstances, overlap may be permitted. Permission will be granted only with the written approval of both instructors and of the respective Department Chairperson(s) or Doctoral Program Director(s) and College/School Dean(s). Permission must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar prior to the end of the registration period.

## **W. Courses Requiring Research Papers/Projects/Theses – Human Subjects**

Students conducting research for courses, theses, dissertations and/or comprehensive projects in which human subjects are used must adhere to the regulations of the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

## **X. Periodic Review of Progress for Doctoral Degree Programs**

Each program must conduct a review of student progress at least once each year. The Doctoral Program Director must share this assessment with the student.

### **1. Format of Annual Review**

The format of this annual review may be determined by the program faculty, but must include the following elements, if applicable, from both the student and the faculty perspective:

- a. Overview of progress on coursework;
- b. Overview of progress on research/inquiry;
- c. Overview of progress on dissertation or culminating research project;
- d. Goals set for the next academic year;
- e. Estimated timeline to completion.

## **2. Submission of Annual Reviews**

Annual reviews are to be collected by the Doctoral Program Directors and made available to The Graduate School.

**Section V**

**GRADING, GRADE POINT AVERAGE, ACADEMIC PROBATION/DISMISSAL**

## V. GRADING, GRADE POINT AVERAGE, ACADEMIC PROBATION/DISMISSAL

### A. Grading for Graduate Courses

#### 1. Available Letter Grades for Graduate Courses

A = 4.0	B = 3.0	C = 2.0
A- = 3.7	B- = 2.7	C- = 1.7
B+ = 3.3	C+ = 2.3	F = 0.0

#### 2. Additional Grades

The following grades should be given only when students meet the conditions for receiving these grades:

IN = Incomplete	NC = No Credit	S= Satisfactory
IP = In Progress	AU = Audit	

#### 3. Grade of “D”

Grades of “D” are not available for any courses taken by a graduate student.

#### 4. Repeating a Course with an “F” Grade in a Master’s Program

Students who receive a grade of “F” in a course are not permitted to repeat that course. The Graduate Program Coordinator, at their discretion can make exceptions in special cases and under extenuating circumstances. Permission will be granted only with the written approval of The Graduate Program Coordinator. The decision will be forwarded to the College/School Dean and to the Graduate School. The original “F” grade can then be removed from the GPA calculation and replaced with the new grade.

#### 5. Pass/Fail Grades

Pass/fail grades are not permitted for credit-bearing courses at the graduate level. Exceptions to this rule are thesis extension (699) and 900-level doctoral courses.

### B. Incomplete Grades

#### 1. Use of Incomplete

The grade of “Incomplete” is used when a student has not completed the required coursework. The IN grade signifies that a grade is being withheld until the required work is completed and approved.

In all cases, the IN grade is a privilege exercised by an instructor; it is not a right ascribed to a student. The instructor is not required to provide an IN grade. An IN grade cannot be employed to avoid the receipt of a low grade.

## **2. Conditions for Receiving an IN Grade**

For an IN grade to be assigned:

- a. The student must initiate the request no later than the last day of class.
- b. A formal agreement is developed between the student and the instructor delineating the conditions for removing the IN grade using *The Contract for an Incomplete Grade*. (This contract is submitted with the Grade Roster.)

## **3. Removal of an IN Grade**

For the IN grade to be removed, students are responsible for completing their work by the following dates:

- a. February 15 for IN grades assigned for the previous fall and/or winter semesters.
- b. June 30 for IN grades assigned for the previous spring semester.
- c. October 15 for summer incompletes.

## **4. Extending the Deadline for Removal of an IN Grade**

If there is reason to extend the deadline for an IN grade removal, it is the student's responsibility to initiate this extension by submitting a *Request of Extension of an Incomplete Grade* to the Office of the Registrar. The instructor and appropriate Chairperson and Dean must sign this request.

## **C. Determination of Grade Point Average**

### **1. Degree Programs**

Grade point average is based on all courses in the program of study (excluding those listed as prerequisites and courses transferred from another institution).

### **2. Certificate, Certification, and Non-Degree Status**

- a. For post-baccalaureate certificate and certification programs, the GPA is based on all courses in the program of study.
- b. For non-degree students not enrolled in a certificate or certification program, the cumulative GPA for all courses taken post-baccalaureate will be computed.

## **D. Maintenance of Grade Point Average**

### **1. Degree Programs (Master's or Doctoral)**

Graduate students taking courses under any matriculation status in degree programs must maintain a GPA of 3.0. Failure to maintain a GPA of 3.0 will result in being placed on academic probation.

### **2. Other than Degree Programs**

Graduate students taking courses under any matriculation other than in a degree program status must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5. Failure to maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5 will result in being placed on academic probation.

## **E. Academic Probation/Dismissal**

### **1. Academic Probation**

- a. A student in a degree program will be placed on academic probation when their GPA falls below 3.0.
- b. Following the semester in which the GPA dropped below 3.0, the degree student must raise their GPA to at least a 3.0 by the end of the semester in which the student completes at least an additional six credits of coursework. These credits must be completed within two semesters that need not be consecutive. All credits completed during these semesters will be considered.

### **2. Dismissal**

- a. Failure to achieve the required GPA within the prescribed period of time will lead to final review, which may result in removal of matriculated status and dismissal. The Graduate School will notify the Graduate Program Coordinator, Doctoral Program Director or designee about students who have not raised their GPA to the required level within this period of time. Dismissal actions will be decided on a case-by-case basis through the review process of each program and will be communicated to The Graduate School by the Graduate Program Coordinator. The dismissal notification to students will be sent out by The Graduate School.
- b. A degree student who receives three C-level or lower grades (i.e., "C+," "C," "C-," or "F") will be dismissed from the program. The Graduate School will notify the Graduate Program Coordinator or designee about students who have received a third C- level or lower grade. The Graduate Program Coordinator will notify The Graduate School to confirm the dismissal action. The dismissal notification to the student will be sent out by The Graduate School. Please note that some programs have a more stringent policy for grades of "F." Doctoral students are dismissed if they receive one "F" grade.



Note: If a student who has been dismissed from one program applies to another program, the only matriculation status available is conditional matriculation.

### **3. Exceptions to Academic Dismissal**

- a. Exceptions to the academic dismissal policies, for both non-maintenance of GPA and/or for more than three C- level or lower grades, will be considered only in special cases and under extenuating circumstances by the Graduate Program Coordinator in consultation with the Graduate Dean.
- b. Conditions will be set for the student's continuing in the program. The decision to withhold dismissal and the conditions for continued matriculation will be forwarded to the Graduate Dean. The notification letter to the student will be sent out by The Graduate School.
- c. Failure to meet the conditions for continued matriculation will result in dismissal from the program.

**Section VI**

**PROGRAM COMPLETION/GRADUATION/COMMENCEMENT**

## **VI. PROGRAM COMPLETION/GRADUATION/COMMENCEMENT**

### **A. Master's Degree Credit Requirements**

1. To receive a master's degree, a student must complete the prescribed number of semester hours and courses required by the program of study.
2. Graduate students taking courses under any matriculation status in degree programs must maintain a GPA of 3.0.
3. Students cannot present more than two grades of "C" toward their degree at final audit.
4. Only the Vice-President for Academic Affairs can make exceptions to these requirements at the recommendation of the Graduate Dean.

### **B. Doctoral Degree Credit Requirements**

1. Semester Hours: To receive a doctoral degree, a student must complete the prescribed number of semester hours and courses required by the program of study.
2. GPA: A student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 as defined by the program of study. Individual programs may set a higher minimum, which must be approved by the Graduate Dean.
3. Grades below "B": Students matriculated in a doctoral program may not earn more than six semester hours of "C." Individual programs may set a more stringent standard, which must be approved by the Graduate Dean.
4. Qualifying Experience for Admission to Doctoral Candidacy: Each program must specify a qualifying experience for admission to doctoral candidacy. Qualifying experiences may include a comprehensive examination, portfolio, clinical or applied examination or a research project. A student must successfully complete the qualifying experience as defined by the individual program.
5. Admission to Doctoral Candidacy: To be eligible for admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, students must have:
  - a. Cumulative grade point average equal to or greater than 3.0 in the doctoral program courses, no more than six semester hours of "C" and no failing grades;
  - b. Successful performance on the qualifying experience.
  - c. Upon satisfying these requirements, a student will be recommended to the Graduate Dean for candidacy.

6. **Culminating Research Experience:** All students will present and successfully defend a dissertation or a culminating research project.

Note: Only the Graduate Dean can make exceptions to these requirements.

### **C. Degree Requirements for Other Programs of Study**

For certification programs, certificate programs and other programs, students must complete all course and other requirements specified on their work programs and attain a minimum GPA of 2.5. Individual programs may have a higher minimum GPA.

### **D. Application for Final Audit to Verify Program Completion**

Students must file an *Application for Final Audit* with the Office of the Registrar in order to receive their degree. For filing deadlines, refer to the academic calendar provided by the Office of the Registrar.

### **E. Degree Students' Eligibility to Attend Commencement**

Permission to participate in May commencement exercises will be granted to:

1. Students who have completed all program requirements and who have filed with, and received from, the Registrar's office an approved *Application for Final Audit* for May graduation. Doctoral degree recipients are required to complete all program requirements in addition to filing a completed dissertation (as described in the Dissertation Manual), having it approved by the Graduate Dean, OR successfully defending the appropriate research project, as defined by the doctoral program.
2. Students who have earned degrees in the preceding January or August.

**Section VII**

**QUALIFYING EXPERIENCE FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDACY AND DOCTORAL  
DEGREE COMPLETION**

## **VII. QUALIFYING EXPERIENCE FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDACY AND DOCTORAL DEGREE COMPLETION**

All programs will require a qualifying experience for advancement to doctoral candidacy. The specific qualifying experience(s) will be specified by the individual doctoral program. Examples of qualifying experiences include comprehensive examinations, portfolios, clinical or applied examinations or research projects.

### **A. General Requirements for all Qualifying Experiences**

#### **1. Coordination of the Qualifying Experience**

The Doctoral Program Director or designee will be responsible for coordinating the procedures for the qualifying experience and ensuring that the outcome is filed with The Graduate School.

#### **2. Approval of the Qualifying Experience**

The qualifying experience process will be developed by the program and filed with The Graduate Dean for approval as part of the doctoral work program.

#### **3. Scheduling**

The qualifying experience will be offered to eligible students at least once a year.

#### **4. Application for Qualifying Experience**

- a. Doctoral students in good academic standing are eligible for the qualifying experience. Good academic standing requires a minimum of a 3.0 grade point average, no more than six semester hours of "C," zero semester hours of "F" on the record and no other disciplinary actions.
- b. Doctoral students may apply to take the qualifying experience after completing the core requirements of their specific discipline or at the recommendation of the Doctoral Program Director. It is the intent of this requirement that students will not apply for this experience prior to having completed a minimum of 50 percent of their required coursework, not including dissertation credits. For programs which have more than one step to complete the qualifying experience, the last step of the qualifying experience should not be scheduled before the student has completed at least 50 percent of their coursework, not including dissertation credits. This experience should be scheduled prior to identifying and formalizing a decision about their dissertation or culminating research project. The application to take the qualifying experience must be approved by the Doctoral Program Director in consultation with the faculty.

## **5. Evaluation of Qualifying Experience**

The committee members who will evaluate the qualifying experience must consist of a minimum of three faculty members involved in the doctoral program in which the student is matriculated.

## **6. Notification to Student**

The grading standards to be used, the process by which grades are assigned and the procedure for notifying students of the results of the qualifying experience must be communicated to students by each individual program.

## **7. Notification to The Graduate School**

The Doctoral Program Director is responsible for notifying The Graduate School of the result of the qualifying experience within four weeks of the student's completion of the experience.

## **8. Failing the Qualifying Experience**

Failure on the qualifying experience will be determined by a consensus of the evaluating committee. Each department or program will develop a procedure for mediating split decisions.

Failure on the qualifying experience will result in review of matriculation status or termination. In no case may the qualifying experience be taken more than twice.

## **B. Comprehensive Examination**

### **1. Format of the Comprehensive Examination**

The examination will be written. Some programs may also include an oral component. If the examination includes an oral phase, it will be given on an individual basis.

### **2. Administration and Scheduling of the Comprehensive Examination**

The department or program in which students do their major work shall administer the examinations.

Comprehensive examinations may be given on a set schedule (i.e., once a year or once a semester) for groups of students or may be scheduled on an individual basis. If given only once a year, the examination cannot be scheduled in the summer for a 10-month program.

The examination shall be scheduled so that it does not conflict with class sessions of any student taking the examination.

### **3. Failing the Comprehensive Examination**

Students who fail the examination are permitted to retake the examination once. Students must wait at least one semester to retake an oral or written examination. Students who fail the examination may be required to register for additional work in preparation for retaking the examination. Exceptions to rescheduling an oral examination or defense will be negotiated by the committee and student. Students who fail the exam for the second time will be dismissed from the program.

## **C. Portfolio**

### **1. Purpose of the Portfolio**

The portfolio is designed to be tangible and authentic evidence of the wide range of knowledge and competencies that doctoral degree candidates should possess. The portfolio will not be a file of course projects and assignments, but rather a goal-driven documentation of the development and growth in knowledge and skills.

### **2. Contents of the Portfolio**

The portfolio must provide evidence of the candidate's knowledge integration, writing and editing and research as well as other competencies deemed necessary for particular disciplines. The portfolio will include a rationale for each artifact included within. Contents may include:

- a. Work generated for courses within the doctoral program.
- b. Integrative essays.
- c. Literature reviews.
- d. Documents generated during clinical or applied experiences.

### **3. Development of the Portfolio**

It is important for doctoral students to think about what they have produced that might become artifacts for the portfolio. Students should consult with professors and colleagues about this as they progress through the program. Students should work on drafts of their rationale statements and on integrative pieces developed for the portfolio. Candidates will receive ongoing direction for portfolio development from a portfolio adviser who is a member of the doctoral faculty.



#### **4. Evaluation of the Portfolio**

Candidates will present their portfolio for assessment in a forum designed for this purpose. A committee of faculty will evaluate the portfolio according to predetermined criteria set by the individual program.

#### **5. Scheduling the Portfolio Assessment Session**

Approval to schedule the assessment session will be given by the Doctoral Program Director in concert with the portfolio adviser. The candidate will submit the portfolio prior to the assessment session following a procedure set by the individual program.

### **D. Practical Examinations**

#### **1. Purpose of the Practical Examination**

The practical examination is designed to provide evidence of a wide range of clinical and applied knowledge and competencies that doctoral students in clinical or applied programs should possess.

#### **2. Scope of the Practical Examination**

The practical examination may consist of a series of clinical or applied performance activities, oral activities and written activities covering areas of basic and advanced clinical or applied practice.

#### **3. Scheduling and Evaluation of Practical Examination Components**

Students will be provided with a schedule for the examination components and with the evaluation rubrics used to assess the performance, oral and written activities.

### **E. Qualifying Research Project**

#### **1. Purpose of the Qualifying Research Project**

The qualifying research project should be an original/independent piece of work that illustrates the student's synthesis of information or prior work in the field. With this experience, students can demonstrate their ability to engage in original, independent thinking.

#### **2. Scope of the Qualifying Research Project**

Programs that have a qualifying research project will set guidelines appropriate to the field of inquiry. Examples of projects can include, but are not limited to, an extensive review of literature, a pilot project for the dissertation that may involve data gathering, directed readings that culminate in an oral presentation or written

report/paper, other empirical or theoretical inquiry into a topic of importance to the field, or a significant replication of a prior study.

### **3. Scheduling and Evaluating the Qualifying Research Project**

The Doctoral Program Director or designee will set a timeline for completion and evaluation of the research project.

**Section VIII**

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS AND CULMINATING RESEARCH PROJECTS**

## **VIII. DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS AND CULMINATING RESEARCH PROJECTS**

### **A. Nature of the Dissertation or Other Culminating Research Project**

The research for the dissertation or culminating project should meet the standard of quality within the discipline or field of study. The research must be original, significant, independently carried out and of publishable quality. The project must be a written work of original research, demonstrating the candidate's comprehensive knowledge and mastery of theoretical, methodological, historical and empirical issues relevant to the chosen research topic.

### **B. Course Numbering for the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

#### **1. Dissertation**

Dissertation Advisement will be numbered 900. Dissertation Advisement Extension will be numbered 901.

#### **2. Culminating Research Project**

The individual program will determine course numbering for courses, which will lead to completion of the culminating research project. Programs must use 800- or 900-level numbers.

Programs that follow the dissertation model (where an IP grade is given until the research project is completed) will use 902 for research project advisement and 903 for research project extension.

Programs for which the culminating research project is completed through a series of courses in which a student receives a grade each semester will use 800-level numbering for each of the component courses.

### **C. Credit for the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

#### **1. Dissertation**

A minimum of 12 credits of Dissertation Advisement will be required for all doctoral programs or tracks requiring completion of a dissertation.

Students will register for a minimum of three credits of Dissertation Advisement (900) each fall or spring semester until they have completed the number of credits designated by their program for the dissertation and then will register for Dissertation Advisement Extension (901) each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed. One credit is given for 901.

Students must be registered for Advisement or Extension (900 or 901, respectively) the semester in which they are defending their dissertation, including summer.

## **2. Culminating Research Project**

A minimum of eight credits of a culminating research project will be required in an applied professional program as an alternative to a dissertation. Programs may use 902 (research project advisement) or a series of 800-level courses for the accrual of the culminating research project credits.

### **D. Registering for the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

Students typically register for their first semester of 900 or of the culminating research project in the semester after they have advanced to doctoral candidacy. In special cases, students may register for either of these experiences prior to advancing to candidacy with approval of the student's adviser and Doctoral Program Director. Students completing a dissertation must register for a minimum of three semester hours of 900 or 901 each semester while working on their dissertation. For students completing a culminating research project, the credit allocation per semester will be determined by the individual doctoral program. (See policies on Continuous Matriculation and Admission to Doctoral Candidacy).

### **E. Grading of the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

#### **1. Dissertation**

Only at the completion of the dissertation will the adviser submit a final grade. The grade will only apply toward the specific number of credits of 900 (Dissertation Advisement) required by the individual program. Dissertation Advisement courses are graded on a pass/fail basis. This grade will also apply to any number of credits of 901 (Dissertation Extension) in which the student had enrolled.

#### **2. Culminating Research Project**

Programs that have a series of 800-level courses leading to completion of the culminating research project will assign letter grades each semester as each course in the series is completed.

Alternatively, culminating research projects numbered as 902 (research project advisement; 903 for research project extension) may be assigned an IP grade until the entire project is completed. Only at the completion of the culminating research project will the adviser submit a final grade. The grade will apply only toward the specific number of credits of 902 (research project advisement) required by the individual program. Programs may use P/F or letter grades for grading 902 (research project advisement), with a passing grade being an A or B.

## **F. Committee for the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

### **1. Membership**

A committee composed of a minimum of three faculty members, including the dissertation chairperson, is required. The three committee members must be Montclair State University full-time, tenure-track faculty; the dissertation chairperson must be a faculty member in the student's program and must hold doctoral faculty status.

### **2. Additional Committee Members**

Programs may allow additional members (above the required minimum of three full-time, tenure-track faculty members from MSU) to serve on individual committees.

Requests for other MSU personnel with relevant expertise and a terminal degree in their field to serve as an additional member on the committee must be made to the Graduate Dean.

Requests for additional members of the committee from outside the University must be made by completing the *Request for Approval of an Outside Dissertation Committee Member* form. The Doctoral Program Director must review the request and forward their recommendation to the Dean of the student's college. The request must also be approved by the Dean of The Graduate School.

### **3. Committee Chair**

One of the Montclair State University doctoral faculty members from the student's doctoral program will serve as the student's committee chair/adviser. The chair of the committee must have been granted status as doctoral faculty. Committee chairs who leave MSU may continue to serve on the committee, but another MSU faculty member must take over as committee chair. Exceptions may be granted when a student is close to completing and defending the dissertation or culminating research project.

### **4. Changes in Committee Composition**

Any change in committee membership must be approved by the Committee Chair, the Doctoral Program Director, and the Graduate Dean.

## **G. Proposal for the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

### **1. Requirement for Proposal**

A proposal for the dissertation or other culminating research experience is required.

## 2. Format of the Proposal

The exact format and content of the proposal will be determined by the individual doctoral program. The proposal may include the following:

- a. Statement of the problem or area of inquiry;
- b. Justification for the proposed research;
- c. Relevant prior research;
- d. Projected findings and/or implications of the research;
- e. Reference list.
- f. Procedures and methods of research/inquiry, if relevant.
- g. Data sources, if relevant.

## 3. Dissertation Proposals

The full committee must meet in person with the student for an oral defense of the proposal prior to its approval. Interactive communication such as video or teleconferencing may be substituted for an in-person meeting only for those committee members from outside the University or if, under unusual circumstances, a committee member within the University is unable to attend in person. The committee, by unanimous consent, approves, modifies or disapproves the proposal.

Once the committee and the Doctoral Program Director have approved the proposal, the student must complete the *Approval of the Dissertation Proposal* form and submit it along with a copy of the proposal to the Graduate Dean for approval. In unusual circumstances (e.g., IRB or other procedural violations), the Graduate Dean may recommend that the committee reconvene and reconsider the proposal.

If it is determined by the student's committee that the project will require IRB approval, the student must file for IRB approval. Under the following conditions, students may submit an IRB application prior to receiving approval of their proposal by their committee and/or receipt of the *Approval of Dissertation Proposal* form from the Graduate Dean:

- a. A written approval from the chair and all members of the student's committee must be submitted to the Doctoral Program Director and kept on file;
- b. The student submits a signed statement to the Doctoral Program Director, noting that the student understands that:
  1. Even with IRB approval, students may not begin to recruit participants or collect any data related to their dissertation until the proposal has been approved by their committee and they have received the *Approval of Dissertation Proposal* form from the Dean of The Graduate School; and,
  2. If the committee requires any changes to the student's methodology that changes any information submitted on the IRB application, the student must submit an amendment to the IRB and that amendment must be approved before the student does any recruitment or data collection.

#### **4. Filing the Proposal**

A copy of the approved proposal must be distributed to each member of the committee and the proposal and accompanying form filed with The Graduate School.

#### **5. Time Limit for Filing a Proposal**

The student must have an approved proposal within three years after advancement to candidacy. If this condition is not met, the Doctoral Program Director of the student's program and the Graduate Dean will review the student's matriculation status.

#### **6. Timing of the Dissertation Defense**

The earliest that a dissertation defense may occur is in the first semester following the approval of the proposal excluding winter or summer precession. Student must be registered for advisement or extension (900 or 901, respectively) during the semester in which they are defending.

### **H. Human Participant and Animal Subject Approval**

The primary responsibility for ensuring ethical treatment of participants lies with the student and dissertation chair. Doctoral candidates must receive approval from the Institutional Review Board *before* conducting research that involves human participants or animal subjects and prior to submitting the dissertation to The Graduate School for final approval.

### **I. Research on Non-Human Organisms**

The student should consult with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs regarding need for approval and policies pertaining to non-human living organisms.

### **J. Style/Format for Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

Dissertation: Refer to the Dissertation Procedures & Guidelines Manual.

Culminating Research Project: No single style for the culminating research project is prescribed. Students should follow a manual established by their program.

### **K. Defense of the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

#### **1. Defense Requirement**

An oral defense is required for a dissertation.



## **2. Scheduling the Defense**

The defense may not occur in the same semester as the approval of the proposal. An *Application for Dissertation Defense Date* must be submitted to The Graduate School by March 1 for May graduation and by November 1 for January graduation. The dissertation defense should take place approximately by April 1 for May graduation and approximately by December 1 for January conferral of degree. For August graduation, an *Application for Dissertation Defense Date* must be submitted to The Graduate School by May 1.

## **3. Presence of Committee Members at the Defense**

All members of the committee must be present at the defense. If there is a member who cannot be physically present due to distance or circumstance, technology such as interactive communication via video or teleconferencing can be used to facilitate this member's participation.

## **4. Procedures for the Defense**

Whoever convenes the defense is to share all ground rules at the start of the meeting.

- a. Attendance by Non-Committee Members. While the presentation of the student's research is open to anyone who wishes to come, the committee deliberation regarding the outcome is open only to committee members and the University Representative.
- b. University Representative. The Doctoral Program Director (DPD) will serve as a representative of The Graduate School and attend the defense. As the University representative, the DPD will function as an observer and ensure that the defense is carried out in a manner consistent with University policy. Under certain circumstances, such as when the DPD is unavailable or when the DPD is also chairing or serving on the student's committee, they may designate some other doctoral faculty member, or representative from The Graduate School, to act in their stead.
- c. Additional Guidelines. In addition to the policies and procedures delineated by The Graduate School, programs have created guidelines for their oral dissertation defense (e.g., whether non-committee members may ask questions or offer comments, and if so, when during the process may they do so). These guidelines are included in the handbook/website/materials that are given to students when entering the program.

## **5. Decisions**

Dissertation defenses are graded on a pass/fail basis (rather than being assigned letter grades). There are three possible outcomes, which are determined by the committee. The outcome must be listed on the *Report of Dissertation Defense*

form, signed by all of the committee members and the Graduate Dean (or Associate Dean) and returned to The Graduate School. The outcomes are:

- a. **Pass** No substantive revisions are required.
- b. **Pass with Conditions** means that substantive revisions to the document and/or the oral defense are required. The list of the conditions, including who must approve of revisions, whether an additional oral defense is required and the timetable for the revisions to be completed must be attached to the form submitted to The Graduate School as a separate document.
- c. **Fail** indicates that the committee voted that the student did not pass. The student will be provided with written documentation from the committee justifying the fail grade. Based on the extent of revisions required, the committee may either recommend dismissal or a second and final defense with significant and extensive changes.

## **L. Final Approval of the Dissertation or Culminating Research Project**

### **1. Dissertation**

The Graduate School annually reviews/updates the Dissertation Guidelines Manual and makes the information available on The Graduate School website. When a student is given the date to defend their dissertation, that student is responsible for reviewing the most current Dissertation Guidelines Manual. The student will follow those procedures when submitting the final manuscript. Students will not be cleared for graduation until formatting requirements are met.

A final copy-edited version of the approved dissertation must be submitted no later than four weeks before graduation.

### **2. Culminating Research Project**

At the successful completion of all requirements, the members of the research committee and Doctoral Program Director will sign a cover sheet indicating approval that all the requirements of this phase of the student's education have been completed. A copy of the approval sheet will be retained in the student's academic folder.

A copy of the completed document will be kept in the department or program as a reference for future students.

**Section IX**

**MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS**

## **IX. MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS**

All master's degree programs have comprehensive experience requirements. These include: comprehensive examinations (written and oral), theses, written projects, treatises, capstone courses, culminating activities, fieldwork, field projects and internships.

Some programs may require more than one comprehensive experience (e.g., comprehensive examination and written project).

It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the comprehensive experience requirement(s) of their program of study.

The comprehensive examination and thesis are governed by the specific guidelines described below.

### **A. Comprehensive Examination**

1. All students need a minimum 3.0 GPA to be eligible to take the comprehensive examination. Departments may set a minimum number of credits to be earned before taking the comprehensive exam.
2. The examination may be written and/or oral. If the examination includes an oral phase, it will be given on an individual basis.
3. Examinations are scheduled in the fall and spring semesters.
4. Graduate Program Coordinators shall submit the date, time and location of the examination to The Graduate School at least four weeks before the examination is to be given.
5. The examination shall be scheduled so that it does not conflict with class sessions of any student taking the examination.
6. The department in which students do their major work shall administer examinations.
7. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Program Coordinator well in advance of the date on which the examination is to be given of intent to take the examination. See departments for specific program requirements and dates. (This will provide sufficient time for departments to communicate with students concerning any reexamination procedures.)
8. Students who fail the examination are permitted to retake the examination. However, students may not take the examination more than three times.

9. Students who fail the examination may be required to register for additional work in preparation for retaking the examination.
10. Departments shall make known to students the grading standards and process as well as the procedure for notifying students of the results of the examination.

## **B. Preparation of a Thesis**

### **1. Eligibility**

Only students in good standing (i.e., GPA minimum of 3.0) after completion of a minimum of 18 credits of graduate coursework are eligible to register for thesis credit.

### **2. Thesis Development**

All regulations governing the writing of a thesis are contained in Procedures and Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses at Montclair State University. Students may obtain a copy of this document from The Graduate School website.

### **3. Registration for Thesis Credit and Time Limitations**

#### **a. Course Numbering and Credit for Thesis**

All master's thesis courses are numbered 698 (i.e., the M.A. in English master's thesis course is ENGL 698). Master's thesis courses are one-semester courses, earning either three, four or six credits depending on the approved academic program. For specific information about the thesis course, students should consult with their graduate adviser.

#### **b. Registering for Thesis**

In order to register for the thesis course, the student must submit the *Approval for Writing a Thesis* form (with the thesis outline attached to it) signed by the student, thesis sponsor, committee members, Graduate Program Coordinator and The Graduate School. The signatures of the sponsor and committee members confirm that the thesis outline has been approved. The signatures of the Graduate Program Coordinator and The Graduate School confirm the student's eligibility to register for the thesis course.

#### **c. Time Limitations**

Students who are unable to complete the master's thesis during the semester in which they register for the thesis course, must register for the master's thesis extension course (one credit) each subsequent semester (excluding summer terms) until the master's thesis is successfully completed and approved by the student's thesis committee. All master's thesis extension courses are numbered 699. There

is no limit on the number of times a student may register for the master's thesis extension course.

**4. Deadline for Submission of Thesis**

The completed thesis must be submitted to The Graduate School no later than four weeks prior to the anticipated date of graduation.

**5. Thesis Course Grade**

Master's thesis course and extension will be graded as 'S' (Satisfactory) at the end of each semester it is not completed. 'S' is not an available grade for a thesis. It indicates Satisfactory completion of a course which does not count in degree credit totals. A committee composed of three faculty members, including the thesis sponsor, will grade the thesis. Only at the completion of the thesis and after confirmation from The Graduate School that the thesis has been filed and is correctly formatted, will the thesis sponsor submit a final grade. The final grade will be applied to the original, three-, four- or six-credit master's thesis course. The master's thesis extension course(s) will be graded as P when the thesis is satisfactorily completed.

**Section X**

**COMBINED UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS**

## **X. COMBINED UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS**

### **A. Definition**

A combined degree program (bachelor's and master's degree), also known as an accelerated degree program, is a state-, university- and department-approved course of study that enables students to complete a bachelor's and master's degree in a shortened period of time, typically within five years of intensive study (as opposed to six or more if the degrees are completed separately). A combined degree program is constructed from two existing programs, one at the bachelor's level and one at the master's level, of which each program must be established as a stand-alone degree. If an undergraduate or graduate program does not currently exist at the institution, it (or both) must be developed, the curriculum review process as outlined by the state of New Jersey must be completed, and it must be approved at all levels before a combined degree program may go forward.

### **B. Eligibility and Application**

Montclair State undergraduates with the appropriate academic major, who meet the general requirements listed below, are eligible to apply to a given bachelor's and master's combined program. Candidates must submit the following for review by the appropriate program:

1. An application for the appropriate combined program;
2. A transcript;
3. A personal statement as outlined in the application;
4. Two letters of reference from faculty members in the major.

### **C. Matriculation in the Program**

1. **Good Standing:** Students in the combined program must meet all program and matriculation requirements outlined in the Undergraduate Handbook, including minimum overall GPA and minimum major GPA, while completing the undergraduate portion of the program. Individual programs may impose more stringent requirements, which can be found in the appropriate program documentation.
2. Students completing the master's portion of the program must meet all matriculation requirements outlined in the Master's/Post-Baccalaureate Policy Manual. Specific programs may impose more stringent requirements, which can be found in the appropriate program documentation.

### **D. Graduate Coursework at the Bachelor's Level**

Once accepted to a given combined program, students may take no more than 12 credits at the master's level prior to completion of the bachelor's degree. These credits will



fulfill both the undergraduate credit requirements in the major as well as meet graduate program requirements as outlined in the program of study.

#### **E. Conferral of the Bachelor's Degree**

Students must complete the minimum 120 credits and all required coursework including all major and General Education requirements. At that point, students will be conferred the appropriate bachelor's degree in the undergraduate major or program. Students will then matriculate into the master's portion of the combined program and complete the remaining required credits as outlined by the program's course of study.

#### **F. Tuition and Fees**

Students pay undergraduate tuition and fees while completing the undergraduate degree and graduate tuition and fees while completing the graduate degree. Undergraduates taking graduate classes are not eligible for graduate assistantships.

