

The Graduate School **Montclair State University**

GRADUATE POLICY MANUAL

For Doctoral, Master's, and
Post-Baccalaureate
Programs 2023-2024



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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, and reduce institutional risk.

Individual colleges, 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 (GPC, master's-level and certificate programs) or Doctoral Program Director (DPD, doctoral level programs) to identify those unit-specific policies.

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 for development and review of Graduate School policy and graduate curriculum. Both parties have the opportunity to review this manual throughout the year. A revised version is published at the start of each academic year. The Graduate School reserves the right to publish changes to this manual during the academic year in accordance with applicable review processes, and after reasonable notice to the campus community.

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Section I

APPLICATION/ADMISSION

I. APPLICATION/ADMISSION

A. General Admissions Requirements to Master's Degree Programs

Applications for Master's degree programs will be forwarded by The Graduate School to Graduate Program Coordinators when the applicant completes all of the following items (please note that programs may have specialized admissions requirements; 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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. Transcripts

- a. During the application process, prospective students may directly upload their unofficial transcripts via their application portal. If admitted, official transcripts that 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.
- b. Applicants with non-US credentials must have their transcripts evaluated by one of the following:
 - i. An agency accredited by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES).

- ii. An agency accredited by the Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE).
- iii. Educated Choices, LLC.
- c. Applicants with non-U.S. credentials who are in the process of earning their bachelor's degree (Last Term Seniors) will be required to submit an evaluation indicating degree conferment prior to admission).

4. Letters of Recommendation

Programs generally require a minimum of two academic and/or professional Letters of Recommendation. This requirement is program-specific.

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 (Essay)

Students must write a Statement of Purpose or Essay 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. Programs may also request additional essays.

B. General Admissions Requirements to Doctoral Degree Programs

1. Standardized Tests

- a. Standardized tests are one criterion that programs may use for evaluating applicants. Doctoral programs will require official GRE scores (those generated by Educational Testing Services) unless 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. The Doctoral Program Director can make exceptions to this policy in special cases and under extenuating circumstances.
- 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. Applicants may directly upload their unofficial transcripts via their application portal. If admitted, official transcripts that 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.
- b. Applicants with non-US credentials must have their transcripts evaluated by one of the following:
 - i. An agency accredited by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES).
 - ii. An agency accredited by the Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE).
 - iii. Educated Choices, LLC.
- c. Applicants with non-U.S. credentials who are in the process of earning their bachelor's degree (Last Term Seniors) will be required to submit an evaluation indicating degree conferment prior to admission.
- d. Where applicable, the applicant must also provide evidence of an appropriate undergraduate background and other departmental requirements.

4. Letters of Recommendation

Three academic and/or professional Letters of Recommendation are required.

5. Interview

Interviews are not required by The Graduate School but may be considered required for some doctoral 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. Additional essays may be required by specific programs. 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 that may lead to doctoral research.

C. Guidelines for Admission to Non-Degree Programs

1. Non-Degree Status

Students admitted with this status include those uncertain about program choice, those who wish to take coursework before being formally admitted to a program, or those who are taking classes for

personal or professional development and are not degree seeking. Non-Degree students may enroll for one semester and a maximum of six credits of coursework provided prerequisites are met. Students may petition The Graduate School to extend their non-degree study to additional terms or for additional credits, but only six graduate credits earned in this status may be transferred into a degree or certificate program, if applicable to that program and approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director. Students must maintain a GPA of 2.5 to continue in non-degree status. To be admitted, students must:

- a. Submit an application.
- b. Submit an unofficial 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 the section on Requirements for International Applicants and Students in this Manual.

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.

D. Guidelines for Admission to Post-Baccalaureate Certification, Post-Master's Certification, & Certificate Programs

In Certification 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. Regular certificate programs only need to follow requirements set by The Graduate School.

a. **Post-Baccalaureate Certification.**

Students seeking a post-baccalaureate certification must have completed a Bachelor's degree program. To be admitted, students must:

- a. Submit an application.
- b. Submit an unofficial transcript providing evidence of receipt of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
- c. Submit copies of other certifications they currently hold when seeking a certification endorsement.
- d. GPA requirement: it is up to programs to determine what undergraduate GPA and/or graduate GPA (if an applicant has taken graduate-level courses) will be appropriate for evaluating student potential for success in the field of study.
- e. International students must also meet requirements outlined in the section on Requirements for International Applicants and Students in this Manual.

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. To be admitted, students must:

- a. Submit an application.
- b. Submit an unofficial transcript providing evidence of receipt of a master's degree from an accredited college or university as well as a transcript of baccalaureate work. Note: those currently matriculated at Montclair State do not need to submit their transcript.
- c. Submit copies of other certifications they currently hold when seeking a certification endorsement.
- d. GPA requirement: 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.
- e. International students must also meet requirements outlined in the section on Requirements for International Applicants and Students in this Manual.

c. Certificate Programs.

Students admitted to a Certificate 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:

- a. Submit an application.
- b. Submit an unofficial transcript providing evidence of receipt of a baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited college or university.
- c. Meet any other specific certificate program requirements.
- d. GPA requirement: 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. International students must also meet requirements outlined in the section on Requirements for International Applicants and Students in this Manual.

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 a member of the [National Association of Credential Evaluation Services](#) (NACES), the Association of International

Credential Evaluators (AICE), or by [Educated Choices, LLC](#) 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. 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 (please see list of exempted countries in the Appendix to this Manual), or who have not earned at least 24 non-remedial credits from an accredited U.S. college or university, must have the following minimum score:

- a. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), internet-based test (iBT): 83
- b. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Essentials: 8.5
- c. International English Language Testing System (IELTS): 6.5
- d. Duolingo English Test: 105
- e. Pearson Test of English (PTE): 53
- f. International Test of English Proficiency (iTEP): 4.5

Note: Applicants may include a request for a waiver of the English Proficiency requirement in the application portal, if there are any special circumstances that The Graduate School should take into account. Please note that the English Proficiency requirement is in place regardless of the applicant's citizenship status.

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 score 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. Only degree-seeking students may be required to take the MSU ESL test and to register for any ESL coursework. Additionally, some Graduate Program Coordinators or Doctoral Program Directors may decide to require that students take additional ESL courses.

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 Global Engagement](#) 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 completed after the prescribed deadline may be considered at the discretion of the academic program and The Graduate School.

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

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 who meet the following conditions:

- 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/Limited 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, Doctoral Program Director, or designee, 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. To be fully matriculated, the student files a Petition for Reclassification with The Graduate School. The petition, which can be found on [The Graduate School website](#), is forwarded to the appropriate Graduate Program Coordinator, Doctoral Program Director, or designee, who forwards the decision to The Graduate School.

3. Conditional Admission/Provisional Matriculation

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 or Doctoral Program Director should not be granted full matriculation for any or all the reasons listed below.

- a. The student's undergraduate grades overall or in specific courses are marginal.
- b. The student's scores on the GRE or other examinations are marginal.
- c. The program wishes to assess the student's level of competency prior to recommending full matriculation.
- d. The student was dismissed from another graduate program at Montclair State University.

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

- a. 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, Doctoral Program Director, or designee.
- b. The student achieves a minimum of 3.0 in all courses taken as part of the condition.
- c. The student fulfills the terms of the conditional admission within three semesters (excluding summer sessions) of the date when the conditional status was granted.

Note: the student must file a Petition for Reclassification with The Graduate School. The petition, which can be found on [The Graduate School website](#), is forwarded to the appropriate Graduate Program Coordinator, Doctoral Program Director, or designee, 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 extensions/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 extensions/leaves of absence.

3. Completion of Certificate Program

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

4. Completion of Doctoral Degree Program

- a. Post-Master's in a related field: Students who enter with a master's degree will have seven years from the date of matriculation, excluding any approved extensions/leaves of absence, to complete their degree.
- b. Master's in unrelated fields: Students who have a master's degree in a different field of study and whose work programs, therefore, include more credits, will have 10 years from date of matriculation to complete their degree.

- c. 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 postponements/leaves of absence.
- d. A student must have an approved dissertation proposal within one year of advancement to doctoral candidacy for students with a 7-year matriculation limit and **within 3 years of advancement to candidacy for students with a 10-year matriculation limit.**

Note: These time limits apply regardless of whether a student pursues the degree as a full-time or part-time student. By enrolling for only the minimum number of credits, students 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 Dean of The Graduate School via the Extension of Matriculation Form, which can be found on [The Graduate school website](#). The Dean or designee, in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director, will review the student's progress. Following this review, the Dean of The Graduate School or designee will make a decision. The Graduate School send an official notification of the decision to the student and the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director.

D. Leave of Absence

Students in doctoral, master's, certification, and certificate programs are eligible for up to two leaves of absence during the entirety of the program.* A leave of absence is considered one semester.** Leaves of absence will be excluded from the time limit for completion of the graduate program. Please contact The Graduate School for any exceptional circumstances that may allow for additional leave time.

* Exceptions to the two-semester leave of absence limit will be granted for pregnancy and/or military deployment.

** By law, a student who requests leave for pregnancy can take up to two consecutive semesters at once.

Requests for a leave of absence must be submitted online to The Graduate School, via the applicable form which can be found on [The Grad School website](#), by the end of the Add/Drop period (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.

1. Alternatives to the Leave of Absence Limit

The University has a Medical Withdrawal Policy and a Student Pregnancy Policy. Leaves and withdrawals that are granted through these policies are excluded from the time limit for completion of the program. TGS does not process requests for Medical Withdrawals, whether for illness or pregnancy. The policies and procedures are available through the Dean of Students website:

Medical Withdrawal: <https://www.montclair.edu/policies/all-policies/medical-withdrawal-policy/>

Pregnancy: <https://www.montclair.edu/policies/all-policies/student-pregnancy-policy/>

E. Continuous Matriculation

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 0.5-credit Continuous Matriculation course (GRAD-MC1 for master's/certificate programs, GRAD-DC1 for doctoral programs) in that semester and pay a continuous enrollment fee. This course is not part of the degree program, its credits do not count towards degree requirements, 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.

Students may enroll for up to 3 semesters of continuous matriculation. Students are still required to complete the program within the prescribed time limits (see Section: [Time Limitation for Completion of Program of Study](#)). 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. Additional Matriculation options

1. 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.

2. Students Completing a Doctoral Dissertation

Students who do not complete their dissertation during the last semester in which they were

enrolled in 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.

3. Doctoral Students Qualifying Examination

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 the Qualifying Examination Enrollment (920) course. 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 current rate for the continuous matriculation fee, and the course will carry 0.5 credits.

4. Programs Requiring a Credit-Bearing Comprehensive Experience Course

Master’s degree-seeking students who do not complete the comprehensive experience course must register for a one-credit extension course each semester until the comprehensive experience project is completed.

5. 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 0.5-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.

G. Simultaneous Matriculation

- 1) A student may matriculate in up to two master’s degree programs which are not designated as dual degree programs, or in a Master’s program and a graduate certificate program, simultaneously at Montclair State University. To do this, a student must petition The Dean of The Graduate School. The Dean or designee will consult with the Graduate Program Coordinators and/or the Doctoral 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) Students who wish to enroll in designated dual degree Master’s programs must satisfy admission requirements of the two programs, and any other requirements set by The Graduate School or the Graduate Program Coordinators.
- 3) Doctoral students may not matriculate in two degree programs simultaneously unless they are seeking to obtain the corresponding Master’s degree on their way to the doctoral degree.

- 4) Students may take a certificate program concurrently with any other program.

H. Full- or Half-Time Equivalency

- 1) For the purpose of financial aid, University policy states that full-time status is six credits per semester for graduate students. Half-time status is three credits per semester.
- 2) Students registered for thesis (698/699) or dissertation (900/901) courses 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) Students enrolled in 698/699/900/901 courses seeking health insurance need to notify The Graduate School prior to the start of classes. These students will need to opt-in to health insurance via a survey, which will be forwarded to the Office of Student Accounts. Please check the following web site for details:
<https://www.montclair.edu/university-health-center/health-insurance/>

Table 1. Thesis and Dissertation. Students enrolled in these courses are considered full-time status regardless of the number of credits for which they are registered. Note: All forms referenced in this table are available on the Forms page of [The Graduate School's website](#).

| Course | Description |
|---|--|
| XXXX-698 Master's Thesis Three to six credits | In order to register for the Master's thesis course, XXXX-698, students must submit the Approval for Writing a Master's Thesis form. |
| XXXX-699 Thesis Extension One credit | 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 Thesis Extension Application 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, he/she must register for XXXX 901. Students must complete form G/H 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 actively working on the dissertation and receiving mentoring . Students must complete form G/H to register for this course. The form must include a plan/timeline for dissertation completion and defense, completed by the dissertation advisor. The Doctoral Program Director's and Dissertation Committee Chair's signatures on the form reflect approval of the timeline for dissertation completion. If the program has a checklist with timeline, TGS will accept a copy of that document. |

***Dissertation Advisement and Advisement Extension will receive a grade of "S" while the dissertation is in progress. This grade will ultimately be updated to a "P" or "F" at the end of the student's program.*

I. Revocation of Matriculation

In the event of a reasonable belief that a student has engaged in serious unprofessional conduct, the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director may recommend to the Dean of The Graduate School (or designee) the revocation of matriculated status of that student. The Graduate School will complete a review of any such recommendation and render a decision in the case. Action taken by The Graduate School may not exceed separation from the student's current academic program. Actions may include lesser actions such as Program Probation, a Program Improvement Plan, and Program Suspension.

The student has the right to appeal the decision to the Provost/ Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Provost will determine whether the decision to revoke matriculation was unfairly biased, arbitrary or capricious. The decision of the Provost is final.

This policy addresses conduct which may not represent a violation of the University Code of Conduct. Violations of the Code of Conduct are adjudicated through the Office of Student Conduct and carry the potential of sanctions up through and including separation from the University.

Revocation of matriculation may also occur due to an academic dismissal or continuous non-enrollment. These matters are addressed elsewhere in this manual.

J. Withdrawal and Registration Holds

1. Voluntary Withdrawal

A student may choose to withdraw from their program by submitting the appropriate withdrawal form to The Graduate School. 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 a student fails to register for either a credit bearing or continuous-matriculation course, a registration hold will be placed on their account. The payment of a fee will be required to remove the hold. Failure to register in two consecutive semesters will be treated as a withdrawal from the graduate program. Semesters on which a student has an

approved leave of absence or postponement of their admission are not counted with respect to this policy.

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 change the student's status and send an official notification to the student confirming the withdrawal.

4. Readmission after Withdrawal

Students who have withdrawn voluntarily or who were withdrawn due to failure to register who wish to return to their former program may do so through a petition for reactivation of matriculation if the matriculation was closed less than two calendar years prior to the semester they wish to return. After two calendar years, the student will need to reapply to the program.

If approved, a student whose matriculation is reactivated will not have an extended time limit for program completion. This means that all previous semesters prior to withdrawal will be counted toward the time for completing the graduate program, any previously granted leave of absence will count toward the total of permissible leaves of absence, and any previous enrollments in Continuous Matriculation course will count towards the total permissible such enrollment. Upon reactivation, The Graduate School will inform the student of the time requirement for completion of the program.

Students whose matriculation is reactivated may be subject to changes in curriculum, policies and procedures applicable to the specific program in which they are enrolled.

Section III

REGISTRATION

III. REGISTRATION

A. First Semester Registration Eligibility

Registration privileges will only be granted to graduate students once the following steps have taken place:

- 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;
- 4) The student has submitted the Intent to Enroll form indicating they are attending;
- 5) The student has paid the deposit, if required by the student's program of study.

B. Admissions Acceptance Policy

An offer of admission is valid for a maximum of three semesters after initial acceptance. If the academic program provides a Postponement option, newly admitted students may request postponement for a future term within the three semester limit. ***Please note that a new student must register for courses or formally request postponement during their initial semester of acceptance by the defined deadline for that academic term.*** If no formal action is taken, the offer of admission will be withdrawn, and matriculation will be closed.

1. 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 will need to submit a new application but may use previously submitted transcripts provided that they remain accessible by The Graduate School. For programs requiring a deposit, the student's deposit will be credited to their future student account upon request to The Graduate School.

C. Suspension of Registration Privileges

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

- a. A student accepted directly from an undergraduate program fails to submit the official final transcript during their first semester.
- b. A student with non-degree admission status who has earned six graduate credits but has not been accepted into a program nor petitioned The Graduate School for additional non-degree coursework.
- c. A student with a deferred or conditional matriculation status has not completed the conditions of the postponement within three semesters (excluding summer sessions).

- d. A student who was assigned to take ESL courses if they have not taken any of them by the end of the fall semester of their first year.
- e. A student whose final transcript does not provide evidence of the completion of the Undergraduate degree.
- f. A student whose final transcript does not provide evidence of the GPA required for enrollment in their program or study.

Section IV

PROGRAM/COURSE/CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

IV. PROGRAM/COURSE/CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

A. Credit Hour Requirements

Master's degree programs. Though individual programs vary, master's degree programs require a minimum of 30 credit hours of graduate-level coursework and all doctoral degrees require a minimum of 48 credit 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.

Certificate programs. Certificate programs require a minimum of nine credit hours of graduate-level coursework. Individual programs may have semester-hour requirements in excess of nine credits.

Certification programs. The requirements for certification programs are stipulated by the external agency conferring certification and/or licensure and may include both undergraduate 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

A 400-level course cannot be used to fulfill requirements for master's or doctoral degree programs, certification programs or graduate certificate programs. Courses at the 400 level may 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. If the student is admitted to a graduate degree program and takes undergraduate courses, they will be charged graduate level tuition and fees.

D. Course Contact Hours

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

E. Credit hour Load for Students

Full-time study is defined as a minimum of nine credit hours per semester, but no more than 16 credit 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 who are covered by health insurance elsewhere must actively opt-out in order to prevent being billed by Student Accounts. The University's health insurance policies are available here:

<https://www.montclair.edu/university-health-center/health-insurance>

For Financial Aid purposes graduate students are considered full time when enrolled in 6 credits per semester, or in 1 or more credit(s) of Dissertation Advisement/Extension or Thesis/Extension.

F. Graduate and Doctoral Assistants

Graduate and Doctoral Assistants must follow the directives of their appointment letters regarding the number of credits required to maintain their assistantships. Please refer to the Terms and Policies of the Doctoral and Graduate Assistantships.

G. Summer Session Course Load

Graduate students are limited to 12 credit hours of coursework within any combination of summer sessions. Additional credits beyond this must be granted approval by the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director and The Graduate School.

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 or Doctoral Program Director 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. Please 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 credit hours of graduate-level credit may be accepted for transfer from any regionally accredited college or university including Montclair State University prior to full matriculation. Master's students also enrolled in a certificate program at Montclair State University are exempt from this policy.

- b. A maximum of six credit hours of graduate-level credit completed at another institution may be transferred after matriculation. Prior approval is required by completing the appropriate form with approvals from the GPC and TGS.
- c. The total number of transfer credits prior to or after matriculation cannot exceed 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 credit 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 credit 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 credit 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

- a. 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.
- b. For doctoral programs, the course must be equivalent to a Montclair State University doctoral-level course. Similarly, for a master's program the course must be equivalent to a Montclair State University master-level course.
- c. The grades earned must be "B" or better (Transfer grades are not used in computing the student's GPA at Montclair State University).
- d. 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.
- e. Students must make the request at the time of matriculation.
- f. The Doctoral Program Director must recommend the transfer of credit to the Dean of The Graduate School as appropriate to the work program.
- g. Credit will not be given for courses that were used within another degree program, unless approved by the Dean of The Graduate School.

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 or Doctoral Program Director and processed by The Graduate School.

N. Credit by Examination

Credit by Examination is not permitted for graduate courses.

O. 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 obtain permission of the GPC or DPD.

2. Independent Study During Fall and Spring Semesters

Students may register for independent study with the permission of the Graduate Program Coordinator or DPD. 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.
- b. 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 fully as specified in the directions and submitted 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. For more information about submitting forms to the Registrar's Office, please see: <https://www.montclair.edu/red-hawk-central/forms/#registrar>

P. 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

- 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 credit 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.
- g. Students approved to take only audited courses in a given semester (that is, those 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.

Q. Undergraduates Enrolling in Graduate Courses (not in Combined Programs)

Undergraduate students that are not in combined Bachelor's/Master's programs 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:

- a. A student must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 and have completed 105 credit hours of coursework as verified by the Office of the Registrar, and have completed any prerequisites, prior to the start of the semester in which the graduate course will be taken. For credits and GPA requirements for combined programs, please check the [Combined Programs Section](#) of this Manual.
- b. Undergraduate students must submit the request form, obtain Registrar verification and recommendation of the academic department & instructor and submit it to The Graduate School. If The Graduate School approves, it will inform the Registrar's Office whether the graduate course is being used for undergraduate or graduate credit; and appropriate charges will be made to the student's account. Students in combined Bachelor's/Master's programs who want to take additional grad courses, must complete the request form to petition for an exception. Such exceptions will be rare.
- c. The Department can submit the permit for the undergraduate student to register for the graduate course through NEST. Departments cannot submit a permit for registration prior to receiving The Graduate School's approval. Approval will not be given retroactively.
- d. Courses taken by undergraduates for graduate credit are not eligible for financial aid, and will not be used in aid calculation. The student must agree to be charged a graduate tuition rate for any course(s) taken for graduate credits.
- e. Courses taken for undergraduate credit will remain on the undergraduate record and will not be moved to the graduate record retroactively.
- f. Approval of undergraduates to graduate courses does not guarantee future acceptance into a graduate program.
- g. For policies specific to combined programs, please see the [Combined Programs](#) section of this Manual.

R. Enrollment in Doctoral-Level Courses by Non-Matriculated Students

- a. Undergraduates cannot be enrolled in doctoral-level courses (700 level and above).
- b. 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 and Dean of The Graduate School (or designee).
- c. 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 and Dean of The Graduate School (or designee).

S. 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.

T. Rescheduling of Classes Cancelled for Inclement Weather

Classes cancelled because of inclement weather may be rescheduled at the discretion of the instructor.

U. Registration for Courses with a Time Overlap (Registrar's Policy)

Students may not register for courses that overlap in scheduled class period. 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, overlap may be permitted in unusual circumstances. Permission will be granted only with the written approval of both instructors and of the respective Department Chairperson(s), Graduate Program Coordinator 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.

V. 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).

W. 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 Director 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

- a. Students who receive a grade of “F” in a course are may repeat that course with the permission of the Graduate Program Coordinator. Permission will be granted only with the written approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator through a form located in [The Graduate School web site](#). If the petition is denied, students may appeal to the Assistant Dean of The Graduate School.
- b. If approval is granted by GPC or TGS, the student may repeat the course. The decision will be forwarded to the College/School Dean and to the Graduate School. If the student passes the course, the original “F” grade can then be removed from the GPA calculation and replaced with the new grade. The original “F” grade and the new grade both remain in the official transcript. The student is responsible for tuition and fees.

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” (IN) 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. 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 must be developed between the student and the instructor delineating the conditions for removing the IN grade using The Contract for an Incomplete Grade. (This contract must be 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 IN grades assigned for the previous summer semester.

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 College/School 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) and Certification programs

Graduate students taking courses under any matriculation status in degree programs or in Certification programs must maintain a GPA of 3.0. Failure to maintain a GPA of 3.0 for the first time will result in being placed on academic probation. Continued failure to maintain a GPA of 3.0 will result in academic dismissal.

2. Non-degree/Certificate Programs

Graduate students in non-degree and certificate programs must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5, except the Paralegal Studies Certificate program, which requires a minimum GPA of 2.75. Failure to maintain the minimum GPA as required in these programs will result in being placed on academic probation.

E. Academic Probation/Dismissal

1. Academic Probation

- a. A student will be placed on academic probation at the end of the Fall, Spring, or Summer semesters if their GPA falls below the minimum requirement as specified above.
- b. Following the semester in which the GPA dropped below the minimum requirement, the student must raise their GPA to the minimum requirement upon completion of an additional six credits of coursework or one semester, whichever is later. All credits attempted during the probationary period 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. The dismissal notification to students will be sent out by The Graduate School.

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

3. Appeals and Exceptions to Academic Dismissal

- a. All students have the right to appeal their first academic dismissal.
- b. Exceptions to the academic dismissal policies, will be considered only in special cases and under extenuating circumstances by TGS in consultation with the GPC/DPD.
- c. 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 student by the Dean of The Graduate School or designee. The notification letter to the student will be sent out by The Graduate School.
- d. Failure to meet the conditions for continued matriculation will result in final academic dismissal from the program.

Section VI

PROGRAM COMPLETION/GRADUATION/ COMMENCEMENT

VI. PROGRAM COMPLETION/GRADUATION/COMMENCEMENT

A. Master's Degree Credit Requirements

- a. To receive a Master's degree, a student must complete the prescribed number of credit hours and courses required by the program of study.
- b. Graduate students taking courses under any matriculation status in degree programs must maintain a GPA of 3.0.
- c. Students cannot present more than two grades of "C" toward their degree at final audit.
- d. GPCs may petition, on behalf of a specific student, to the Dean of The Graduate School for an exception to these requirements.
- e. The Dean, or designee, will notify the GPC and the student of the decision. If approved, TGS will also notify the Registrar's Office. If denied, an appeal may be made to the Provost.

B. Doctoral Degree Credit Requirements

- a. To receive a doctoral degree, a student must complete the prescribed number of credit hours and courses required by the program of study.
- b. 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 Dean of The Graduate School.
- c. Students matriculated in a doctoral program may not earn more than six credit hours of courses with "C" grades. Individual programs may set a more stringent standard, which must be approved by the Dean of The Graduate School.
- d. 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.
- e. Admission to Doctoral Candidacy: To be eligible for admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, students must:
 - a. Have a cumulative grade point average equal to or greater than 3.0 in the doctoral program courses, no more than six credit hours of "C" and no failing grades;
 - b. Perform successfully on the qualifying experience.
 - c. Obtain the approval of the Dean of The Graduate School for candidacy upon satisfying all other requirements.

- f. Culminating Research Experience: All students will present and successfully defend a dissertation or a culminating research project.
- g. DPDs may petition, on behalf of a specific student, to the Dean of The Graduate School for an exception to these requirements.
- h. The Dean, or designee, will notify the DPD and the student of the decision. If approved, TGS will also notify the Registrar's Office. If denied, an appeal may be made to the Provost.

C. Completion 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 the minimum GPA required by the program.

D. Applying for Graduation: Degree programs

Students must apply for graduation through NEST 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 Commencement exercises will be granted to students who have completed all program requirements and who have applied for graduation, and received approval to graduate from the Registrar's office. Doctoral degree recipients are required to complete all program requirements in addition to either filing a completed dissertation (as described in the [Doctoral Procedures Manual: From Candidacy to Graduation](#)) and having it approved by the Dean of The Graduate School, or successfully defending the appropriate research project as defined by the doctoral program. Students are only allowed to participate in the Commencement ceremony that corresponds with the semester of their degree conferral.

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 Dean of The Graduate School 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 credit hours of coursework with "C" grades and zero credit hours of coursework with "F" grades 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 credit hours of 900 or one credit hour of 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) and 903 (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 Dean of The Graduate School. 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 Dean of The Graduate School.

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 or, for the academic year 2021-2022, via video conferencing system with the student for an oral defense of the proposal prior to its approval. If using video, the system must provide interactive communication, to resemble an in-person meeting as much as possible. 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 Dean of The Graduate School for approval. In unusual circumstances (e.g., IRB or other procedural violations), the Dean of The Graduate School 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 Dean of The Graduate School:

- 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 must submit 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 must be 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 Dean of The Graduate School 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 pre-sessions. The 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

For the Dissertation: Refer to the Dissertation Procedures & Guidelines Manual. For the 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 graduation. 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. Please review the [Doctoral Procedures Manual](#) for details about this aspect.

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 Dean of The Graduate School (or designee) and returned to The Graduate School. The outcomes are:

- a. **Pass.** No substantive revisions are required.
- b. **Pass with Conditions.** 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.** This outcome 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 Procedures 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 Procedures 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. The department/program should keep a copy of the completed document 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, 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) The Graduate Program Coordinator 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 register for the Comprehensive Exam course (GRAD CMP) through NEST in the semester when the examination will take place. 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 coursework in preparation for retaking the examination.
- 10) Departments are responsible to inform students of the grading standards and process. Students will have access to their grade in the Comprehensive Exam course in NEST.

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 Master's 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. 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 enrolled in the undergraduate portion of a combined program meeting the general requirements listed below, are eligible to apply to the master's portion of a combined program. Candidates must check with their advisors and the Graduate Program Coordinator for the specific requirements.

Prior to applying to the graduate portion of the program, students will need to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Official major listed as the Undergraduate portion of a combined program (Bx/Mx).
- 2) A 3.0 minimum cumulative GPA. Please note that some programs will require a higher GPA.
- 3) Have earned a minimum of 90 credits.
- 4) Submitted an application with The Graduate School.

Applications for admission into the graduate portion of a combined program will be reviewed by The Graduate School once the student officially files for graduation with the Registrar.

Application requirements may vary for applicants who meet the verification criteria for their program as listed on the University's [Combined Program Website](#).

C. Matriculation in the Program

Good Standing: Students enrolled in a combined program must meet all program and matriculation requirements outlined by the Provost's Office, 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 on the University's Combined Program Website. Students not fulfilling this criteria during the undergraduate portion of the combined program will be counseled out of the combined program option after 60 undergraduate credits have been earned. Furthermore, undergraduate students will not be eligible to remain enrolled in the undergraduate portion of a Combined Program after 90 undergraduate credits have been earned.

To be eligible for admission to the graduate portion of a combined program, students must be officially enrolled in the undergraduate portion of their combined program, submit an application to The Graduate School, and appear on the graduation list. Students completing the master's portion of the program must meet all matriculation requirements outlined on the [Combined Program Website](#).

D. Graduate Coursework at the Bachelor's Level

Once enrolled in the undergraduate portion of a combined program, students are permitted to take between 6 and 12 credits (depending on the program requirements) of graduate level coursework prior to completion of the bachelor's degree. These credits (generally for specific, predetermined courses) 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 (including for pre-approved undergraduate swing courses) and graduate tuition and fees while completing the graduate degree. Undergraduates taking graduate classes are not eligible for graduate assistantships.