

NDSU GRADUATE SCHOOL

Handbook



Fall 2023

NDSU Graduate School

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Office Hours

Academic Year (Fall and Spring)

Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Summer Semester and University Breaks

Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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This publication is available in alternate format upon request. Please contact the owner of the publication (701) 231-5945 or ndsu.gsa@ndsu.edu.

NDSU Land Acknowledgement

We collectively acknowledge that we gather at NDSU, a land grant institution, on the traditional lands of the Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda) and Anishinaabe Peoples in addition to many diverse Indigenous Peoples still connected to these lands. We honor with gratitude Mother Earth and the Indigenous Peoples who have walked with her throughout generations. We will continue to learn how to live in unity with Mother Earth and build strong, mutually beneficial, trusting relationships with Indigenous Peoples of our region.

Guidelines Acceptable Use of Electronic Communication Resources

[Policy Section 158](#) defines the acceptable use of computing and networking resources of North Dakota University System (which includes NDSU). The policy provides examples of unauthorized and unacceptable uses of resources and defines electronic communication devices.

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1 - Introduction

The North Dakota State University (NDSU) College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies houses the Graduate School, the Center for Writers, and several interdisciplinary programs.

The Graduate School Handbook addresses many aspects of graduate study at NDSU. However, the main focus is policies and procedures.

The Handbook is reviewed and updated twice each academic year (start of Fall semester and start of Spring semester), therefore readers should verify that they are consulting the most recent version. If you are uncertain, the Graduate School webpage will have the most recent version or contact the Graduate School to obtain the most recent version.

Contact the Graduate School with questions or concerns regarding any information contained in this Handbook.

1.1 - The Role of the Graduate School

The Graduate School processes all documents necessary for completion of a graduate degree, (from admission to graduation) or for pursuit of non-degree graduate study (non-degree enrollment or course audits). Graduate School staff work with graduate students, faculty, and graduate program coordinators to interpret policy related to graduate education, to assist with completing forms, to audit completion of requirements, and to review disquisitions. In addition, the Graduate School offers opportunities for professional development, support services, and funding.

We want every graduate student to be successful in graduate studies!

To support the success of graduate students, the Graduate School has several divisions, Admissions Team, Academic Support Team, Business & Operations Team, and the Center for Writers.

1.2 – Admissions Team

The Admissions Team is responsible for recruiting graduate students and assisting them during the program admission processes. The Admissions Team works closely with graduate program coordinators to recruit applicants and to support applicants through various means, including the completion of application materials and connecting to individuals in graduate programs during events and occasionally individual meetings.

1.2.1 - Admissions Team 2023-24

Neely Benton, Director of Graduate Recruitment and Admissions
Melissa Ostby, *Graduate Admission Coordinator*
Sam Akers, *Admissions and Enrollment Officer*

1.3 - Academic Support Team

Academic Support Team is a liaison between the Graduate School and the NDSU colleges and the departments within those colleges. In the liaison role, academic support staff sustain mutual understanding among graduate students, faculty, and graduate program coordinators about progress toward degree completion. To create mutual understanding, Academic Support staff monitor student progress toward degree completion; interpret policies; and review necessary forms to ensure they adhere to Graduate School policies and procedures.

Contact Academic Support staff with questions regarding policies and procedures, required forms, and degree completion.

1.3.1 - Graduate Professional Skills Academy

The NDSU [Graduate Professional Skills \(GPS\) Academy](#) is a free resource that aims to support graduate student communities by providing professional development for diverse career readiness, by innovating high-impact programming grounded in research and evidence, and by sustaining collegial on- and off-campus partnerships that allow the Academy to be a creative and resilient service that meets the needs of current graduate students and future graduate students.

While the GPS Academy supports graduate students to define and pursue all career goals, the emphasis of the Academy resources is non-academic career opportunities (that is, opportunities other than tenure-track positions at any type of university).

1.3.1 – Grad Hub

The NDSU Graduate Hub, or Grad Hub, is a space located in the NDSU Main Library Room 6. The space is dedicated to graduate students from all graduate programs and encourages graduate students to convene for a variety of purposes, including academic support groups, social events, or individual study.

1.3.3 - Academic Support Team 2023-24

Melissa Selders-Ortez, *Academic Support Administrator*

Hali Haugen, *Academic Support Specialist*

Matthew Warner, *Academic Support Specialist and GPS Academy Coordinator*

Scarlet Gray Bernard, *Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator*

1.4 - Business Operations Team

Business Team process forms for graduate assistantship hiring and payroll, including contracts and tuition waivers. Staff members also monitor graduate assistant trainings.

Contact Business Coordinators with questions regarding assistantship forms and tuition waivers.

1.4.1 - Business Team 2023-24

Nonnie Tangen, *Business Manager*
Audra Hart, *Business Coordinator*

1.5 - The Center for Writers

The [Center for Writers](#) provides free writing support to all NDSU students, faculty, and staff. The services include one-on-one consulting sessions, topical workshops, grant-writing guidance, and other writing resources. The delivery of services happens through in-person and through synchronous mediated means (concurrent interaction - such as video conferences) but does not happen through asynchronous means (nonconcurrent interaction - such as email exchanges or “document drop-off”).

2 – Graduate Admission Information

The Graduate School admits students to pursue a specified degree of a graduate program beginning in the stated semester of the admission letter. There is no transfer process between programs. To pursue a degree in a different program requires a new application including another application fee.

Degree objective changes are allowed within the same graduate program. If a student chooses to change their degree objective within the same graduate program, the student must complete the [Degree Objective Change](#) form. If a student wishes to continue to a higher degree within the same graduate program, the student must complete a [Continuation of Program](#) form.

Note that some graduate programs require the student submit a new application to make either of these changes. Students should consult with their advisor or graduate program coordinator prior to beginning either change.

A student may pursue two credentials concurrently. If the credentials are from two different graduate programs, the student is responsible to notify *both* programs that they are pursuing two credentials. A student pursuing credentials from multiple graduate programs must maintain continuous enrollment in *each* program. Note, a loss of good standing in any program effects enrollment status for all programs. Grade point average is not “split” among programs.

2.1 - Admission Status

Graduate students are admitted under one of three classifications: Full Graduate Standing; Conditional Standing; or Non-Degree Enrollment.

2.1.1 - Full Graduate Standing

A student admitted under *Full Graduate Standing* has met all requirements for admission and has been accepted by a program for the purpose of pursuing a graduate degree. A student must have *Full Graduate Standing* to receive a graduate degree.

2.1.2 - Conditional Standing

A student admitted under *Conditional Standing* has not met all requirements for admission or has deficiencies in prerequisite coursework. However, they show potential for successful graduate study. Admission under *Conditional Standing* requires that the admitting graduate program must specify conditions for the student to satisfy in order to change status from *Conditional Standing* to *Full Graduate Standing*.

The Graduate School places any student whose undergraduate cumulative GPA is below 3.00 at the time of admission in a specific group of *Conditional Standing*. For admitted students of this group, the Graduate School sets a condition: *Earn a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or greater in the first nine didactic credits of the graduate program.*

The graduate programs to which the students of this group seek admission may establish additional conditions to the one set by the Graduate School before a status change to *Full Graduate Standing*.

Students admitted under *Conditional Standing* are automatically placed on Academic Warning until the specified conditions of admission are satisfied (*see 4.1 for more about Academic Warning*). A registration hold is applied until the Graduate School reviews the first semester grades. If a student on Academic Warning fails to achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 for the first semester of attendance, the student is placed on Academic Probation (*see 4.1 for more about Academic Probation*). A student cannot earn more than 12 semester hours of graduate credit while under any admission condition other than *Full Graduate Standing*.

2.1.3 - Non-Degree Enrollment

A student or an NDSU faculty member who wishes to participate in graduate study (for personal growth, improvement of skills, or other reasons) but not to work toward earning a graduate degree is admitted as a *Non-Degree Student*. Note, admission as a *Non-Degree Student* is distinct from someone seeking to *audit* a course. *Non-Degree Students* still participate in course activities such as completing assignments, delivering projects, and taking exams; whereas students *auditing* a course do not participate in any activities aside from “listening” (audit – *audire, Latin*, “to hear” - same root as “audio” and “audience”). Confer with the instructor of record for a course if auditing is the only interest.

Non-Degree Students who wish to become degree-seeking students must complete the admission process through the Graduate School (including a new application as well as another application fee). No more than 10 credits earned as a *Non-Degree Student* may be used toward completion of a graduate degree, and the student’s advisor, supervisory committee (if applicable), and the graduate program coordinator must approve these credits as part of the degree program.

2.2 - Accelerated Degree Programs

An undergraduate student admitted to an accelerated master’s degree program must meet all applicable policies and guidelines for both the undergraduate degree and the graduate degree. For additional information, see the [combined/accelerated degree programs of study](#) page.

3 - Expectations and Responsibilities

Graduate study differs from undergraduate study in many respects. Graduate students are presumed to have more maturity, intellectually and emotionally, relative to undergraduates, and this greater maturity affords graduate students more autonomy (self-direction) over decisions about their studies. However, greater autonomy also entails more responsibilities and consequences connected to decisions.

For example, graduate students need to be attentive and assertive when managing the progression of their graduate studies – identifying appropriate coursework, communicating to others about activities, and negotiating within circumstances. Autonomy is not autocracy (exercising undisputed influence over decisions). Consequently, graduate students are responsible for knowing, verifying, and clarifying the policies, procedures, and deadlines necessary for successfully completing a graduate degree in a timely manner. The management of a sophisticated project (graduate degree) within the constraints of existing structures and resources is important demonstration of professionalization.

Factors important to successful, timely completion of a graduate program include being well organized, setting priorities, working collegially, and being economical with time. Support and resources are available for graduate students as described in several sections of this Handbook and promoted through various communications. However, graduate study requires a significant commitment of time and of effort to satisfy the academic rigor necessary to earn a graduate degree. The expectations tend to be even higher for doctoral students compared to master's students.

Amid the rigor are many rewards. Graduate study has many opportunities not available elsewhere. Over the duration of a graduate program, students often develop collegial relationships with other students and with faculty. There are opportunities to choose research topics related to interests, to conduct and present research, to participate in department and college committees, and to pursue professional development opportunities. Graduate-level research and scholarship requires that students delve into topics to attain high levels of proficiency over a subject area, acquiring and refining awareness of research methodologies, communication strategies, and tools during the attainment.

Lack of awareness or understanding of a policy or deadline is not a valid reason for an exception to (“what I have done should qualify as fulfilling something like a rule”) or exemption from (“something like a rule does not apply to me”) a policy or deadline. If there is uncertainty, an appropriate response is to ask the individuals – classmates, faculty, staff – available to help resolve ambiguities. A *better* response is to determine whom to ask for clarification from the Graduate School – Academic Support Team being the most likely candidate.

Do not mistake someone's confident certainty with their being accurate. A classmate saying they did something in a particular way does not become “the policy.” Seek clarification from appropriate sources. Clarification is a fundamental research process: Locate sources, filter the content of sources for verification, and draw conclusions situated against reasonable limitations.

3.1 - Academic Calendar

The [official NDSU calendars](#) are important references for planning activities and assuring important dates are known well in advance, such as the deadlines for notifications of exams or the final submission deadline for disquisitions.

All graduate study procedures happen within the constraints of the official NDSU calendars.

Consequently, students are responsible to initiate forms and other documents and ensure the forms or documents are properly completed (including any required signatures) then received by designated recipient(s) before or on posted deadlines (*see Section 8 “Progress Toward A Graduate Degree” for more information*).

If students have questions or need assistance completing a document, first, review the document to identify a designated recipient to contact (office or individual). If the document does not indicate a recipient, consult the source of the document (such as a webpage or an email). If a contact still is not identifiable after reviewing the document and its source, contact the Graduate School main office.

3.2 – Expectations for Communication

The NDSU email is the official mode of communication for all NDSU notifications and procedures. Consequently, the Graduate School sends any information about academic standing, degree status, or other information pertaining to graduate study at NDUS to the NDSU email address.

Regularly check NDSU email.

Students are responsible for checking NDSU email, and failure to check NDSU email is not a legitimate reason for missing important communication(s).

Students are responsible to observe the [policies](#) and procedures (including associated deadlines) of the Graduate School, of [NDSU](#), and of the specific graduate program in which they are enrolled. While policies and procedures are often identical among the Graduate School, NDSU, and specific graduate programs, some graduate programs have unique policies often needed due to programmatic design.

Unless otherwise informed or stated, students are responsible for informing advisors and supervisory committee members about correspondence with the Graduate School or with Records & Registration regardless of format (in-person or telephone conversation, or exchanges via email). Graduate students might notice that advisors, supervisory committee members, or graduate program coordinators are added to email correspondence. The purpose of including more individuals is to increase awareness of activities and often included individuals might need to provide signatures or further advice.

It is unprofessional to omit, intentionally or not, information from an advisor, furthermore omissions of information might worsen a situation through decreased trust and self-created complications. If people do not know about a situation, they cannot extend support. If they

cannot extend support, a task becomes more complicated.

3.2.1 - Conflict resolution

The Graduate School encourages students to resolve a problem at the level most closely related to the origin of the dispute.

1. A student should first discuss a problem(s) with the person(s) directly involved;
2. If the student is not satisfied after discussing the problem with the person(s) directly involved **or** if a discussion of the problem(s) with the person(s) directly involved seems inappropriate because of the nature of the problem(s), the student should seek advice from the graduate program coordinator;
3. Depending on the nature of the problem(s), the program coordinator or student's supervisory committee members may deal with the situation directly, advise the student to discuss the problem(s) with the appropriate academic dean and/or the Dean of the Graduate School, or advise the student of the appropriate grievance procedure to pursue.

The [NDSU Ombudsperson](#) provides consultation and conflict resolution to students, faculty, and academic affairs staff members.

p3.3 - Plan of Study

Most graduate programs require that degree-seeking graduate students complete then file a Plan of Study. The Plan of Study has several purposes. One purpose is to form officially a Supervisory Committee prior to beginning a disquisition project (master's thesis, master's paper, or doctoral dissertation). The Supervisory Committee is a group of graduate or graduate-affiliate faculty who will support the student through their disquisition project. The Supervisory Committee will also administer any required examinations prior to beginning the disquisition project.

Another purpose of the Plan of Study is to outline the necessary coursework to complete a graduate degree and identify any requirements to fulfill (such as a language requirement for some degree programs in the humanities and social sciences).

A Plan of Study must be completed then filed with the Graduate School by or before the end of the first full year of study in a graduate program.

Even if a graduate program does not require a Plan of Study, it is useful to create a timeline for coursework and to speak with faculty about research interests even if a Supervisory Committee is not required. The Plan of Study and timelines create structure to decrease burdens, allowing students to concentrate on fulfilling goals during a graduate degree and preparing to realize post-graduation goals.

3.4 - Advice for Graduate Studies

While everyone is different, some habits and practices have established records of guiding graduate students through their studies and research.

3.4.1 - Connect with other graduate students

Students provide a support system for morale boosts and offer recommendations regarding many aspects of graduate studies – course offerings, research opportunities or interests, balancing research-work-life, best restaurants, and coffee specials.

3.4.2 – Reflect, Organize, and Plan

Graduate study is a paradox. It requires a lot of time, yet the time proceeds quickly so graduate study seems brief. Admission, courses, writing, exams, research, presenting – many activities happen concurrently. Students need to learn how to be economical with time and prudent about decisions given the rapid course of events. Here are some recommendations:

- Discuss your professional goals with your advisor
- Perform self-reflective activities such as completing an individual degree plan (IDP)
 - myIDP.org
 - [Imagine PhD](#)
- Work with your advisor to identify possible participants on the supervisory committee
- Update your advisor and supervisory committee on your progress
- Schedule yearly meetings with your supervisory committee

3.4.3 - Use your resources.

There are resources on campus to help: the Center for Writers, the Graduate Professional Skills (GPS) Academy, Counseling Center, Disability Services, etc. (see *Section 10 “Directory of Services” for contact information*).

3.4.4 - Code of Student Conduct

The [Rights and Responsibilities of Community: A Code of Student Conduct](#) sets forth the expectations of student behavior and details the rights afforded within the conduct process at NDSU.

[The Dean of Students Office](#) is charged with maintaining, promoting, and upholding the Code of Student Conduct. The Office houses more information related to the Code of Student Conduct, including reporting mechanisms in Student Advocacy.

4 - Scholastic Standards

Graduate students must maintain good academic standing and make satisfactory progress towards degree completion. To be in good academic standing and to receive a graduate degree, a student must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00. To make satisfactory progress toward degree completion, a student must complete the necessary academic expectations (such as completing coursework) and degree procedures (such as scheduling various examinations through notifications) as expected based on the specific graduate program and the Graduate School.

All courses taken by a graduate student for which grades are given (not satisfactory/unsatisfactory) will be used in calculating the semester and cumulative GPA.

Grades of A, B, C or S may be used to fulfill graduation requirements.

Earning more than two grades of C, D, F or U may be grounds for dismissal upon recommendation by the graduate program coordinator.

4.1 - Academic Warning and Academic Probation

Students admitted in *Conditional Status* and students in good standing whose cumulative GPA decreases to less than 3.00 at any time of attendance are placed on *Academic Warning*. A student on *Academic Warning* cannot register for courses for the following semester until the grades for the current semester post.

A student on *Academic Warning* whose cumulative GPA remains below 3.00 for the subsequent semester of registration, is placed on *Academic Probation*. Students on *Academic Probation* may not continue their studies until a remediation plan is filed and approved by the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies (the Graduate School). Furthermore, students on *Academic Probation* will be removed from any graduate assistantship.

A student on *Academic Probation* who does not submit an acceptable remediation plan before the last day to register for the next semester or does not fulfill the requirements outlined in their approved remediation plan will be dismissed from the Graduate School for at least one year starting from the term of dismissal. Dismissal appears on the student's official academic transcript.

4.2 - Transfer credit

Students with previous graduate levels (such as a master's degree) can transfer credits to a NDSU graduate program. However, limitations exist regarding the amount of credits and which credits. Graduate students should consult with their advisor and/or graduate program coordinator to determine if the program accepts transfer credits and if the credits selected for transfer will satisfy departmental and Graduate School requirements.

Transfer credits are processed when the Plan of Study is submitted. If your program does not require a Plan of Study, submit a [Change to Plan of Study](#) form to add the credits to your transcript and degree progress.

Change to Plan of Study (DocuSign form)

Required signatures

- Graduate Student
- Advisor
- Graduate program coordinator

Any transcripts for transfer credit must be filed with the Graduate School prior to the Plan of Study or Change to Plan of Study form. To see if credits are eligible for transfer, review the full policy for the program type: [master's transfer policy](#) or [doctoral transfer policy](#).

4.3 – Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (U) Grades

Some courses, such as master's paper, thesis, or dissertation research, are graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U). S/U grades are not used when calculating semester or cumulative grade point average. However, programs may use U grades to determine if a student is making *satisfactory* progress toward degree completion.

5 - Registration

Course registration dates and deadlines are listed each semester on the [NDSU OneStop website](#). Students register using Campus Connection. Instructions and other registration information is available on the NDSU OneStop website: <https://www.ndsu.edu/onestop/registration>.

The deadline to add courses in Campus Connection is the Wednesday of the second week of classes for the term. After this deadline, students are required to request to be added to a course using a Class Permit completed by the department that manages that course. More information is available in the [NDSU Catalog](#).

5.1 - Graduate School Holds

Registration holds are placed on a student's account for many reasons. However, the Graduate School places registration holds based on three categories.

5.1.1 - Graduate School Hold (GSH)

Holds with this code are placed on a student's record for two reasons:

- a) Degree completion verification – The Graduate School must receive final transcript(s) for a student's posted bachelor's or master's degree to remove the hold allowing the student register for courses. Review admission letter for details about necessary degree transcripts.
- b) Plan of study – The graduate student must submit a Plan of Study and receive Graduate School approval to remove the hold then register for courses.

5.1.2 - Conditional Admission (CAN)

A student admitted in *Conditional Status* cannot register for subsequent semesters until the first semester grades are reviewed. If the cumulative GPA is 3.00 or greater the student may register for the following semester. A hold will continue for subsequent semesters until the student has satisfied the conditions of admission at which time the hold is removed. Examine the admission letter for details regarding the conditions of admission (*see Section 2.1.2 Conditional Status for more information*).

5.1.3 - Graduate Academic Standing (GAS)

A student on *Academic Warning* or *Academic Probation* cannot register for subsequent semesters until the Graduate School has reviewed the grades at the end of each semester. This process continues until the student returns to good standing. Please refer to the letter attached to the email regarding admission status.

5.2 - Continuous Enrollment

Students are required to register for at least one graduate level credit each semester (Fall and Spring) until all degree requirements are complete (including Graduate School review and approval of the disquisition). Summer registration is required for students completing a preliminary or final defense during the Summer semester. Registration for the prior or next semester will cover examinations that occur during semester breaks.

Departments may have additional policies regarding continuous enrollment, which may require a specific minimum credit enrollment and/or a summer registration. International graduate students must follow the guidelines set forth for visa compliance.

5.3 - Credit/Course Load

A graduate student enrolled for nine credits of graduate level courses is considered to have a full-time graduate load. However, graduate students who also hold a graduate assistantship that requires working 20 hours per week are considered full-time if registered for five or more credits of graduate level courses. To receive financial aid, students must be enrolled at least half-time (5 credits). Loan deferment may also require full- or half-time status. Eligibility varies with financial aid programs; consequently, students should contact their lender for requirements.

Department policies may require a higher minimum credit enrollment and/or a summer registration requirement for all students. International graduate students must follow the guidelines set forth for visa compliance.

Graduate students should register for no more than 15 credits of graduate level courses in any semester. Graduate program coordinators should submit overload via email to the appropriate Academic Support Specialist for consideration.

5.4 - Incompletes

The Graduate School follows the [university policy and procedure](#) for incomplete grades.

5.5 - Grade Appeals

The Graduate School follows the [university policy and procedure](#) for grade appeals. An appeal of a grade might involve Section 337 – Grade Appeals Board.

5.6 - Dual Career Registration

Graduate students may take undergraduate courses to satisfy prerequisites for graduate courses, to fulfill conditions of admission or to meet requirements defined by their graduate program. Undergraduate courses do not fulfill graduate degree requirements unless the program has a foreign language requirement. Undergraduate courses are billed at the undergraduate course rate and are not covered by a tuition waiver unless the course is to fulfill a foreign language requirement.

5.7 - Audited Courses

The Graduate School follows the NDSU policy regarding [auditing courses](#). Audited courses cannot be included on a Plan of Study.

5.8 - Dropping Courses/Withdrawing from Graduate School

Drop deadlines for the standard semester and summer terms are posted on [the official NDSU calendars](#). A graduate student may not drop to zero credits via Campus Connection. It is necessary to complete processing, including submission of forms, within the posted deadlines. More information is available in the [NDSU Catalog](#).

Students who do not wish to continue with their studies should complete the request to [Withdraw from Graduate School form](#). The student is responsible for informing their advisor, graduate program coordinator, and assistantship supervisor of their intention to withdraw from graduate studies.

5.9 - Leave of Absence

A student may request a [leave of absence](#) to put their studies on hold. A leave may be taken for up to four semesters (Fall and Spring). A student may take multiple leaves during their graduate career; however, a leave does not affect the completion deadline of seven years for a certificate or master's student and 10 years for a doctoral student. The Leave of Absence requires the signatures of the advisor of the graduate student and the graduate program coordinator (listed as Coordinator in the DocuSign form).

Students must request a leave of absence prior to the fourth week of the semester. Forms received after that date are not processed and the student must submit a Request for Reactivation and pay a processing fee prior to being allowed to register.

To return from a leave of absence, complete the request for reactivation form. A processing fee is not required.

5.10 - Family and Medical Accommodations policy/Modified Duties/Leave of Absence

Graduate students may request an extension to complete degree requirements and/or a leave of absence for family and medical reasons. A student may request modified duties. The policy and links to the required forms are in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

5.11 - Reactivation/Reapplication

Students who step away from graduate studies for four semesters or fewer (fall and spring) may request reactivation using [the Request for Reactivation form](#) and paying the processing fee. The student's advisor and graduate program administration must approve this request prior to Graduate School consideration.

Students who step away from graduate studies for more than four semesters (fall and spring) must reapply to the Graduate School, which includes an application fee for the re-application.

6 - Financial Information and Assistantships

6.1 - Tuition

Once registered, a graduate student is responsible for all tuition and fees. A student receiving a tuition waiver must pay any differential tuition and student fees. Tuition and fee schedules for the current year are published to the One Stop website

<https://www.ndsu.edu/onestop/accounts/tuition/>.

Payment plans are available. For more information on fee payment options, browse the [payments methods](#) page.

6.2 - Graduate Assistantships

Graduate students awarded an assistantship are responsible for completing the [graduate assistant onboarding](#) process and for reading and adhering to the [graduate assistantship policy](#). If requirements outlined in these policies are not completed, delays may occur in starting the assistantship and/or receiving the stipend or processing tuition waiver.

6.2.1 - Graduate Service Assistantships

A graduate service assistant (GSA) provides non-academic support for departments in a variety of forms, such as office assistance, website development, computer technical support, or assistance for campus services such as the Wallman Wellness Center, NDSU IT Help Desk, Student Health Center, or Disability Services.

6.2.2 - Graduate Research Assistantships

A graduate research assistant (GRA) develops competence in performing professional-level work in support of research, scholarship, or creative activity depending upon the project. Unless specified by a graduate program, the activity conducted as GRA is not required to be part of a dissertation or thesis project but it is encouraged in order to encourage timely completion of a graduate degree.

6.2.3 - Graduate Teaching Assistantships

A graduate teaching assistant (GTA) performs duties and has responsibilities for teaching or supporting the teaching of undergraduate content (such as delivering lectures, supporting course-connected labs, or tutoring for designated courses or sections of a course). The extent of the duties and responsibilities should be defined in the position description and contract. Responsibilities may include instruction, grading, course development, and proctoring exams. GTAs cannot teach graduate-level courses.

All in-class GTAs are evaluated during the third week of the first semester of their appointment. While the format may be determined by individual units, the evaluation must be documented and it must address the comprehensive English proficiency of the teaching assistant, including

speaking and listening ability, commensurate with assigned duties. A copy of the evaluation instrument and the results for each teaching assistant shall be made available to the Graduate Dean upon request.

International graduate students who are GTAs and whose first language is not English must adhere to the [English Language Proficiency Procedure for Graduate Teaching Assistants](#). International graduate students who do not satisfy the minimum criteria outlined in the policy will be required to provide evidence of English language proficiency.

6.3 - Tuition Waivers

A tuition waiver only applies to base tuition costs for regular graduate-level course credits. Graduate students with assistantships that include a graduate tuition waiver are responsible for any differential tuition, student fees, and tuition for other types of credits taken, such as undergraduate credits taken not fulfill a requirement (for example, a foreign language requirement) or cooperative education credits.

To be eligible for a tuition waiver, students must work for 160 hours per semester and be paid at least the federal minimum wage. Students who, for any reason, do not complete a minimum of 160 hours in a given semester will not be eligible for that semester's tuition waiver and will be billed for the full tuition amount for that semester. The tuition waiver may have limitations depending on the assistantship appointment. Regarding limitations, graduate students should check with the hiring department.

To be eligible for a summer tuition waiver, a student must have Graduate School approval and have received a tuition waiver for the preceding or following academic term (Spring or Fall). A [graduate summer tuition waiver form](#) must be approved by the Graduate School in order for the waiver to be applied (requires the signature of only the graduate student).

Graduate students who receive a tuition waiver from an assistantship may not receive another NDSU tuition waiver. If a student is eligible for more than one waiver, the waiver that results in the most tuition waived will be applied.

7 – Final Steps of Degree: Pathway to Degree

The [Pathway to Degree](#) page on the Graduate School website outlines the final steps to complete your graduate degree, providing links to required forms and policies explanations. A section outlining the steps is also available in Section 8 – Progress toward Graduate Degree. Questions should be directed to an Academic Support Specialist.

7.1 - Time Limitations

All time limits apply to transferred credits as well as NDSU credits.

- Master's degree coursework program that is more than **seven calendar years** old at the time of the final defense cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
- Doctoral degree coursework that is more than **ten calendar years** old at the time of the final defense cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.

A graduate student has one year, starting on the date of the final defense, to complete the Graduate School format review process and all other degree requirements. If the disquisition does not receive final approval or if a graduate student fails to fulfill any other degree requirements within the stated time limit of the degree program, **the student must repeat the defense of the disquisition.**

A graduate student who has not registered for longer than a continuous two-year period must reapply for admission (and pay associated admission fees) and is subject to the degree requirements as defined at the time of readmission *not as defined during the previous period of graduate study*. Questions about the requirements to complete a graduate program should be directed to Academic Support Specialists for clarification.

7.2 - Degree Awarding

NDSU awards certificates, masters and doctoral degrees at the end of each semester. However, formal commencement exercises are only in May and December.

7.2.1 Commencement

Graduating students may participate in the commencement ceremony at the end of the semester in which they successfully complete their final defense or the semester in which the degree requirements are completed.

For example, students completing requirements in the summer semester may participate in the May ceremony.

Graduate students whose degree has already posted cannot participate in commencement.

8 – Progress Toward a Graduate Degree

While the series of activities to complete a graduate degree might vary in details based on degree program, several actions are common for the majority of degrees.

This section lists the steps in sequence, summarizes the activities, and when possible, provides links that direct to referenced forms or documents. To conclude, the section notes areas in which the Graduate School does not have a policy and prefers graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate program coordinators resolve matters, such as design of comprehensive exams.

Review the sequence and each step. When possible, a description of the motivating logic is available (usually to coordinate among graduate student, Supervisory Committee, and Graduate School). If a step seems vague, seek clarifications from the Graduate School Academic Support Team earlier rather than risk missing deadlines or “skipping” a DocuSign form.

8.1 – Outline of Activities

The progress toward successful completion of a graduate degree includes several important steps. The steps appear in sequential order.

The outline matches the majority of programs and serves as a reference for planning. Graduate students need to consult with advisors about the specifics.

However, the stated deadlines are from the Graduate School and *are non-negotiable*. The deadlines are necessary for producing documents (such as Commencement lists) and for transitioning student records through the record systems.

Part of becoming a professional is recognizing that respecting the time and work of others requires external reference points such as deadlines to coordinate activities.

The procedures help everyone. The graduate student should take charge of contacting necessary individuals and offices and contact them *in a timely manner* (**Examine deadlines!**).

Regarding DocuSign Forms

DocuSign forms can be distributed to any email, but the graduate student should confirm to which email signature requests should be sent. For example, a committee member who works for a company is a member of the Supervisory Committee, and because they are not an NDSU faculty or staff, they do not have an NDSU email. No problem, the graduate student can provide the preferred email for that committee member – Gmail, company email, etc.

8.1.1 - File Plan of Study by the end of the first academic year of coursework.

If a graduate student has not filed a Plan of Study, this is the first step. Plans of Study are available in [Forms for Graduate Students](#). Graduate students should select the plan designated for the type of graduate degree.

Step for Only Doctoral Students

Doctoral students have to complete a Preliminary Examination. Some programs refer to this as the comprehensive examination (or “comps”). This examination will transition you from doctoral student to doctoral candidate. The doctoral student should complete most or all coursework prior to examination. For many programs, the preliminary exams happen only after a graduate student completes all required coursework. However, the graduate program and Supervisory Committee determine whether a doctoral student has accomplished enough to begin the examination processes.

⇒ Submit a [Notification of Scheduled Examination](#)

- The doctoral student must submit the *Notification of Scheduled Examination* through DocuSign **7 calendar days** prior to the selected examination date. A *successful* submission requires all signatures, not only that the graduate student has submitted the form.
- The Notification activates an audit of coursework and grades to verify all requirements have been met and the courses match the approved and on-file Plan of Study
 - Graduate students should examine the Plan of Study to increase the likelihood that the audit should happen without incidence or possibly only minor adjustments (correcting course number or title).
- Required signatures in DocuSign
 - Graduate Student
 - Advisor
 - Graduate Program Coordinator

⇒ Submit a [Report of Preliminary Examination](#)

After a successful examination, the graduate student has **14 calendar days** starting on the examination date to provide the Report of Preliminary Examination. Failure to submit a Report of Preliminary Examination is grounds for invalidating the examination.

- Required signatures in DocuSign
 - Graduate Student
 - Advisor
 - All remaining Committee members (up to five more, only two more required)

Congratulations, you are a doctoral candidate!

Returning to information for all graduate students – doctoral students received enough direct attention!

8.1.2 - Respond to the Intent to Graduate survey

- First, review the submitted Plan of Study. The coursework completed and listed on the transcript should match what is listed on the Plan of Study.
 - If the graduate student needs to modify a Plan of Study so that it lists the courses completed, they can complete a [Change to Plan of Study](#). This is common as course availability and even interests may have changed since originally filing the Plan of Study.
 - Required signatures for Change to Plan of Study
 - Graduate student
 - Advisor
 - Graduate Program Coordinator
 - Remember to verify that the Plan of Study lists the *current* committee members. Similar to coursework, changes to committee members may have happened since originally filing the Plan of Study. A Change of Supervisory Committee is necessary.
 - Required signatures for Change of Supervisory Committee
 - Graduate Student
 - Advisor
 - Added Committee member (up to four)
 - Deleted Committee member (up to four)
 - Graduate Program Coordinator

Important: The Change of Supervisory Committee form can be confusing because it serves several purposes. For example, the required signature of the Advisor is toward the bottom of the form unless the graduate student is changing advisors, in which case it is toward the top of the form – the fields for the Current Advisor and the New Advisor. This form can be “tricky” due to its several purposes (forming a Committee, changing a Committee, changing an Advisor) so contact the Academic Support Team as soon as possible when attempting to make changes.

8.1.4 - Submit a [Notification of Scheduled Examination](#)

- Graduate student must submit the “Notification of Scheduled Examination” through DocuSign **7 calendar days** prior to the selected examination date. A *successful* submission requires all signatures, not only that the graduate student has submitted the form.
- The Notification activates an audit of coursework and grades to verify all requirements

have been met and the courses match the approved and on-file Plan of Study

- Graduate students should have examined the Plan of Study to increase the likelihood that the audit should happen without incidence or possibly only minor adjustments (correcting course number or title).
- Required signatures in DocuSign
 - Graduate Student
 - Advisor
 - Graduate Program Coordinator

8.1.5 - Send the disquisition (dissertation, master's paper, master's thesis) to Committee members at least seven calendar days prior to the scheduled examination date

8.1.6 - Submit a Report of Final Defense

After a successful defense, starting on the date of the defense, the graduate student has **14 calendar days** to file the *Report of Final Defense*.

- Verify whether any Committee member wishes to view the disquisition after you make any requested modifications.
- Required signatures in DocuSign
 - Graduate Student
 - Advisor
 - All Committee Members (up to five members)

IMPORTANT: It is necessary – imperative! – to have a *Notification of Scheduled Examination* on file, which activated the audit of courses and grades. Without the *Notification of Scheduled Examination* on file, the audit does not occur. Without the audit, a graduate student might not be in a position to graduate due to missed requirements.

8.1.7 - After the Defense

Yes, it is possible to concurrently file the *Approval Page* and the *Report of Final Defense*. However, one reason that a graduate student might not be able to submit the two forms concurrently is that a Committee member has requested to review the disquisition. The Committee member, requesting to review the disquisition, can sign the *Report of Final Defense* (acknowledging a successful defense) but does not want to sign the *Approval Page* until the graduate student addresses any requested changes and allowed the Committee member to review the changes.

⇒ **Submit an [Approval Page](#)**

- Required signatures in DocuSign

- Graduate Student
- All committee members
- Department Chair

⇒ **Complete an [IRB/IACUC/IBC Compliance Form](#)**

- Required signatures in DocuSign
 - Graduate Student
 - Advisor

8.1.9 - Pay the [Disquisition Processing Fee](#)

Only doctoral candidates: Check with department regarding the dissertation video

- The Graduate School does not require a dissertation video
- Some graduate programs require the video

8.1.10 - Submit a PDF of the disquisition through ProQuest for format review

- Expect at least one exchange of format revisions
- Anticipate at least two to four *business* days for the review process

Final Degree Clearance Deadline

Graduates student must complete all degree requirements, including the format review process, on or before the deadline.

8.2 – Areas not Addressed by the Graduate School

While the sequence described in 8.1 covers many of the steps necessary to complete a graduate degree, some programs might have more steps. However, most of the outlined steps involve the Graduate School in some manner (often filing a form or document to activate a procedure, such as including a graduate student in Commencement materials or verifying through audit a graduate student has completed courses that satisfy degree requirements).

For some areas of graduate study, the Graduate School has no established policy or guidance. In these areas, the graduate program coordinator, department administrators, and advisor of graduate students exercise control. The Graduate School would only intervene if a graduate program advisor, a department administrator, or a Supervisory Committee member requests guidance resolving an issue.

8.2.1 - Reading lists for exams or for the disquisition process

The examination process is highly situated within each graduate program. The Graduate School does not specify how to create reading lists for exams (comprehensive exam lists, maxi reading lists, or any other exam format).

However, as the process is highly situated within each graduate program, the graduate program should provide descriptions of the process in an accessible way for graduate students, graduate program coordinators, and Supervisory Committee members. If the process is so highly situated that it cannot be described, then the process itself raises ethical questions about the transparency and fairness of the examination process.

Some departments have prepared lists based on specific subject areas or topics. The availability of these lists should be readily accessible for graduate students, graduate program coordinators, and Supervisory Committee members.

Other departments require the graduate student and supervisory committee to arrange lists based on disquisition topic and expertise of committee members. The process of arranging lists should be documented between the graduate student and Supervisory Committee members (or at least the advisor of the graduate student).

No aspect of reading lists is defined through Graduate School policy – not number of lists (e.g., should each committee member be responsible for working with the advisee to create a list, or does every graduate student need the same number of lists, can there be “one big list”), not number items per list (e.g., is there a minimum number of items to make a list, or a maximum number of items), not types of items deemed acceptable for lists (i.e., should the included articles only be from journals of a certain impact factor or can the list include unreviewed material from a blog posting by a scholar deemed of high reputation).

The graduate student and their Supervisory Committee members should follow any guidance from graduate program materials. If guidance is not available, the graduate student and Supervisory Committee members should determine among themselves what is appropriate for the graduate student to demonstrate preparation to begin collecting and reading material for examination lists.

Graduate students should remain in contact with advisor and, preferably, full Supervisory Committee. It is possible that the advisor or Committee members might expect changes to a list. Only if changes are not permitted according to graduate program materials should requests for changes be denied (for example, the graduate program has established lists that the faculty agree are the “core” of the examination).

The Graduate School does not intervene unless the circumstances have become untenable (e.g., committee members are not providing lists despite requests by a graduate student or creating undue burden through frequent ineffective communication about examination lists).

8.2.2 - Design and Delivery of Examinations

Similar to reading lists, the design and delivery of examinations is highly situated within each graduate program. Even within a program, the examination might vary depending upon the topic area and the expectations set by Supervisory Committee members for a graduate student.

Graduate students and committee members should clarify the expectations of the examination format including the number and type of examinations, and the timing of administering examinations.

Given the highly situated aspect of examinations, graduate students within a program might have very distinct experiences based on several factors. Graduate students focused on different areas of research might require very distinct examination formats. However, it is expected between graduate student and committee members that the process of examination will be the result of discussion or readily available policy in documents pertaining to the graduate program (e.g., a program handbook or a program exam policy).

9 – Glossary

Academic Calendar

A listing of important registration, financial aid, and account payment dates and deadlines throughout the academic school year (Official [Academic Calendar](#))

Academic Warning

Any student in good standing whose CGPA drops to less than 3.0 at any time of attendance is placed on academic warning

Academic Probation

If a student on academic warning fails to achieve a CGPA of at least 3.0 in the subsequent semester of attendance, they will be placed on academic probation.

Accelerated Degree Program

A combined bachelor's and master's program for highly qualified students, which allows designated graduate credits to be used toward both degrees.

Approval Page

The signed [Approval Page](#) signifies that the supervisory committee approves of the master's paper, thesis, or dissertation. (See 8.1 for more information).

Comprehensive/Preliminary Examination

A two-part (written and oral) examination scheduled after the majority of doctoral coursework is completed. Each doctoral program defines the specific expectations and conducting of the examination (consult with advisor and graduate program coordinator). Successful completion of the examination marks the transition from doctoral student to doctoral candidate.

Continuous Enrollment

The requirement that graduate students register for at least one graduate credit each semester (Fall and Spring) until all degree requirements are complete, including Graduate School approval of the thesis, paper, or dissertation. For details review the section of the Graduate Bulletin on [Continuous Enrollment](#).

Credential

Academic or educational qualifications, such as degrees or diplomas, that are in progress or completed.

Didactic Courses

Didactic courses are those courses approved for graduate credit numbered 601-689, 691; 700-789, 791; 800-889, 891. Courses numbered 690, 692-699, 790, 792-799, 890, 892-899 are considered special or experimental courses and are not to be included as didactic courses on a plan of study.

Disquisition

A term used to describe a master's paper, thesis, or dissertation. A few graduate programs do not require a disquisition.

Doctoral Candidate

The phrase denotes that a graduate student has passed comprehensive/preliminary examination and may formally begin a dissertation project. While the dissertation project might have started prior to passing the examination, only after examination is the transition from doctoral student to doctoral candidate officially recognized.

Enrollment Hold

A hold placed on a student's account that prevents course registration (See 5.1 for more information on Graduate School Holds).

Final Defense

An oral examination scheduled after the coursework *and* disquisition are completed. This examination will be concerned primarily with the disquisition, but it may also cover material from coursework, especially those courses fundamental to the disquisition. One semester must separate the Comprehensive/Preliminary Examination and the Final Defense. (See 8.1 for more information).

Final Degree Clearance Deadline

Graduates student must complete all degree requirements, including the format review process, on or before the deadline. The deadline is the last day of the semester.

Format Review

The format review process is the final step before publication of the master's paper, thesis or dissertation. This review ensures the document formatting is consistent with NDSU's format guidelines.

Grade Point Average (or GPA)

A calculation using a 4-point scale and credit hours (specifics of calculation available [here](#)). Two commonly calculated grade point averages are (a) semester GPA and (b) cumulative GPA. The semester GPA is specific to grades posted and credit hours for a given semester. The cumulative GPA factors all posted grades and all credit hours into the calculation. Note, some programs might use more specific GPA calculations, for example, a GPA for a subset of courses within a program, to determine eligibility for progression to another stage of the program. Consult with your advisor, graduate program director, and policy handbook for the program.

Graduate Program Coordinator

A person entrusted by an academic department to oversee the operations and procedures of the graduate programs of that department. After an advisor, the graduate program coordinator is the next person that a graduate student should contact to resolve questions and to clarify processes related to the graduate programs of that department. *All* programs have a coordinator who is responsible for the graduate studies in a department or sometimes departments.

Graduate Assistant Onboarding

The process new graduate assistants have to complete as employees of the university (see 6.2 for more information).

Oral Defense Deadline

Student's planning to graduate in the current semester must defend their master's paper, thesis, or dissertation by this date to be eligible to submit their document to the Graduate School for format review.

Plan of Study

An agreement between the student, the academic program, and the Graduate College that specifies all courses required to earn the graduate degree. This includes any qualifying transfer credits and up to 10 credits taken as a non-degree NDSU graduate student toward the degree (see 3.3 for more information).

Post- Defense Submission for Format Review Deadline

By this date, you must submit your master's paper, thesis, or dissertation to the Graduate School to attempt to graduate in the current semester. Students must have completed their Final Defense and completed any content revisions requested by their committees prior to making the submission. (See 8.1 for more information).

Report of Preliminary Exam

Completed after the preliminary exam, the supervisory committee indicates approval or disapproval of the examination and serves as their recommendation for doctoral candidacy (See 8.1 for more information).

Report of Final Defense

Completed after the final defense, the supervisory committee indicates approval or disapproval of the examination and outlines any changes requested to the master's paper, thesis or dissertation. (See 8.1 for more information).

Supervisory Committee

The Supervisory Committee is comprised of the student's Advisor (committee chair) and supporting committee members. The goal in selecting a supervisory committee is creating a team to help the student develop a Plan of Study to align with the student's desired professional goals, provide support in the growth of the student as a professional, and oversee the student's final project or final defense.

10 – Directory of Services and Resources (2022-23)

Resource	Phone	Email or Website
Career and Advising Center	(701) 231 7111	career-advising.ndsu.edu
Center for Writers	(701) 231 7927	ndsu.cfw@ndsu.edu
Counseling Center	(701) 231 7671	
Disability Services	(701) 231 8463	ndsu.disability.services@ndsu.edu
Graduate School - Academic Support		ndsu.gsa@ndsu.edu
Graduate School - Business Operations		ndsu.grad.school@ndsu.edu
Graduate School - Grad Hub / GPS Academy	(701) 231 6456	matthew.b.warner@ndsu.edu
Graduate School - Main Office	(701) 231 7033	ndsu.grad.school@ndsu.edu
Information Technology - Help Desk	(701) 231 8685	ndsu.helpdesk@ndsu.edu
International Student and Study Abroad Services	(701) 231 7895	ndsu.international@ndsu.edu
Learning and Applied Innovations Center (LAIC)	(701) 231 5130	ndsu.laic@ndsu.edu
Libraries - Archives	(701) 231 8914	
Libraries - Circulation	(701) 231 8888	
Libraries - Data Visualization Lab	(701) 231 7351	robert.tolliver@ndsu.edu
Libraries - Digital Fabrication Lab	(701) 231 9746	adam.elznic@ndsu.edu
Libraries - Reference	(701) 231 8886	
NDSU OneStop	(701) 231 6200	
Office of Multicultural Programs	(701) 231 1029	ndsu.multicultural@ndsu.edu
Office of Teaching and Learning	(701) 231 7015	ndsu.otl@ndsu.edu
Ombudsperson	(701) 231 5114	kristine.paranica@ndsu.edu
Police - Non-emergency	(701) 231 8998	
Registration & Records	(701) 231 7981	
Student Health Services - Clinic	(701) 231 7331	ndsu.studenthealthservices@ndsu.edu
Student Health Services - Pharmacy	(701) 231 7332	