

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS & ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

- Graduate Degree Requirements (p. 1)
- Academic Expectations and Guidelines (p. 3)

Graduate programs are typically regarded as either research or professional oriented programs. Research programs have a major research component. At the master's level, the research component may be included in a series of courses, a research product, and/or a thesis. At the doctoral level, the research product is a dissertation. Professional programs at the master's level may include an internship and/or a practicum in lieu of a research product.

Graduate studies tend to be more focused, provide greater depth of study within the chosen field, foster independent learning, and promote knowledge of the literature. All of the graduate programs at Sam Houston State University require an assessment of knowledge retention toward the end of the academic program. The assessment may be incorporated as a comprehensive exam, in written and/or oral format, and/or a comprehensive capstone course.

Regardless of the type of program, the academic expectations placed on graduate students far exceed those experienced at the undergraduate level. While pursuit of knowledge is the major goal of graduate studies, graduate students are expected to achieve and remain in **academic good standing**. At Sam Houston State University, a graduate student must maintain an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate coursework attempted. See Scholastic Expectations (<http://graduate-catalog-2015-2016.shsu.edu/home/degree-requirements-and-academic-guidelines.html#expectations>) for further details.

Graduate Degree Requirements

- Academic Procedures (p. 1)
- Degree Plan (p. 2)
- Comprehensive Examination (p. 2)
- Enrollment in Thesis or Dissertation Courses (p. 2)
- Master's Thesis/Doctoral Dissertation (p. 2)
- Graduation (p. 3)

Academic Procedures

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR STEPS REQUIRED BY GRADUATE STUDIES IN FULFILLING REQUIREMENTS FOR A GRADUATE DEGREE

Procedure	Time
1. Become familiar with general regulations and appropriate degree section of Graduate Catalog	Before registration
2. Meet with graduate advisor to plan course of study	Before initial registration
3. Meet Candidacy Requirements	Per program requirements
4. Conduct Annual Review with Advisor	After each year in program
5. If Thesis or Dissertation is required:	Per program requirements
a. Establish Advisory Committee	See Academic Calendar; http://www.shsu.edu/~reg_www/academic_calendar/
b. Submit thesis/dissertation proposal	
c. Defend thesis/dissertation proposal	
d. Defend final thesis/dissertation	
e. Submit thesis/dissertation to library for review	
6. Apply for degree	See Academic Calendar; http://www.shsu.edu/~reg_www/academic_calendar/
7. Meet Comprehensive Requirements	During semester of anticipated graduation

Notes:

1. Each student is responsible for contacting his/her graduate advisor for the specific program requirement deadlines. A student is required to complete master's level graduate work within a six-year period, measured from the date of initial enrollment for graduate credit in a particular degree program and within an eight-year period for doctoral level graduate work.
2. Students must be enrolled in at least one course (one credit hour or more) in both the semester of graduation and the semester in which the comprehensive requirements are met. Completing a course for which a grade of IP was given in a previous semester does not constitute enrollment.

Degree Plan

A degree plan details the curriculum for the specific academic program and is developed for each graduate student. All courses on the approved degree plan must be completed with a satisfactory grade to meet the requirements for the degree. Changes in an approved degree plan may be made by petition to the graduate advisor and approved by the appropriate academic dean.

A student is required to complete master's level graduate work within a six-year period, measured from the date of initial enrollment for graduate credit in a particular degree program and within an eight-year period for doctoral level graduate work. The period of time a student is on an approved leave of absence will be counted as time accumulated toward that six-year or eight-year deadline for completion of the degree. Any extension of the six-year or eight-year deadline must be approved in writing by the appropriate academic dean.

Comprehensive Examinations

All candidates for a graduate degree must pass integrative comprehensive examinations. The major department will establish whether the comprehensive examinations are written, oral, or a combination of the two. In lieu of comprehensive exams, some programs have been granted permission to use a comprehensive capstone course or portfolio submission.

The major department will organize a committee for the administration of the examinations. A grade of "high pass," "pass," or "fail" for each exam must be filed in the office of the appropriate academic dean. Should a student fail one or more examinations, a re-examination shall be permitted per departmental or college guidelines, as appropriate. A third examination may be permitted only with the approval of the appropriate academic dean and the department. Students should consult the major department for specific guidelines regarding comprehensive examinations. Students must be enrolled in the University the semester in which the comprehensive exams are administered.

Enrollment in Thesis or Dissertation Courses

(Refer to Academic Policy Statement 930129 (<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/c129276a-8ab2-44cf-922d-53d7a33a2f79.pdf>))

A graduate student at Sam Houston State University writing a thesis or dissertation must enroll in the appropriate thesis or dissertation courses. Typically, a master's student is required to take at least six hours of thesis courses. Depending on the specific program, a doctoral student is required to take a minimum of either nine or twelve hours of dissertation courses. Once a student enrolls in a thesis or dissertation course, the student must continuously enroll in such a course every fall and spring semester until the signed thesis/dissertation route sheet is received by the Registrar's Office. Students must be enrolled in at least one course (one credit hour or more) in the semester of graduation.

A student who is unable to work on the thesis or dissertation for a period of time may present to the appropriate academic dean a written request for a leave of absence of up to one year. The dean's approval of such a request must be in writing. A student granted a leave of absence may not be enrolled in any coursework during this period. A student on a leave of absence will lose access to University services and must submit a new application to re-enter the program.

Master's Thesis/Doctoral Dissertation

Thesis/Dissertation Committee

A thesis or dissertation committee will be formed prior to enrollment in the first thesis/dissertation course. The committee must be composed of a chair and at least two additional members, all of whom have appropriate graduate faculty status. With the approval of the department chair, academic dean, and Dean of Graduate Studies the committee may include one member who is not employed by SHSU as per Academic Policy Statement 950601. Selection of the chair depends on student preference, faculty availability, and expertise. After a faculty member agrees to serve as chair, the student will select the other committee members with guidance from the chair. The committee must then be approved by the chair of the major department and the appropriate academic dean. Any change in the composition of the thesis or dissertation committee will be approved in the same manner.

Prospectus

In consultation with the thesis or dissertation chair, the student will select a subject of investigation and determine the availability of the required sources, facilities, materials, and equipment for the research and the writing of the thesis or dissertation. The student will prepare a prospectus which will specify the topic, detail the purpose of the proposed investigation, describe the proposed method(s) of investigation, indicate the relationship of study to relevant research and findings of scholars in the student's area of concentration, and provide a commentary on source materials and/or facilities available for the successful completion of the research.

The prospectus shall be submitted to the thesis or dissertation committee following the timelines outlined by the departmental or college policies. Upon committee approval, the signed prospectus is submitted to the appropriate academic dean for final approval. Any subsequent changes in topic or the proposed method of investigation must be approved in writing by the committee and submitted for approval to the appropriate academic dean.

Preparation

To facilitate the preparation of the thesis or dissertation, the student should refer to the *Directions on Form, Preparation, and Submission of the Final Copies of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations* at <http://library.shsu.edu/research/guides/thesis>, as well as other important information on the Graduate Studies website.

Procedure

Candidates should be in regular contact with committee members throughout the thesis/dissertation process. Candidates should allow committee members ample time to review draft versions of the thesis/dissertation. The candidate should submit the completed thesis or dissertation to the thesis or dissertation committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The following steps must be completed, most in the graduating semester.

1. The candidate shall submit a draft of the thesis/dissertation to the Library for format and style review. The last day to submit the draft can be found in the Academic Calendar (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/calendars/academic-calendar.html>).
2. The chair of the committee or the graduate advisor establishes a time and location for administering a verbal defense of the thesis or dissertation. The defense must be held at least six weeks prior to graduation. Attendance at the defense is open to the entire university community.
3. The thesis/dissertation chair will submit a signed *Report of the Outcome of the Thesis/Dissertation Defense* to the appropriate academic dean.
4. Upon successful completion of the defense, the candidate should begin the routing of the Electronic Route Sheet. (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/theses-and-dissertations.html>) This form will be automatically routed to the thesis/dissertation committee chair and the appropriate academic dean; the director of the library; the Office of Graduate Studies; and the Office of the Registrar.
5. Upon approval by the committee, the final (approved) version of the thesis or dissertation should be taken to the Newton Gresham Library by the candidate for final review prior to reproduction. The last date for submission can be found in the Academic Calendar. Reproduction of the thesis or dissertation and binding costs are the responsibility of the candidate. The original copy will remain in the library collection.

Graduation

Application for a Degree

For fall and spring graduates, a formal application and payment of the degree/diploma fee must be made in the Registrar's Office on or before the 12th class day of the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. Summer graduates will be required to file a formal application and pay the degree/diploma fee prior to the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. Specific dates can be found in the Academic Calendar. A student filing a degree application after the published deadline will be assessed a late fee. A student who is completing the last semester of coursework at an institution other than SHSU must provide the Registrar with an official transcript of this coursework no later than one day prior to the graduation date.

Application for a Graduate Certificate

All graduate students who complete a graduate certificate issued by SHSU must submit the Graduate Certificate Completion Form (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/grad-toolkit.html>) to the Office of Graduate Studies via email at gradstudies@shsu.edu. This form should be sent on or before the 12th class day during the fall or spring semester. Summer graduates will be required to submit the Graduate Certificate Completion Form on or before the 4th class day. At this time, no fee is associated with the Graduate Certificate Completion form. Please note that certificates issued by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will be distributed by the TEA not by the Office of Graduate Studies at SHSU.

Academic Expectations and Guidelines

- Grading System (p. 3)
- Academic Honesty (p. 4)
- Scholastic Expectations (p. 4)
- Graduate Certificates (p.)
- Academic Probation and Suspension (p. 4)
- Resignations (p. 4)
- Transcripts (p. 5)
- Transfer of Credit (p. 5)
- University Academic Policy Manual and Student Guidelines (p. 5)

Grading System

Four grades are given in graduate courses at the University:

Grade	Denotation
A	Academic Excellence
B	Acceptable Performance
C	Passing, yet Insufficient Performance
F	Failure

- The mark "IP" denotes "in progress" and is given in thesis and other courses which cannot be completed within one semester.

- The mark “CR” denotes “credit.”
- The mark of “W” denotes “withdrew” and is given for resignations.
- The mark “X” denotes “incomplete.” If the student meets the prescribed requirements of the course before the end of the next long academic semester (fall or spring; the summer term is not considered a long semester for X grade submissions) after the “X” is given, the student will receive the grade earned; otherwise, the mark “X” will be automatically changed to an “F.”
- The mark of “Q” is assigned to courses dropped from the thirteenth class day, for a fall or spring semester, or from the fifth class day, for a summer session, through the last class day, but, prior to any final exams being taken or course completion. Courses with the mark of “Q” will not be counted as courses attempted and will not be included in determining grade point averages. However, be aware that SHSU students are allowed no more than five “Q” drops during the course of their career at SHSU.

A graduate student who elects to drop all courses, i.e., to resign from the University, must notify the Registrar’s Office and process a Resignation Request (see Resignations).

Academic Honesty

The Graduate Faculty of Sam Houston State University expects students to conduct academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit), the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments.

The University’s policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in the *Student Guidelines* (<http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide>), distributed by the Division of Student Services. Students should check with their academic colleges and departments for potentially stricter policies than those listed in the Graduate Catalog.

Graduate Certificates

Graduate Certificates issued by SHSU must follow all policies for graduate level work. Including, but not limited to: admissions, scholastic expectations, degree plan requirements, and graduation.

Scholastic Expectations

A minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is required in all coursework taken for graduate credit. All grades earned in courses taken for graduate credit will be utilized in computing the grade point average. If a course is repeated, the highest earned grade will be used for computing the grade point average. A grade earned at another institution may not be used to remove a grade deficiency earned in residence at Sam Houston State University. Semester hours of credit earned at another institution are not utilized in computing the student’s Sam Houston State University overall grade point average. Only those transferred courses from accredited institutions in which a grade of “A” or “B” was earned and which are accepted toward an official degree program may be applied toward a degree (see Transfer of Credit).

Academic Probation and Suspension

In order to achieve and remain in **academic good standing** at Sam Houston State University, a graduate student must maintain an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate coursework attempted.

A 3.0 overall grade point average is the absolute minimum required for graduation. A graduate student who falls below a 3.0 overall grade point average at the close of any semester during which one or more semester credit hours are attempted will be placed on probation. If an enrolled student on probation fails to achieve a minimum 3.0 overall grade point average at the close of the next semester or summer school following the starting of the probation, the student will be terminated.

A committee of the department or college graduate faculty will review the graduate status for any student earning two grades of “C” in any combination of graduate courses. The committee will consider the advisability of the student’s continued enrollment in the graduate program. A student who earns three grades of “C” or one grade of “F” will be terminated from graduate studies. **A student who earns a third grade of “C” or a grade of “F” during the semester or summer of the anticipated graduation will be terminated from graduate studies and will not be eligible to graduate.** The appropriate academic dean may place on probation, retain on probation, or terminate any student deficient in grade points without regard to the regulations previously stated.

Any appeal for a review of the termination of graduate status should be directed in writing through the graduate advisor of the program, to the chair of the department, to the academic dean of the college for final approval or denial, and finally to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

If a student wishes to pursue a different program after being terminated from his/her original program, he/she must complete the admissions process and be accepted into the new program. A student must be in Academic Good Standing in order to change to a new program or receive a release from the academic program, academic dean, and Graduate Dean. Once accepted, the previous program must release the termination block in the Registrar’s Office before the student can register in the new program.

Resignations

To resign (officially withdraw) from the University, a student must notify the Registrar’s Office and process a Resignation Request. The Resignation Request must be in writing and becomes effective on the date received by the Registrar’s Office. The effective date of the Resignation Request, as

received by the Registrar's Office, is the date used for determining any refund as authorized in the State Refund Policy (see Tuition and Fees Refund Policy (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/students/registration/resignations-refunds-drops.html>)). The student is responsible for clearing all debts owed to the University. A student who wishes to drop all courses must officially resign. **A student who discontinues attending class and fails to officially resign from the University will receive the grade of "F" in each enrolled course.**

A student who resigns after the 12th class day of a regular semester or after the 4th class day of a summer session will receive a mark of "W" for each enrolled course. A student who resigns from the University while enrolled in a course whose duration is less than a normal term will receive a mark of "W" if the resignation occurs after one-half of that course time has been completed.

Transcripts

Effective October 17, 2016, currently registered students will be permitted unlimited unofficial transcripts pending they are cleared of all financial holds and any other holds which might hold registration. Free official transcripts will no longer be available to current or degree awarded students.

Transcripts will not be released to anyone who has a financial debt to the University.

Transfer of Credit

In accordance with Academic Policy Statement 801007, graduate courses completed at other accredited colleges and universities may be applied as transfer credit toward a graduate degree at Sam Houston State University at the discretion of each graduate program and the college in which it is housed. Transfer credit is not automatically conferred and must be requested by the graduate advisor. Only courses with an earned grade of "B" or better may be used as transfer credit. Transferred courses must adhere to the six year time frame for Master's degrees and the eight year time frame for doctoral degrees. If courses are older than the allowed time frame, written justification must be provided by the graduate advisor with approval by the academic dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies for courses to be transferred.

The maximum number of hours that may be transferred into a graduate program are as follows:

- 6 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 30 hours;
- 9 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 31 to 36 hours;
- 12 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 37 to 48 hours;
- 15 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 49 or more hours.

Students are encouraged to contact the appropriate graduate advisor for information concerning transfer credit allowed for a specific degree.

University Academic Policy Manual and Student Guidelines

Sam Houston State University's *Academic Policy Manual* (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-students.html>) and *Student Guidelines* (<http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide>) provide specific information pertaining to the educational mission of the University and student conduct. Copies of these publications may also be viewed at the Reference Desk of the Newton Gresham Library.