

# DEGREE REQUIREMENTS & ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

- Graduate Degree Requirements (p. 1)
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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. Further assessment information can be found under Comprehensive Requirements (p. 2).

Regardless of the type of program, the academic expectations placed on graduate students far exceed those experienced at the undergraduate level. To maintain 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. Students associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine will adhere to an academic standings policy as outlined in their student handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)). See Scholastic Expectations (p. 5) for further details.

## Graduate Degree Requirements

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## Academic Procedures

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

Procedure	Time
1. Become familiar with general regulations and appropriate degree section of Graduate and Professional Catalog	Before registration
2. Meet with graduate advisor to plan course of study, including any attempted certificates	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 linked below table
b. Submit thesis/dissertation proposal	
c. Defend thesis/dissertation proposal	
d. Defend final thesis/dissertation	
e. Submit thesis/dissertation to The Graduate School for review	
6. Apply for degree and/or graduate certificate	See Academic Calendar
7. Meet comprehensive requirements	During semester of anticipated graduation

Academic Calendar ([http://www.shsu.edu/~reg\\_www/academic\\_calendar/](http://www.shsu.edu/~reg_www/academic_calendar/))

### Notes:

1. Each student is responsible for contacting their 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.
3. Students are responsible for appropriate application to degree for diplomas and/or certificates.

## 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. A student associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine is required to complete the curriculum within a six-year period.** The period of time a student is on an approved leave of absence will be counted as time accumulated toward the 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 and the Dean of The Graduate School.

## Comprehensive Requirements

Comprehensive requirements are an important measure of skills and knowledge acquired throughout the program of study. All master's degree and doctoral degree candidates must demonstrate the skills and knowledge acquired through their program by passing an integrative comprehensive examination before completing their degree plan. The major department/school will establish the form of the comprehensive examination (e.g. timed exam, research presentation, thesis defense, capstone course, portfolio submission, performance, etc.) and whether it is written, oral, or a combination of the two. Graduate candidates must check with their program's graduate advisor and/or department/school to determine the comprehensive examination procedures for their program.

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

## Enrollment in Thesis or Dissertation Courses

(Refer to Academic Policy Statement 930129 (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/policies/930129%20Graduate%20Degree%20Enrollment%20and%20Completion%20Requirements.pdf>) - Graduate Degree Enrollment and Completion Requirements)

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, spring, and summer 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. Completing a course for which a grade of IP was given in a previous semester does not constitute enrollment.

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. Students returning from leave of absence should contact program advisors immediately to seek guidance for enrollment procedures.

## Master's Thesis/Doctoral Dissertation

### Thesis/Dissertation Committee

A thesis/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/school chair, academic dean, and Dean of The Graduate School the committee may include one member who is not employed by SHSU, as per Academic Policy Statement 950601 ([https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/curriculum/950601%20Members%20Not%20Employed%20by%20SHSU%20on%20Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Committees\\_2017.pdf](https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/curriculum/950601%20Members%20Not%20Employed%20by%20SHSU%20on%20Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Committees_2017.pdf)). 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/school 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/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/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/dissertation committee following the timelines outlined by the department/school or college policies. Upon committee approval, the signed prospectus is submitted to the appropriate academic dean for final approval and to The Graduate School for notification purposes by using the Thesis and Dissertation Initiation Sheet (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/theses-and-dissertations.html>). 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/dissertation, the student should refer to the *Directions on Form, Preparation, and Submission of the The Final Copies of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations* at Thesis and Dissertation Resources (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/theses-and-dissertations.html>).

### 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/dissertation to the thesis/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 Thesis/Dissertation Specialist 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/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 Thesis/Dissertation Specialist; The Graduate School; and the Office of the Registrar.
5. Upon approval by the committee, the final (approved) version of the thesis/dissertation should be submitted to the Thesis/Dissertation Specialist by the candidate for final review prior to publication. The last date for submission can be found in the Academic Calendar (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/calendars/academic-calendar.html>).
6. SHSU publishes theses and dissertations electronically through Vireo (<https://shsu-etd.tdl.org/>) and ProQuest (<https://about.proquest.com/>). In certain cases, however, SHSU will allow for an Embargo (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/theses-and-dissertations.html>) to be placed on a candidate's research. An embargo allows a thesis/dissertation to be withheld from being published for a limited time or permanently in SHSU's Institutional Repository and ProQuest. Printing and binding costs for physical reproductions of the thesis/dissertation 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 Office of the Registrar 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 their graduation application and pay the degree/diploma fee by the 4th class day of the first summer session in which the degree is to be conferred. The specific deadline dates to apply to graduate each term can be found in the Academic Calendar (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/calendars/academic-calendar.html>). A student filing a degree application after the published deadline will be assessed a late fee. A student who is completing the last term of coursework at an institution other than SHSU must provide The Graduate School with an official transcript of this coursework no later than one day prior to the graduation date (See Transfer of Credit (p. 6)). Further details regarding the graduation application process and graduation ceremony information may be found through the Registrar's Graduation (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/graduation/>) site, including application fees.

### Application for a Graduate Certificate

All graduate students who complete a graduate certificate issued by SHSU must submit an application for graduation with the Office of the Registrar (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/>). This process should take place on or before the 12th class day during the fall or spring semester. Summer graduates will be required to complete the process on or before the 4th class day. Graduate certificates may be awarded at the completion of the required graduate certificate coursework, except for graduate certificates that require degree completion per the academic program. Here is a complete list of graduate certificates (<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/degrees.html?degTyp=mast>) offered at SHSU.

Please note that certifications issued by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will be distributed by the TEA not by The Graduate School at SHSU.

## Academic Expectations and Guidelines

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## 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/dissertation 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.
- Students associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine are subject to a grading policy found in the College of Osteopathic Medicine Student Handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)).

## 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.

Sam Houston State 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/schools for potentially stricter policies than those listed in the Graduate and Professional Catalog. Students associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine must adhere to additional policies that can be found in the College of Osteopathic Medicine Student Handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)).

## Graduate Certificates

Graduate certificates issued by Sam Houston State University must follow all policies for graduate level work, including, but not limited to, admissions, scholastic expectations, degree plan requirements, and graduation. Students may pursue a graduate certificate with or without simultaneous enrollment in a graduate degree program.

### Students seeking a graduate certificate with simultaneous enrollment in a graduate degree program.

For information on transfer of credit for graduate courses completed at other accredited colleges and universities, see Academic Policy Statement 801007 (<http://catalog.shsu.edu/archives/2023-2024/graduate-and-professional/academic-policies-procedures/degree-requirements-academic-guidelines/#transfer-credit>).

The maximum number of hours that may count as shared credit between multiple certificates and/or with a graduate degree program taken simultaneously is at the discretion of the academic dean and the Dean of The Graduate School.

### Students seeking a graduate certificate without simultaneous enrollment in a graduate degree program.

For transfer of credit of graduate courses completed at other accredited colleges and universities may be applied as transfer credit toward a graduate certificate 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. The maximum number of hours that may be transferred into a graduate certificate attained at another accredited college or university are as follows:

- 3 hours of transfer credit toward a certificate of 18 hours or less;
- 6 hours of transfer credit toward a certificate of 19 hours or more.

For a student that is enrolled in multiple graduate certificates simultaneously, the maximum number of hours that may count as shared credit are as follows:

- 3 hours of shared credit toward multiple certificates of 18 hours or less;
- 6 hours of shared credit toward multiple certificates of 19 hours or more.

## 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 (p. 6)).

Students associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine will be subject to a different set of scholastic expectations as outlined in their student handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)).

## 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 following the starting of the probation, the student will be academically terminated.

A student who earns a grade of "C" in any course (repeated or distinct course) within the academic program may have their graduate status reviewed by a committee comprised of the department/school or college's graduate faculty. The committee will recommend an appropriate remediation for the student.

A graduate student who earns a grade of "F" in any graduate course will be terminated from graduate studies.

Those students who earn a grade of "F" during the semester of their anticipated graduation will be terminated from graduate studies and will not be eligible to graduate in that term. 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, then to the chair of the department/school, then to the academic dean of the college, and finally to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Refer to Academic Policy Statement 910312 ([https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/910312%20Academic%20Probation%20and%20Suspension\\_2022.pdf](https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/910312%20Academic%20Probation%20and%20Suspension_2022.pdf)) for further information.

If a student wishes to pursue a different program after being terminated from the original program, the student 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 of the college, and Dean of The Graduate School. Once accepted to the new program, the previous program must release the termination block in the Office of the Registrar before the student can register in the new program.

Students associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine will be subject to a different academic probation and dismissal process as outlined in their student handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)).

## Resignations

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

A Sam Houston State University transcript is the official record of a student’s academic college credits (transfer courses reported to SHSU, credits earned by exam – CLEP), including all undergraduate and graduate level courses and degrees earned.

For information about ordering your transcript, see the Office of the Registrar’s page (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/transcripts-and-student-records/transcripts.html>).

## Transfer of Credit

In accordance with Academic Policy Statement 801007 ([https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/curriculum/801007%20Courses%20and%20Grades%20Transferred%20from%20Other%20Colleges%20and%20Universities\\_2017.pdf](https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/curriculum/801007%20Courses%20and%20Grades%20Transferred%20from%20Other%20Colleges%20and%20Universities_2017.pdf)), 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 The Graduate School 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 seeking a graduate certificate without simultaneous enrollment in a graduate degree program should reference the Graduate Certificates (p. 4) section of this catalog for transfer information.

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

Students seeking to transfer from another institution to the SHSU College of Osteopathic Medicine must apply for transfer via the transfer admissions policy as outlined in the College of Osteopathic Medicine student handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)).

## University Academic Policy Manual and Student Guidelines

Sam Houston State University’s Academic Policy Manual (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/policies.html>) and *Student Guidelines* 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.

Students associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine must adhere to additional policies that can be found in the College of Osteopathic Medicine student handbook ([https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook\\_Final\\_03102020.pdf?language\\_id=1](https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/documents/Student+Handbook_Final_03102020.pdf?language_id=1)).