



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate College

Graduate Advising Handbook

Revised 9/2026 CBJ

Preface

This handbook serves as a reference for faculty and staff serving as graduate program directors and graduate coordinators. Typically, the *graduate program director* is the faculty member designated as the primary leader of a department's graduate programs. Some departments use different terms for this role; some departments have more than one faculty member serving in this capacity; and some departments have a staff member designated to perform many of these tasks. *Graduate coordinators* are the term we use for administrative staff who support graduate programs. We use the term *graduate advisor* for the faculty mentor who serves as the thesis or dissertation chair or otherwise works directly with advising the student. *Graduate faculty* are those who work with graduate students and have been designated to meet the credentials outlined in the graduate faculty status policy in the graduate catalog.

Graduate program directors and graduate coordinators perform essential duties that are critical to the success of the graduate program. We in the Graduate College are grateful to their dedication and efforts in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students and their assistance in making graduate education a priority at WMU. This Handbook was designed to provide information and resources primarily to assist faculty serving as graduate program directors with their responsibilities, but graduate coordinators will find it useful as well.

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WMU Graduate College

We begin this handbook with an overview of the Graduate College, since this unit works closely with graduate program directors and graduate coordinators to recruit, retain, and graduate students in certificate, master's, specialist, and doctoral degree programs.

Graduate College Mission:

The Graduate College, the institution's primary advocate for graduate studies, develops and improves the environment for graduate education at WMU by providing leadership in shaping graduate policy and integrating services that recruit, retain, support, and graduate a diverse population of students.

Graduate College Strategic Planning Goals:

Goal #1: Provide quality service to prospective and current graduate students, alumni, graduate program faculty and staff, and university leadership

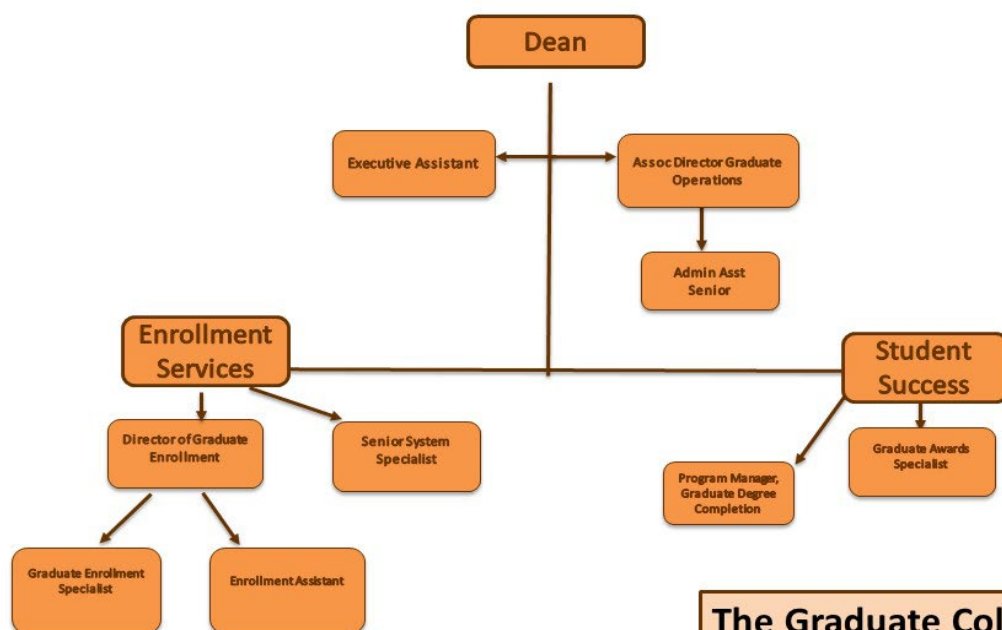
Goal #2: Increase the diversity of students admitted to and graduating from WMU

Goal #3: Assist graduate programs with enrollment management

Goal #4: Support and promote graduate student achievement in research and creative scholarship

Goal #5: Support and promote graduate student academic success, degree completion, and career readiness through improved mentoring, support, and professional development opportunities

Graduate College Organization Chart



Graduate College Services

Administrative Services

- Leadership in Graduate Education
- Guidance in Curriculum Development
- Clarification of University Policies and Procedures

The Graduate Dean and members of the Graduate College team provide leadership and advocacy for graduate education. Please note that the Graduate College does not make graduate policies. Under the principle of shared governance, the policies that regulate university rules and regulations for graduate education are developed by the Graduate Studies Council, reviewed by the Faculty Senate Executive Board, and approved by the Faculty Senate body. These policies are then reviewed and approved by the university administration. The Graduate College can bring issues to the attention of the Graduate Studies Council, but the Graduate College does not set policy. We do, however, ensure compliance with university policy by establishing procedures.

Enrollment Services

- Recruiting and Communication
- Domestic Graduate Application Processing
- Enrollment Management
- Retention Efforts

It is worth noting that the students are not admitted to the Graduate College at WMU, as they are at many other institutions. The Graduate College's role in admissions is overseeing the application system and processing admissions decisions from departments for domestic graduate applications. At WMU, graduate students are admitted to the university and to the college and department in which their program is housed. Admission decisions are made by the specific graduate program to which a student applies.

In addition to overseeing the graduate application system, the Graduate College processes applications and admission decisions for domestic applicants. International Student and Scholar Services processes applications and admission decisions for international applicants.

The Graduate College performs general recruiting efforts for all graduate programs and provides assistance with specific recruiting efforts for individual graduate programs. Our recruiting efforts include representing WMU at national grad fairs, corresponding with prospective applicants and directing them to specific departments, and communicating with prospects and applicants through the Salesforce TargetX system.

The Graduate College assists with the WMU strategic enrollment plan by monitoring national trends in graduate education and gathering data and information for comparison. We evaluate

WMU graduate enrollment data, identify areas of concern, and develop suggestions for obtaining optimal enrollment.

Student Success

- Graduate Appointments
- Thesis & Dissertation Processing and Support
- Graduate Student Support
- Retention and Professional Development Efforts
- Awards/Fellowships

One major role of the Graduate College is oversight of graduate appointments. We ensure compliance with collective bargaining contracts and university policies, post GA salary and tuition rates, and process and approve GA offers.

The Graduate College oversees the submission of theses and dissertations. We post deadlines, guidelines, and answers to frequently asked questions on our website. Current dissertation defense announcements are posted on our website and social media. The Graduate College processes all theses and dissertations to ensure consistency to standards and submits the final approval to the Registrar's Office for use in the graduation audit. We also process and approve nominations for graduate faculty status to ensure that faculty who work with graduate students meet the criteria of the Higher Learning Commission, our accrediting body.

To support graduate student retention and success, the Graduate College offers professional development opportunities. We collaborate with other offices, including University Libraries, Office of Faculty Development, and Career and Student Employment Services, to hold workshops on relevant topics. On our website, graduate students can find a wealth of professional development information in [COMPASS](#): Centering on Mentorship, Professionalization, and Student Success. This tool assists students in gaining skills to become a successful professional.

The Graduate College offers a variety of funding opportunities for graduate students. There are fellowships that offer stipend and tuition benefits, including the Dissertation Completion Fellowships, Thurgood Marshall Fellowships, Martin Luther King Jr., Dolores Huerta-Morris Hood Jr., Rosa Parks Future Faculty Fellowships, and Doctoral Scholar Fellowships. Others offer funding for research or educational expenses, including the Gwen Frostic Doctoral Fellowships, Fisher Gerontology Dissertation Prizes, Patricia L. Thompson Dissertation Awards, and Stapleton-Reinhold Scholarships. We also offer funding to support graduate students engaged in scholarly work with Graduate Student Research Grants and Graduate Student Travel Grants.

We submit nominations of graduate students for national awards, including the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools Distinguished Thesis Award, the CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award, the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools Excellence in Teaching Award, and the K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders Award. We also support sending the WMU Three-Minute Thesis winner to the regional competition.

Graduate Program Director Responsibilities

Graduate program directors serve numerous roles, typically including the following:

- Providing leadership for graduate education in the department
- Recruiting and admitting students
- Advising and mentoring students and approving programs of study
- Perform annual reviews of students
- Leading the department's graduate committee
- Providing information to students about potential funding opportunities
- Serving as primary contact for the graduate program
- Overseeing graduate curriculum
- Providing information to students about career options and job opportunities

In recognition of the work involved in performing these roles, many departments will provide some workload credit for faculty serving as graduate program directors, and departments should consider these contributions in promotion and tenure reviews. Graduate Program Directors should be credited for their efforts in a manner consistent with the AAUP contract, university norms, and departmental standards. The amount of workload credit should depend on numerous factors including the following:

- number of graduate students in the program
- involvement in recruiting and admissions
- complexity of annual reviews
- amount of advising expected
- administrative role
- amount of staff assistance available
- whether work is expected all year round or academic year only
- accreditation duties

Graduate program directors serve many, varied, and important roles in their departments. In order for graduate programs to be successful, there are certain responsibilities that must be carried out in a timely manner. While different departments will fulfill these responsibilities in different ways, for many programs it is the graduate program director who serves as the responsible party. Below we elaborate on common roles of the graduate program director.

Recruitment/Marketing

- Organize recruitment and marketing initiatives
- Attend virtual and in-person recruitment fairs
- Following up with inquiries in a timely manner
- Returning phone calls and emails from prospective students in a timely manner
- Organizing campus visits and tours
- Meeting with students who visit campus
- Maintaining accurate information on program website and other marketing materials
- Utilizing social media platforms to promote program

Admissions

Departments are responsible for maintaining accurate information in the application system and making admissions decisions for all applicants. The Graduate Program Director or Graduate Coordinator is responsible for learning the application system so that applications can be monitored, reviewed, and processed. The Graduate College is a resource for questions about admissions.

The Graduate Program Director's role in admission may include the following:

- Communicate with applicants in a timely manner regarding application status
- Reach out to prospective students with incomplete applications
- Determine number and dates of application deadlines and inform the Graduate College
- Train and convene application review committees
- Make and submit admission decisions in the application system in a timely manner
- Welcome admitted students and inform them of first steps to begin the program

Advising

The Graduate Program Director's role in advising may include the following:

- Ensure currency of the program's Graduate Student Handbook descriptions of policies, procedures, and expectations
- Contact incoming students with information on required courses for the first semester
- Ensure that each student has an advisor
- Perform annual reviews of each student in program, monitoring performance in courses, research, teaching, internships, etc.
- Reach out to students not making adequate progress and develop solutions
- Answer student questions and concerns
- Ensure appropriate submission of all university forms required for degree completion
- Coordinate comprehensive exams

Other Administrative Duties

The Graduate Program Director may play a role in additional administrative duties including the following:

- Provide input to department chair on course rotation that allows degree completion in a reasonable timeframe
- Develop curriculum proposals for curricular changes to the graduate program
- Assist with data collection for annual reports, program assessment, program review, and accreditation
- Maintain accurate records of graduate students in the program
- Serve as representative of the graduate program at department, college, and university levels
- Assign teaching duties to department teaching assistants
- Participate in Graduate College advising meetings to stay current on university efforts

Where to go for information

The official source of information on graduate programs, courses, and policies is the **Graduate Catalog**, available on the Registrar's website wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs.

The Registrar's Office **website** wmich.edu/registrar has information on academic calendars, course offerings, graduation audits and commencement, tuition and fees, and grades.

The Graduate College **website** wmich.edu/grad has information on procedures, forms, funding opportunities, graduate appointments, graduate faculty status, and events. We also house the graduate application portal. You are always welcome to call our office at (269) 387-8212, email our general address at grad-info@wmich.edu, or reach out to individual team members wmich.edu/grad/directory/staff.

We have SharePoint site ([GradShare](#)) available only to faculty and staff who work with graduate students. Here you will find graduate appointment detailed information and award templates, admission letter templates, best practice documents, and slides from grad advising meeting presentations.

The Graduate College meets every fall and spring semester with graduate program directors, department chairs, and graduate coordinators at our **Grad Advising Meetings**. This is our opportunity to provide information related to graduate education at WMU. Slides from these meetings are archived in [GradShare](#). We also meet virtually with these groups several times per year for **Grad Gatherings**. These are additional opportunities to engage with the Graduate College team and discuss particular topics.

The **Grad-at-a-Glance** newsletter is emailed monthly to faculty and staff who work regularly with graduate students. A similar version is emailed to all graduate students. The newsletter is also housed on our website: wmich.edu/grad/faculty-staff/grad-glance-staff-faculty-edition. This monthly bulletin provides timely information on upcoming events, important GA information, funding opportunities for graduate students, and the latest news from the Graduate College. This is an important way to stay informed about graduate education at WMU.

You can also connect with the Graduate College on **social media**.



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WesternGradCollege>



X: x.com/wmugradcollege



Instagram: @wmugradcollege



LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/wmu-graduate-college/



YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/WMUGraduateCollege

Useful Reports

Graduate program directors and graduate coordinators can get authorization and training from Institutional Research to access Bronco Insights, the system that houses valuable university data. The Graduate College website lists a number of Bronco Insights reports that can help graduate programs gather and analyze data <https://wmich.edu/grad/faculty-staff/admission-resources> Some examples include the following:

55.00.10 Graduate Program Profile by Major Cluster

(Enrollment, Completion info, GA and faculty numbers, Admissions info, and more)

20.00.10 Registered Student Headcounts-Majors (just numbers of students, no detail)

20.00.20 Registered Student Detail (names and details such as academic standing)

20.05 Point-in-Time Trend Reporting (non-census) headcount and credit hour info

21.00.20 Students Registered in Prior Terms Not Registered in Future Terms

-can be run by department, includes student detail, used for retention efforts

21.10.40 Master's Retention and Graduation Rates

21.10.45 Doctoral Retention and Graduate Rates

70.10.91 Graduate Time to Degree (compare multiple years by department or program)

70.10.10 Degrees Awarded

70.10.11 Degrees by Term

70.00.20 Student Degree Detail by Term

55.00.50 Doctoral Candidacy and Campus Status for Registered Students

40.00 Grades and Academic Performance

40.50 Probation and Dismissal

40.50.10 Students in Academic Difficulty

Warning: semester GPA < 3.0, program GPA $\geq$ 3.0

Probation: program GPA < 3.0

Extended Probation: program GPA < 3.0, semester GPA $\geq$ 3.0

Final Probation: program GPA still < 3.0, semester GPA $\geq$ 3.0

Probation Removed: when conditions of good standing restored

Dismissal: after probation or extended probation if semester GPA < 3.0; after final probation if cumulative GPA < 3.0

Note that, for a graduate student who repeat a course all grades stay on their record but, as of 2024 only the most recent grade is used to calculate GPA.

Critical Policies and Forms

In order to ensure compliance with university policies and accreditation standards, there are a number of policies and forms that are critical to a student's progression through degree completion.

General Progression for Non-Thesis Master's Degree Students

Student enters program

(discusses initial coursework with grad program director/advisor, enrolls in courses)

↓

Student submits [Program of Study form](#) (form owner Registrar's Office)

↓

Annual assessment of student progress using department form or [Annual Review form](#) located in the "Annual Review" drop down menu or use your departmental form

↓

Student completes coursework

↓

Student files for graduation with Registrar in **GoWMU**

↓

Student satisfies all graduation requirements

↓

Student graduates!

General Progression for Thesis Master's Degree Students

Detailed printable pathway outlined on our [website](#).

Student enters program

(discusses initial coursework with grad program director/advisor, enrolls in courses, and begins to define thesis project)

↓

Student submits [Program of Study form](#) (form owner Registrar's Office)

↓

Student forms thesis committee, following published deadlines, and files [Committee form](#) located in the "Committee appointment forms" drop down menu

↓

Annual assessment of student progress using department form or [Annual Review form](#) located in the "Annual Review" drop down menu or use your departmental form

↓

Student completes coursework and develops thesis proposal

↓

Student files for graduation with Registrar in **GoWMU**

↓

Student conducts thesis research

↓

Student completes thesis and submits drafts to thesis chair for comments until the final draft is produced and submitted to thesis committee

↓

Student presents and successfully defends thesis for thesis committee
(schedules thesis through department; completes [Thesis Approval form](#) located in the "Approval forms" drop down menu

↓

Student submits final, approved copy of thesis to Graduate College and ProQuest ETD site

↓

Graduate College reviews and approved thesis

↓

Student satisfies all graduation requirements

↓

Student graduates!

General Progression for Doctoral Degree Students

Detailed printable pathway outlined on our [website](#).

Student enters program

(discusses initial coursework with grad director/dissertation chair, enrolls in courses, and begins to define dissertation project)

↓

Student submits [Program of Study form](#) (form owner Registrar's Office)

↓

Student forms dissertation committee and files [Committee form](#) located in the "Approval forms" drop down menu

↓

Annual assessment of student progress using department form or [Annual Review form](#) located in the "Annual Review" drop down menu or use your departmental form

↓

Student completes coursework and develops dissertation proposal

↓

Student applies to advance to candidacy with [Candidacy form](#) located in the "Dissertation, Specialist Project, and Thesis" drop down menu or use your departmental form

(successful defense of dissertation proposal and candidacy/comprehensive exams)

↓

Student continues dissertation research and data analysis according to proposal

↓
Student files for graduation with Registrar in **GoWMU**
↓
Student completes dissertation and submits drafts to dissertation chair for comments until the final draft is produced and submitted to dissertation committee
↓
Student schedules dissertation defense through the Graduate College with [Dissertation Defense Scheduling form](#) located in the “Dissertation, Specialist Project, and Thesis” drop down menu or use your departmental form
↓
Student presents and successfully defends dissertation for dissertation committee completes [Dissertation Approval form](#) located in the “Approval forms” drop down menu
↓
Student submits final, approved copy of dissertation to ProQuest ETD site
↓
Student satisfies all graduation requirements
↓
Student graduates!

General Progression for Graduate Certificate Students

Student enters program either together with a degree program or independent of a degree program through the application process
(discusses initial coursework with grad program director/mentor, enrolls in courses)
↓
Student submits [Program of Study form](#) (form owner Registrar’s Office)
↓
Student completes coursework
↓
Student files [Application to Receive Graduate Certificate](#) in **GoWMU**
↓
Student satisfies all certificate requirements
↓
Student receives certificate credential!

General Progression for Accelerated Graduate Degree Students

Student completed 88 undergraduate credits 45 earned hours, 15 of which shall be earned at Western Michigan University

↓

Student works with undergraduate advisor to submit Application for Graduation for undergraduate degree program

↓

Once the undergraduate graduation audit is complete (6-8 weeks), student [applies](#) to Accelerated Master's Program while still an undergraduate student

↓

Student submits [Master's Program of Study form](#) (form owner Registrar's Office) to Registrar's Office (after discussing plan of study for graduate degree with departments graduate advisor)

↓

Student registers for graduate-level courses while still an undergraduate using the [AGDP course approval form](#) (form owner Registrar's Office)

↓

After baccalaureate graduation, student is considered a graduate student

↓

Student follows degree progression above for specific pathway and satisfies all graduate requirements and graduates!

Critical Forms Submitted to Registrar's Office:

Program of Study

Purpose: This document is used by the Registrar's Office to complete the graduation audit and must be submitted before applying for graduation. It must include all the courses that complete the program requirements, even if they have not yet been taken. This form verifies that the department has approved the student's plan of courses. The graduate catalog states that it should be filed prior to completion of 12 hrs. for master's students and after 18 hrs. or end of second semester for doctoral students. The Program of Study will be required to be on file with the Registrar's office before a student can receive federal financial aid.

Note that this form does not go to the Graduate College. Changes to the Program of Study form can be made with the Course Substitution form by submitting a revised program of study form to the Registrar's Office.

Form Link: Some graduate programs have developed their own versions of the program of study, or you can use the general forms located on the [Registrar's site](#).

Routing Process:

1. Student or graduate program director fills out form
2. Graduate Program Director reviews to ensure that all graduation requirements are

included and approves form

3. Chair reviews and approves, if needed
4. Student or department makes copies for student and program
5. Department submits form to Registrar's Office

Final Destination: Registrar's Office (registrar-info@wmich.edu)

Accelerated Graduate Degree Programs (AGDP) Course Approval

Purpose: Upon admission to an AGDP, students submit the [Accelerated Graduate Degree Program Course Approval form](#) to identify the courses taken as an undergraduate that will be applied towards their accelerated graduate program.

Routing Process:

1. Student or department fills out information on form.
2. Student and graduate program director sign form.
3. Department submits form to Registrar's Office

Graduation Application

Students file application for graduation through GoWMU **at least two semesters before graduation**, which triggers the graduation audit. Graduation application deadlines are October 1 for Spring graduation or February 1 for Summer I, Summer II, or December graduation. Note that students can move their graduation term forward by emailing their graduation auditor (with no additional fee), but they cannot graduate earlier than the term they select in the application; thus, it is better to advise students to apply earlier rather than later. Student will receive notification from the Registrar's Office indicating any degree requirements or approvals that are outstanding so they can remedy those in time for graduation.

Critical Forms Submitted to Graduate College:

Notification of Appointment to a Dissertation, Project, or Thesis Committee (AKA "Committee Appointment Form")

Purpose: The [Committee Appointment Form](#) (located in the "Approval forms" drop down menu) Document officially establish a student's committee and indicates agreement of the committee to serve in guiding the student through their degree program. Each faculty member on a committee must have active graduate faculty status, and the Graduate College will check for active status before approving the committee. This should be filed as soon as the committee is formed, generally by the end of the second year for thesis and dissertation students. Form must be approved and on file before the graduation audit.

Routing Process:

1. Student or department fills out top portion

2. Student or department circulates for committee member signatures
3. Student or department obtains department chair and graduate program director signatures
4. For doctoral students, either student or department sends form to their academic college for dean's signature. For master's students, either student or department sends to Graduate College (grad-dissertation@wmich.edu)
5. If a doctoral student, the academic college may send the form back to the department for departmental staff to send to the Graduate College, or the academic college may send it directly to the Graduate College to obtain the graduate dean's signature

Final Destination: Graduate College – Dissertations and Theses (grad-dissertation@wmich.edu)

Graduate Faculty Nomination (AKA "GFN")

Purpose: Every faculty member is required to have Graduate Faculty Status in order to participate in graduate education. Faculty members can have "associate" status, which is a 3-year term that allows them to teach courses and serve on committees (but not chair the committee), or "full" status, which is a 5-year term that allows them to teach, serve on graduate committees, and chair graduate committees. Qualifications for graduate faculty status are defined by Faculty Senate MOA 16/14 and outlined in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

[Graduate faculty nomination form](#) may be initiated by the faculty member or graduate coordinator. It is important to note that **GFNs are required for all faculty who work with or teach graduate students**, including outside committee members. Graduate student committees will not be approved without current graduate faculty status for all committee members. Outside committee members should submit a GFN upon joining a committee, and WMU faculty should submit when their 3- or 5-year term expires. The Graduate [College website](#) includes a list of all graduate faculty members and the dates of term expiration.

Routing Process:

1. Faculty member or graduate coordinator fill out informational portions
2. Faculty member attaches or sends a current CV (note that criteria for full graduate faculty status evaluates scholarly activity in the past 5 years, so it is important to send a recent CV)
3. Faculty member or graduate coordinator obtains department chair signature
4. Faculty member or graduate coordinator sends to academic college for dean's signature
5. Academic college or department sends to Graduate College for dean's signature

Final Destination: Graduate College – Dissertations and Theses (grad-dissertation@wmich.edu)

Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

Purpose: This [doctoral candidacy form](#) certifies that a student has fulfilled all the requirements for the doctoral degree except for the dissertation. For students on graduate assistantships, there is a stipend increase after achieving candidacy. Even students who are

not on graduate assistantships are encouraged to obtain candidacy, since this recognizes an important milestone in their doctoral degree progression.

Routing Process:

1. Student fills out information portion, sends to graduate program director
2. Circulate form for dissertation committee signatures
3. Student or department makes copies for student and program

Student or graduate program director submits form to Graduate College Final Destination:
Graduate College – Graduate Awards (grad-awards@wmich.edu)

Dissertation Defense Scheduling

Purpose: The [Dissertation Defense Scheduling document](#) allows the Graduate College to advertise and promote the final defense presentations for doctoral students. The form also ensures that doctoral students are at the proper stage of their program to schedule the defense and allows the Graduate College to anticipate receipt of the approved dissertation. Form must be submitted at least two weeks before final defense date. Master's and Specialist students do not need to use this form, since scheduling of their defenses is done within the department.

Routing Process:

1. Student completes form after consulting with their committee members
2. Student submits form and dissertation abstract to Graduate College

Final Destination: Jennifer.holm@wmich.edu – Program Manager of Graduate Degree Completion

Dissertation, Thesis, or Specialist Project Approval Form

Purpose: The [Dissertation, Thesis, or Specialist Project Approval](#) form is signed after the defense and provides proof that the committee members approve the dissertation, thesis, or specialist project and the student had passed the final defense. Once the Graduate College reviews the submitted dissertation/thesis/specialist project for proper formatting, the Graduate Dean gives the final approval on behalf of the university.

Routing Process:

1. Student fills out information section
2. Student circulates for committee member signatures after successful thesis, project, or dissertation defense
3. Student submits form to Graduate College when submitting approved thesis, project, or dissertation

Final Destination: Graduate College – Dissertations and Theses (grad-dissertation@wmich.edu)

Under-enrollment

Purpose: The [Under-enrollment form](#) is required only for students on graduate appointment who plan to take fewer than full-time credits. Graduate appointees are expected to be fully enrolled, unless all coursework has been completed and the only remaining requirement is thesis, dissertation, or capstone. Approval from the graduate program director or department chair and Graduate College is required before tuition will be paid for under enrolled students.

Routing Process:

1. Student or department completes information on form
2. Graduate program director or department chair reviews and approves
3. International students must submit form to HIGE immigration advisor for approval
4. Student submits completed form to Graduate College for approval

Final Destination: Graduate College – Graduate Appointments grad-awards@wmich.edu

Delayed Tuition Remission Waiver

Purpose: The [Delayed Tuition Remission Waiver](#) form is for students on teaching assistantships only and allows them to utilize unused portion of tuition remission for Summer I and/or Summer II courses, as outlined in the current TAU bargaining agreement. There are several restrictions and deadlines defined on the form, so read it carefully. The delayed tuition remission requires graduate program director signature to confirm courses are in the student's approved program of study.

Routing Process:

1. Student completes information on form
2. Graduate program director certifies that the course(s) are included in the student's program of study
3. Student submits completed form to Graduate College

Final Destination: Graduate College – Graduate Appointments grad-awards@wmich.edu

Permission to Elect Undergraduate Course (Master's Only)

Purpose: Approval of the [Permission to Elect Undergraduate Course in a Master's Degree Program](#) form by the department and Graduate Dean allows a master's student to use up to six credits taken at the undergraduate level in their graduate program. These include 3000- and 4000-level courses or 5000-level courses taken as an undergraduate. For students on a graduate appointment, approval of this form is required before tuition will be paid for the course. Doctoral students cannot use undergraduate credits in their program of study.

Routing Process:

1. Student or graduate program director completes form
2. Department chair and graduate program director review and approve
3. Department submits form to Graduate College

Final Destination: Graduate College – Graduate Awards (grad-awards@wmich.edu)

Program Time Extension (AKA “Extension Request”)

Purpose: The [Program Time Extension](#) form is required by the Registrar’s Office when a student has surpassed the maximum allowed time for their degree program. Master’s students must complete all degree requirements in six years, and doctoral students must complete the requirements in seven years. Any coursework used to meet degree requirements must be taken within this time limit, including transfer courses. Requests to use older coursework are made with this form, and the department must certify that the student has remained current in the course material. This form is also used to allow transfer credits taken more than 6 or 7 years ago.

Routing Process:

1. Student completes information portion and Part 1
2. Graduate program director or graduate advisor completes Part 2 and 3
3. Graduate program director or graduate advisor circulates form for necessary signatures
4. Department sends form to Graduate College

Final Destination: Graduate College – Dissertations and Theses (grad-dissertation@wmich.edu)

Leave of Absence

Purpose: If a student is temporarily unable to continue in their graduate program due to significant issues (health, family, job, military duty, etc.), they may request a [Leave of Absence from](#) the program for up to one year. During this time, the student is not enrolled at WMU, which may impact access to resources. The leave of absence extends the degree time limit by the specified period.

1. Student completes information in the student portion
2. Graduate program director or graduate advisor endorses request with their signature
3. Department chair endorses request with their signature
4. Student or department sends form to Graduate College (grad-info@wmich.edu)
5. Graduate College dean reviews and approves
6. Graduate College sends copy to Registrar’s Office

Critical Policies to Note

Master's degree requirement: minimum of 30 credit hours (at least ½ at 6000 or above); at least 24 taken at WMU. Policy located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under "Graduation Requirements".

PhD degree requirement: 60 credits with a minimum of 30 credit hours plus dissertation hours **after** admission to the doctoral program (at least ½ at 6000 or above). Policy located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under "Graduation Requirements".

Maximum time length is 6 years for master's and 7 years for doctoral student or must file for extension using the [Program Time Extension form](#).

Continuous enrollment in 7000 (thesis) or 7300 (dissertation) requires enrolling in 1-6 hours each fall and spring semester until all requirements are completed (summer session not required if student registers for fall semester before end of spring). Policy located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under "Academic Regulations".

Annual reviews: The Graduate Catalog policy located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under "Academic Regulations" states that:

- "a graduate student's academic performance, professional development, research progress, and, where applicable, professional/ethical behavior will be reviewed annually to determine the student's eligibility to continue in the program."
- "Upon the student's initial enrollment in a ...program, the department shall provide a document to the graduate student outlining its annual review criteria and procedures." (i.e., Handbook)
- "The review will assist the student in measuring timely progress toward completion of the program of study and in providing documentation for awards or assistantships or, if deficiencies are apparent, note them and indicate corrections necessary within a specific period of time. Uncorrected deficiencies and/or unsatisfactory progress, performance, or behavior may result in a student's dismissal from the program."

Academic Dismissal vs. Program Dismissal: If a student does not meet WMU academic standards, they will be dismissed from the university. Policy located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under "Academic Regulations" This *academic dismissal* is based solely on grades and GPA. If a student does not meet program requirements or standards, but has an acceptable GPA, they can be dismissed by the program. This *program dismissal* requires the department to send a letter to the student and Registrar indicating the rationale and justification, including the opportunities the student was given for remediation. The Registrar will move the student to non-degree seeking status, since they are dismissed from the program but not from the

university. The student has the right to appeal the program dismissal, using the policy in the graduate catalog: Policy located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under “Student’s Rights and Responsibilities”.

Readmission vs. Reinstatement: Following an academic dismissal, a student can apply for readmission or reinstatement to the program, with the difference being the timing.

If enrollment will be less than one year after dismissal, *reinstatement* into the program can be requested by the program. Reinstatement requires the department to submit a request to the Graduate Dean outlining a mentoring plan for success and should be done only when the department finds specific considerations that can be remediated. Contact the Graduate Dean for information, as we do not place this on the website since the request must come from the department and not the student and should be used only in exceptional circumstances. The Graduate Dean will approve reinstatement of a dismissed student only with the support of the department.

If it has been more than one year since the dismissal, the student must apply for *readmission* through the application system. The department can require submission of new materials or can waive the checklist items and use previous admissions materials. The department will review the application and make a decision in the application system. Note that readmission of a student who was academically dismissed requires approval of the Graduate Dean, and the student will be admitted on probation since the previous GPA will remain.

Change in Degree Program: If a student switches from one degree program to another, such as from master’s to PhD, they must apply to the new program through the University application system. *This ensures that all university records are updated to the new program.* Similarly, a doctoral student who pursues a master’s in route must submit an application to the master’s program through the University application system.

Code of Conduct: University policy on student code, misconduct, non-discrimination, and graduate student rights and responsibilities are outlined in the graduate catalog located in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under “Student’s Rights and Responsibilities”. In addition, a description of the expectations for good practice in graduate education is included in the [Graduate Catalog](#) under “Student’s Rights and Responsibilities. Here, the general code of conduct for graduate students and faculty working in graduate education are defined. This serves as a good reminder of best practices in communication between faculty and graduate students.

