



Ph.D. COMPUTER SCIENCE & SYSTEMS

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

All Computer Science and Systems PhD (CSS PhD) students are responsible for understanding the information and policies contained in this handbook. This includes information linked to websites and documents. Information found on the websites for the School of Engineering and Technology, the Graduate School, and UW Tacoma supersedes information found in this handbook. This handbook is subject to change; please refer to the website for the most recent version

<http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/set/graduate-resources>

Information and Policies for CSS PhD Graduate Degree Students

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Graduate Program Chair/Coordinator (GPC): Wes Lloyd, PhD

Graduate Program Advisor (GPA): Rachel Crook, M.S.

Schedule Advising Appointment: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/set/advising>

Faculty Directory: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/set/facultyresearch>

All graduate students are subscribed to the graduate student e-mail listserv for all SET graduate students (allsetgrad@lists.uw.edu), a SET PhD student list (allcssphd@uw.edu), as well as their major-specific listserv (uwtechgrad@uw.edu) in their first quarter of enrollment. This is very important, as we will post course information, deadlines, and other notices on a regular basis. Students are encouraged to add the listserv email to their contacts to prevent these messages from going to spam/junk.

In addition, please sign up with **UW Alert** to receive updates via text or email regarding emergency closures of campus: <https://www.washington.edu/safety/alert/>

The faculty Graduate Program Chair (GPC) oversees matters relating to the graduate curriculum and the courses, including the review process of proposals for capstone projects, theses, and course substitutions.

The faculty Graduate Program Coordinator provides advising of a substantive, academic nature. The graduate program coordinator also functions as the faculty liaison to the Graduate School.

The Graduate Program Advisor (GPA) is responsible for helping students with the technical pieces of graduate student life, such as deadlines, forms, and formal procedures. The graduate program advisor also functions as the staff liaison to the Graduate School.

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1. Overview of the Ph.D. in Computer Science & Systems Program

Student Learning Goals: The PhD in Computer Science and Systems program prepares students for a research career in industry or academia. Graduates of the PhD in Computer Science and Systems program have a broad, comprehensive knowledge of computer science core areas, including algorithms and architecture. They have deep knowledge and expertise in a specific area of computer science research that enables them to act as independent research scholars who create solutions that can change the world.

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Upon successful completion of the PhD in Computer Science and Systems program, graduates will be able to:
- Read, understand, and evaluate professional literature on advanced topics in computer science
- Use current techniques, skills, and tools necessary for computing practice
- Independently conduct original research by identifying important computer science problems (e.g. performing a gap analysis), developing solutions through creative problem-solving and rigorous design, designing and performing experimental evaluation, and conducting rigorous analyses of results
- Communicate computer science concepts in verbal and written forms to effectively disseminate results to a technical audience

Learning Outcome	Relevant Courses and Exams
Read, understand, and evaluate professional literature on advanced topics in computer science	TCSS 598, TCSS 600, TCSS 700, TCSS 800, General Exam, Final Exam
Use current techniques, skills, and tools necessary for computing practice	TCSS 540, TCSS 543, TCSS 558 TCSS 500-level elective courses
Independently conduct original research: from identifying important computer science problems, to the development of solutions through creative problem-solving and rigorous design, to the design and implementation of experimental evaluations, and performing a rigorous analysis of results	TCSS 700, TCSS 800
Communicate computer science concepts and results to a technical audience	TCSS 598, General Exam, Final Exam

Table 1. Mapping of learning outcomes to program components

VISION

The School of Engineering & Technology is a unique public-private partnership in higher education that serves as a catalyst for generating energy and interest in computing science and engineering disciplines by:

- Addressing the need to ensure the availability of well-educated bachelors and masters-level computing science and engineering professionals in numbers sufficient to support and fuel the growth of Washington's high-tech industries.
- Providing every Washington citizen access and opportunity to prepare for, and advance in, outstanding and rewarding technology careers.

MISSION

The School of Engineering and Technology aims to provide the highest quality computing, engineering, science, and technology education for a diverse population and engage in research and innovation that benefits the community by fostering social mobility and economic development

VALUES

- Research and Teaching
- Community
- Impact
- Excellence
- Innovation
- Identity

For the complete overview of SET's Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals, please visit:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/set/about/mission-goals>.

2. Important Dates and Deadlines

Please be aware of all important dates and deadlines, including registration dates at:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/registrar/academic-calendar>. Graduate School deadlines at:

<https://grad.uw.edu/calendars/student-dates-deadlines/>

3. PhD in Computer Science and Systems Doctoral Process

The PhD in CSS program builds upon the existing MSCSS program. Students need to satisfy the requirements for the MSCSS program (40 credits). Furthermore, they need to complete at least 20 credits of additional 500-level elective coursework and 30 credits of doctoral dissertation (TCSS 800). Overall, the PhD program will require completion of 90 credits, namely:

- 40 credits required to obtain the MSCSS degree with a master thesis option, namely:
 - TCSS 543 Advanced Algorithms or TCSS 540 Theory of Computing (5 credits)
 - TCSS 558 Applied Distributed Computing (5 credits)
 - TCSS 598 Master Seminar in CSS (5 credits)
 - 15 credits of 500-level TCSS elective courses (510 or above; see list below)

- TCSS 700 Master's Thesis (10 credits)
- 20 credits of 500-level TCSS elective courses, chosen from at least 3 different concentration tracks (see Table 3)
- 30 credits of doctoral dissertation (TCSS 800)

In addition, to obtain the PhD degree, students need to successfully pass a:

- General examination with research proposal
- Final examination (dissertation defense)

A mapping to the individual courses in which these learning outcomes are realized is given in Table 1. The courses have specific student learning outcomes that are measured through course assignments and exams, as documented in detail in the assessment and grading policy rubric of each course syllabus. The Graduate Program Committee, a committee consisting of Graduate Faculty at SET, oversees the curriculum and makes recommendations for changes as needed.

Logistics: The PhD program adopts many of the existing procedures and policies described for the existing MSCSS program described in this document. PhD students are strongly encouraged to review all policies and procedures for both the MSCSS and PhD programs.

Students in the PhD program need to regularly meet with their faculty advisor to report and discuss research progress. Students will be able to enroll in a part-time or full-time course of study while making meaningful progress towards the degree. A model trajectory for a full-time graduate student progressing through the PhD in CSS degree program is shown in Table 2. The table assumes no transfer credits.

Table 2. Academic trajectory for the PhD program.			
Year	Quarter	# Credits	Courses
Year 1	AUT	13	TCSS 543 (5cr), TCSS 598 (3cr), TCSS 5xx (5cr)
	WIN	12	TCSS 558 (5cr), TCSS 598 (2cr), TCSS 5xx (5cr)
	SPR	10	TCSS 700 (5cr), TCSS 5xx (5cr)
Year 2	AUT	10	TCSS 700 (5cr), TCSS 5xx (5cr)
	WIN	10	TCSS 5xx (5cr), TCSS 5xx (5cr)
	SPR	10	TCSS 700 (5cr), TCSS 5xx (5cr)
Year 3	AUT	5	TCSS 800 (5cr), General Exam
	WIN	5	TCSS 800 (5cr)
	SPR	5	TCSS 800 (5cr)
Year 4	AUT	8	TCSS 800 (8cr)
	WIN	5	TCSS 800 (5cr)
	SPR	2	TCSS 800 (2cr), Final Exam

TCSS 5xx refers to a 500-level elective courses (TCSS 510 or above). Coursework needed to obtain the MSCSS degree is highlighted in bold. Once a PhD student has completed all course requirements, 2 dissertation credits are considered as full-time for F-1 status maintenance (cfr. Year 3-5). Students continue registering for their Faculty Advisor's section of TCSS 600 (Independent Study) or TCSS 700 (Thesis) until the General Exam is passed – once the General exam is passed, students register for their Faculty Advisor's section of TCSS 800 (Dissertation) until dissertation is complete, the final exam is scheduled/passed, and the student graduates.

A. MSCSS degree

The PhD program builds upon the existing MSCSS program. In the MSCSS program, students graduate in one of three options: a thesis option, a capstone project option, and a course only option. As shown in the model trajectory in Table 2, PhD students will complete the MSCSS degree as the first major milestone on the way to the PhD degree. Furthermore, PhD students are expected to complete the thesis option for the MSCSS degree to demonstrate their preparedness and aptitude to pursue independent doctoral research.

Besides the master thesis, to obtain the MSCSS degree, students must successfully complete three core courses (TCSS 543, TCSS 558, TCSS 598), and 15 credits of TCSS 500-level elective courses.

The thesis option is the most rigorous option in the existing MSCSS program. The master thesis process starts with a master thesis proposal, prepared by the student under the guidance of a graduate faculty member who acts as the Master Thesis Committee Chair (primary faculty advisor). The Master Thesis Committee must consist of between two and four members, at least half of whom must be graduate faculty.

Please refer to [UW GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICY 4.2.1](#) for details on Thesis supervisory requirements.

The master's thesis proposal describes the problem, the methods that will be used to solve the problem, the evaluation metrics, related work, the deliverables, and a week-by-week timeline with a detailed work plan to complete the thesis. The master's thesis proposal is submitted by the student to the Graduate Program Committee in the quarter before the quarter in which the student intends to start the thesis. The Graduate Program Committee reviews the proposal. If the proposal is not approved by the Graduate Program Committee, the student is given the option to, depending on the quality of the proposal and the interests of the student, either start the work as a capstone project instead of a thesis, or refine the proposal and resubmit it in a later quarter. Students who opt to do a capstone project instead of a thesis can still complete the MSCSS degree in the capstone project option; they will no longer be able to complete the PhD degree without later completing an additional thesis project (e.g. 10-credits of TCSS 700).

After receiving approval, the student signs up for the required number of TCSS 700 credits and completes the thesis with the support of the primary advisor. It is the responsibility of the student to provide frequent updates on their progress to their Master's Thesis Committee.

The master's thesis work often results in one or more publications in a conference(s) or journal(s). The master's thesis work culminates in an oral presentation and the submission of a master's thesis to the UW Graduate School. The master's thesis defense is public and more in depth than the presentation of a capstone project, typically lasting 30 minutes or more. The master's thesis presentation is attended by the Master's Thesis Committee members and by other faculty and students. Questions are asked directly related to the project by those in attendance.

The Master's Thesis Committee evaluates the work considering factors such as:

- Demonstration of the ability to work independently and think creatively
- Demonstration of mastery of the project area
- Quality of the written document
- Quality of the presentation

When all deliverables have been evaluated and approved by the Master's Thesis Committee, the committee members fill out a form approving those deliverables.

The student becomes eligible for the MSCSS degree provided all other requirements have been satisfied.

B. PhD elective courses

Once completing the MSCSS degree, PhD students then complete 20 credits of 500-level elective coursework chosen from three different concentration tracks as identified in the MSCSS program to provide subject matter breadth in computer science (please refer to MSCSS Graduate Handbook for list of courses and tracks).

4. PhD Supervisory Committee Formation

Please refer to [Graduate School Policy 4.2](#) for details on PhD Supervisory Committee Formation.

The appointment of a doctoral supervisory committee indicates that the Graduate Faculty in the student's field find the student's background and achievement a sufficient basis for progression to the next stage of a program of doctoral study and research.

Doctoral supervisory committee member responsibilities include the approval of a course of study which will fulfill the general course breadth requirements of the student's major and supporting fields, conducting the student's General Examination and, when appropriate, recommending advancement to Candidacy.

The doctoral supervisory committee approves the Candidate's dissertation proposal and guides the student in carrying out appropriate research for the dissertation. The Graduate School does not stipulate the content of the dissertation; guidance on the dissertation is the responsibility of the supervisory committee.

For doctoral committee responsibilities for the General Exam and Final Exam, see [Graduate School Policy 1.1.4](#).

A. Timeline and Process:

- To allow time to identify a suitable Graduate School Representative (GSR), it is suggested that the doctoral supervisory committee be established at least four months prior to the intended date of the General Examination.
- The appointment of a committee is initiated by the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) after consultation with appropriate Graduate Faculty members in the student's field and with the student.
- The GPC recommends members of the supervisory committee to the Dean of The Graduate School by entering this information into MyGradProgram (MGP).
- For any dissertation project that may include human or animal subjects, the GPC or GPA must advise the student of the need to comply with the University of Washington Human Subjects Division and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee's requirements, as appropriate, and the student and committee chair must complete the [Use Of Human And Animal Subjects For UW Graduate Student Theses And Dissertations](#) form.

B. Committee Composition:

- The doctoral supervisory committee consists of a minimum of four members, at least three of whom (including one Chair and the GSR) must be members of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to chair doctoral committees.
- A majority of the members must be members of the Graduate Faculty.
- The GSR must be a productive scholar in the GSR's own research area that may differ from that of the student's dissertation project.
- The members outside the GSR must be identified by the student's appointing department or program as productive scholars in the student's major field and/or subfields.

C. The Committee Chair:

- The Chair(s) of a committee must be able and willing to assume principal responsibility for advising the student. In addition, the Chair(s) should have adequate time available for this work and should expect to be accessible to the student.
- A program can petition to the Office of Academic Affairs to have a non-endorsed faculty member serve as chair if:
 - 1) the student's area of specialization is uniquely supported by the proposed chair, and
 - 2) at least one-half of the total committee members are endorsed to chair.
- Emeritus and affiliate faculty may serve as Chair(s) if the above conditions are met.
- If a committee has Co-Chairs, both serve with equal importance on a student's supervisory committee and equally share the responsibility for the student's progress. In the case of Co-Chairs, one Co-Chair must have a Graduate Faculty appointment with doctoral endorsement. The other Co-Chair may be appointed without Graduate Faculty status if the individual has a qualified UW faculty appointment. Qualified faculty appointments in this case are those appointments eligible for continuous or five-year graduate faculty roles. A Co-Chair without qualified UW faculty appointment may be appointed only by petition through the Office of Academic Affairs to the Dean of the Graduate School or the Dean's designee.

D. The Role of the Graduate School Representative (GSR)

The GSR represents the broad interests of the Graduate School with respect to high standards of scholarly performance. The GSR is a voting member of the dissertation supervisory committee, and as such provides an important service function to the Graduate School and the University.

In all cases, the GSR must meet the following Graduate School requirements:

- Attest to the validity of examinations and indicate approval of the process by which examinations are conducted;
- Ensure that the student is treated in an unbiased manner; and
- Represent the Graduate School in ensuring university-wide standards of scholarly performance.

In addition, any graduate program may choose to define the role of the GSR to include one or both of the following:

- Ensure that the student's mastery of the subject matter is broad and comprehensive;
- Provide additional support for the student as the student navigates the exam and dissertation process.

If a graduate program sets additional expectations for the GSR beyond the Graduate School requirements, the graduate program must clearly articulate these expectations, and the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) or designee must communicate them in writing to all parties (student, chair, committee members, GSR) upon appointment of the GSR. The minimum role of the GSR must be defined consistently across all committees in the graduate program.

The GSR's signature on the committee signature form affirming the decision of the committee communicates to the Dean of the Graduate School that the Graduate School and program-level responsibilities have been met.

E. Graduate School Representative (GSR) Eligibility:

- As with all doctoral supervisory committee members, the GSR is proposed to the Graduate School by the Graduate Program Coordinator in the student's degree-offering unit and must be a member of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to Chair.
- Faculty members with a primary, joint, or affiliate appointment in the student's degree-offering unit or the committee chair's department are not eligible to serve as the GSR.
- It is vital that a conflict of interest in the selection of the GSR be avoided. Budgetary relationships, personal relationships, or research and/or publication relationships between the GSR and either the student or the committee chair are examples of possible conflicts of interest. (See GSR Eligibility for more information.) The GSR is responsible for ensuring that no such conflicts of interest, or appearance of conflicts of interest, exist, and must attest to this upon request.

F. Reading Committee Timeline and Composition:

- After the General Examination, the Graduate Program Coordinator informs the Dean of The Graduate School of at least three members of the supervisory committee who will serve on the reading committee.
- At least one of the members of the reading committee must hold an endorsement to chair doctoral committees. The reading committee is appointed to read and approve the dissertation.

G. Function of the Reading Committee:

It is the responsibility of the reading committee to:

- Ensure that the dissertation is a significant contribution to knowledge and is an acceptable piece of scholarly writing.
- Determine the appropriateness of a candidate's dissertation as a basis for issuing the Committee Signature Form for a Final Examination.

5. General Exam

Please refer to [Graduate School Policy 1.1.41](#) for details on the General Exam requirement for PhD programs.

The General Examination is a formal requirement of the Graduate School. The General Exam is intended to ensure that graduate students are prepared to conduct independent research successfully. It culminates in the attainment of Candidacy of Philosophy, recognizing that the student has developed and demonstrated the necessary skills to pursue doctoral research. Prior to taking the General Exam, the student must successfully complete 20 credits of graded 500-level coursework beyond the requirements for the MSCSS degree, and have started performing doctoral thesis related research. The General Exam is expected to be scheduled near the end of the third year in the model trajectory (see Table 2).

The preparation for the General Exam starts with the selection of a General Exam Chair (primary faculty advisor) and exam committee, adhering to the UW Graduate School policies on the formation of PhD Supervisory Committees. Through the General Exam, the PhD Supervisory Committee assesses that the student demonstrates a deep familiarity with the literature in the student's field; that the student is able to articulate a research plan that demonstrates knowledge, skill development, and makes a substantial contribution to the field of study; and that the student is able to demonstrate scientific critical thinking skills, including acknowledgement of areas to which their knowledge does not extend.

The steps of the General Exam Include:

1. Identification of a General Exam Advisor (primary advisor), to be completed after obtaining the MSCSS degree.

2. Selection of the remainder of the exam committee. Please refer to [Graduate School Policy 4.2.2](#) for details on the rules for membership on the Ph.D. Supervisory Committee.
3. The student schedules the oral exam date with the Supervisory Committee after completing 20 credits of graded 500-level coursework (TCSS 510 or above) beyond the requirements for the MSCSS degree. Scheduling is performed well in advance of the exam date (see below).
4. The student prepares a research proposal in a format similar to the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship application. In this proposal, the student should include a description of the conceptual background and broad significance of the proposed research, a gap analysis with respect to existing work, and a research plan. The student sends the research proposal to the Supervisory Committee no later than 6 weeks before the General Exam date.
5. The student meets with each Supervisory Committee member individually to discuss the research proposal no later than 2 weeks prior to the General Exam date. The student revises the research proposal based on the feedback and suggestions received from the committee members.
6. The student submits a revised research proposal to the Supervisory Committee, no later than 2 days before the General Exam date.
7. The examination is to be held within 2 months of step 4, and usually by the end of three years in the program, or within 1.25 years after starting the TCSS 500-level coursework beyond the MSCSS degree, whichever is later. A University requirement states that the exam may not be scheduled until the student has satisfied a 2-year minimum residency requirement, including one year of full-time study.

The oral portion of the General Examination consists of a presentation by the student (40 minutes), followed by questions from all faculty on the Supervisory Committee, in a round-robin style question format. By University rules, a minimum of 4 faculty members must attend the General exam (the primary advisor, the outside graduate school representative, and 2 others). The examiners will ask questions designed to determine the student's familiarity with the literature in their field, and preparedness to pursue research. If the exam is not scheduled by the deadline identified above, and the Graduate Program Committee has not approved a petition for extension, the student is considered to have failed the exam.

At the conclusion of the oral exam, the committee will discuss and decide on one of the following outcomes:

1. Pass

2. Conditional Pass

- By rewriting of the research proposal: this could happen if the examining committee feels the student has shown sufficient mastery of the literature and skills to conduct independent research, but has written an inadequate proposal (e.g. the research plan lacks detail). After the rewritten research proposal is approved, the student will pass the General Examination. The timeline for rewriting the research proposal is left to the discretion of the committee based on the perceived effort.
- With adjournment of the examination. This could happen if the student has demonstrated competency in most of the learning objectives of the General Exam, but the examining committee requires further evidence of competency to ensure the student is prepared for independent research. The mechanics of the completion of the examination (e.g., new oral exam, a revised research proposal) and the timeline for completion are left to the discretion of the committee.

3. Fail

- Students may retake the General Examination with permission of the Graduate Program Committee. In this case, the student will prepare a new research proposal and will have to give another oral examination. A change in subjects and/or examining committee may be recommended.

After passing the exam, a warrant is signed by the examining committee, a copy is placed in the student's file, and the result is delivered to the Graduate School. The student works on their dissertation with the support of the primary advisor, and seeks feedback from the Supervisory Committee members and the Graduate Program Committee faculty through an annual progress report (see below).

6. Final Exam

Please refer to [Graduate School Policy 1.1.4.5](#) for details on the Final Exam requirement for PhD programs.

A Final Examination may be scheduled if:

- a student passed a General Examination in a previous quarter;
- a reading committee is officially established with the Graduate School;
- the reading committee has read an entire draft of the dissertation and;
- the entire supervisory committee has agreed that the student is prepared and has approved the student to schedule a Final Examination. At least four members of a supervisory committee (including the Chair, Graduate School Representative, and one additional Graduate Faculty member) must be present at the examination.

Resources from the Graduate School:

- [What if a committee member does not show up for the exam?](#)
- [Instructions for Virtual Doctoral Examinations](#)

If the Final Examination is satisfactory, the supervisory committee members who participate at the examination sign the committee signature form and return it to the student's graduate program by the last day of the quarter (last day of finals week). Any members of a supervisory committee who participate at an examination but do not agree with the majority opinion are encouraged to submit a minority report to the Dean of the Graduate School. If an examination is unsatisfactory, a supervisory committee may recommend that the Dean of the Graduate School permit a second examination after a period of additional study.

Registration as a graduate student is required the quarter that a Final Examination is taken AND the quarter the dissertation is submitted. The degree is conferred in the quarter in which the student's dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School.

A candidate certificate and the doctoral degree may not be awarded the same quarter.

Since students are not eligible to register for TCSS 800 (Dissertation) until passing the General Exam, and because TCSS 800 has a 10-credit limit per quarter, UWT CSS PhD students should schedule a defense no earlier than the 3rd quarter after passing the General Exam.

The final exam constitutes the dissertation defense. The student will confer with their primary advisor and committee to determine if they are ready to defend their dissertation approximately two months prior to the defense. The student, with approval from the primary advisor, will then confer with their committee to determine an agreed upon date and time for the oral defense when at least four members including the primary advisor can participate in the exam. At this time the student will notify the advisor of any changes to the committee in order to notify the Graduate School. Two weeks prior to the scheduled oral defense the student will submit a final draft of their dissertation to their committee.

The oral portion of the Final Exam will last approximately two hours, beginning with a forty-minute presentation by the student. Faculty and students are invited and are welcome to ask questions. Questions will then be asked in a closed session limited to the exam committee and possibly other faculty. By University rule, a minimum of 4 faculty members must attend the Final exam (the chairperson, the outside graduate school representative, and 2 others). The examiners will ask questions designed to determine whether the student has completed their dissertation research and should be conferred with the Doctor of Philosophy degree. After passing the exam, a warrant is signed by the examining committee, a copy is placed in the student's file, and the result is delivered to the Graduate School.

7. PhD Student Annual Progress Report

PhD students are required to submit an annual progress report each year by May 1. This progress report consists of a standard form on which the students report milestones and progress, including courses and exams completed so far, a brief description of completed research and next steps, and research papers in preparation, submitted, or published. The annual progress report is prepared by the PhD student with guidance of the primary advisor. All progress reports are reviewed by the Graduate Program Committee, the outcome of which is communicated to the PhD student in the form of a letter with feedback. The purpose of this annual process is to solicit faculty-wide aid in identifying and remediating issues that may arise throughout a student's tenure helping to ensure student success.

8. Academic Honesty

There can be a tremendous amount of pressure on students at a university to get good grades and finish a degree. Students at the University of Washington are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct; cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. Please review the Student Conduct Code for more information: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/student-conduct/student-code>

9. Course Days, Times, and Quarters Offered

The UW Time Schedule lists credit classes offered at the University of Washington - Tacoma. It is updated daily and is subject to change. Please contact your Graduate Program Advisor with questions.

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/registrar/registration#permalink-15721>

10. Course Substitutions and Transfer Credits

A. Transfer credits

- A maximum of 6 quarter credits of graduate-level coursework taken at another recognized academic institution may be transferred and apply to UW master's degree requirements, when acceptable to the graduate program and the Graduate School. No more than 12 credits derived from any combination of Graduate Non-Matriculated credits and transfer credits may be applied towards the total degree requirements. Transfer credits may not be applied towards the thesis or culminating experience requirement. (UW Graduate School [Policy 1.1](#)) For credit equivalencies, please contact your Graduate Program Advisor.
- Transfer courses may only be applied to your program's elective course requirements.

B. Course Substitutions

After matriculating, students are permitted to take five (5) credits outside of the UW Tacoma campus to fulfill an elective requirement for their program.

Here are the steps to register for a course on another UW campus:

- Students must have completed all pre-requisite courses for the class. It is recommended to take a look at the time schedule to see which prerequisites are required for the class:
 - [UW Seattle time schedule](#)
 - [UW Bothell time schedule](#)
- Reach out to the instructor of this class to make sure they approve registering for their course (please do this via email)
- Students need to get approval from their Graduate Program Chair. Since students will be taking this course in place of an elective course on the Tacoma campus, this still qualifies as a "substitution." Students need to provide the confirmation from the professor from Bothell/Seattle and the student's reasoning for wanting to take this class (such as not enough elective options, or mentioning that this course is in their area of academic interest, etc.). To receive this approval, students will need to complete the petition and send it to their Graduate Program Chair directly https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/petition_to_substitute_2019.pdf
- If the Graduate Program Chair approves, students will need to work with the [Advising team on the Bothell campus](#) or [Seattle campus](#) to add this course to your schedule. Please note cross campus enrollment does not open until Period II registration.

- Please note, only one substituted course may be applied towards MSCSS elective course requirements

11. Tuition-Exempt Status

Eligible University and State of Washington employees may enroll in up to twelve credits towards the requirements of any graduate degree program using a tuition exemption, provided they enroll on a space available basis. Eligible students are allowed to enroll in courses that have been designated as available for tuition exemption.

A maximum of 6 credits per quarter will be eligible for tuition exemption. Tuition-exempt students may register beginning the third day of the quarter (UW staff and faculty) or the fourth day of the quarter (all others). More information about tuition exemption policies can be found online: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/registrar/tuition-exemption>

Students enrolled in courses other than ones previously listed are not eligible for tuition exempt status and must pay tuition and fees.

12. Funding Opportunities

The School of Engineering and Technology awards a few competitive scholarships to students each year, as well as limited research assistantship and hourly paid positions.

The number of research assistantships and other paid research positions vary depending on grants awarded to the school. Students on H-4 visas may not be eligible for these positions or any other paid position. Positions will be advertised on the SET website and on **allsetgrad@lists.uw.edu**. Students must submit a separate application to be considered.

Students seeking funding should utilize the resources provided by the Graduate Funding Information Service at <http://www.lib.washington.edu/commons/services/gfis> and the UW Tacoma Office of Global Affairs at: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/oga/sf>

Both these resources offer opportunities to schedule an appointment with a representative.

13. International Students

Students on F-1 visas will pay non-resident tuition. F-1 students are eligible to apply for research assistantship positions and may work on campus for up to 19.5 hours per week. Students on H-4 visas should reach out to the ISSS advising team for questions about in-state tuition and employment options.

Students must contact the Office of the Registrar for residency petitions and all related information. Please visit the website for more information: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/registrar/residency>.

Students should contact the [UW Tacoma International Student Services office](#) for advising prior to making any visa changes. In addition, the ISSS coordinates the CPT and OPT approval process. Students should contact their ISSS advisor first, then follow up with their graduate program advisor. Please note that new students are not eligible for CPT.

International students should remain in close contact with their [international student advisor](#). It's important to inform your advisor immediately about major changes, such as requesting leave, family emergencies, sickness, injury, changes in registration, etc. Additionally, we strongly recommend that newly matriculated students schedule an introductory meeting with their international student advisor after New International Student Orientation to ensure a smooth transition.

14. Index of Graduate School Memoranda

The Index of Graduate School Policies includes graduate program policies maintained by the Graduate School. Content is reviewed and modified as needed. Final decisions regarding implementation or continuation of policies receive the advice of the Graduate School Council. All of the policies are available online at: <https://grad.uw.edu/grad-school-policies/>

A. Continuous Enrollment and On Leave Status

Graduate students are required to maintain graduate status during their program of study. Failure to maintain this status requires reinstatement to the University of Washington. Students who desire to take a quarter or quarters off without going through the reinstatement process must apply for on-leave status for each quarter they do not register. For complete details regarding the on-leave policy, refer to Policy 3.5: <https://grad.uw.edu/policies/graduate-on-leave-status/>

B. Procedure for Requesting Leave

Beginning September 28, 2011, students requesting on-leave status must submit an online Request for On-Leave Status via MyGrad Program: <https://grad.uw.edu/policies/graduate-on-leave-status/>

For a given quarter, students can submit the request as early as two weeks prior to the first day of instruction and must submit payment of the non-refundable fee no later than 11:59:59 p.m. PST on the last day of instruction. Leave is granted on a quarterly basis, though the following students may request up to four consecutive quarters of leave at one time: PCMI students, military personnel with deployment orders, and some UW Fulbright grantees (with the exception of military personnel with deployment orders, these students will be required to pay the fee for each quarter of leave requested). Please refer to the Graduate School's Academic Calendar for quarterly deadlines for requesting leave: <https://grad.uw.edu/calendars/student-dates-deadlines/>

Students can log into MyGrad to request on-leave status here:

<https://grad.uw.edu/policies/graduate-on-leave-status/>

C. Reinstatement to the Graduate School

Students previously registered in the Graduate School who have failed to maintain graduate student status (on-leave status was not secured and registration was not maintained) but wish to resume studies within the same degree program must file a request for reinstatement to the Graduate School. Requests will first be reviewed and approved by the department. Once the department has approved the request and the Graduate School has confirmed students' eligibility for reinstatement, students will be notified to pay a non-refundable reinstatement fee before registering for the requested quarter of reinstatement.

<https://grad.uw.edu/policies/reinstatement/>

D. Time to Degree and Limits for On-Leave Status

The Graduate School normally allows ten years from the quarter of admission to complete requirements for a doctoral degree. Periods spent On-Leave or out of status are included in these limits. Before approving a *Petition for On-Leave Status* for a student whose leave period will take them in excess of these limits, the department must first file a *Petition to the Dean of the Graduate School* (via MyGrad Program) explaining why this action is being requested. This *Petition to the Dean* must be approved by the Graduate School before the *Petition for On-Leave Status* is filed.

<https://grad.uw.edu/policies/graduate-on-leave-status/>

E. Grading system

Numerical grades shall be entered as numbers, the possible values being 4.0, 3.9, . . . and decreasing by one-tenth until 1.7 is reached. Grades below 1.7 will be recorded as 0.0 by the Registrar and no credit is earned. A minimum of 2.7 is required in each course that is to be counted toward a graduate degree. A minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 is required for graduation. Please refer to the University Grading System for details:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/catalog/university-grading-system>

Please note some courses like Thesis are structured to be CR/NC. If you have questions about the grading structure for your courses, please connect with your Graduate Program Advisor.

F. Incomplete Grades

An Incomplete may be given only when the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work to within two weeks of the end of the quarter and has furnished proof satisfactory to the instructor that the work cannot be completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control.

To obtain credit for the course, a student must successfully complete the work and the instructor must submit a grade. In no case may an Incomplete be converted into a passing grade after a lapse of two years or more. An incomplete received by the graduate student does not automatically convert to a grade of 0.0 but the "I" will remain as a permanent part of the student's record.

G. S/NS Grade Policy

Students may elect to take certain courses on a satisfactory/not satisfactory (S/NS) basis. However, credits from courses with the S/NS grading option will not count towards the program degree requirements and are not computed into GPA calculations.

Students should consult with their Graduate Program Advisor prior to changing a numerically graded course to the S/NS option.

H. Low Scholarship Status

Reviewing Performance and Progress ([UW Graduate School Policy 3.7.2](#))

Faculty should assess student progress using a variety of professional behavior and academic metrics to determine if a student has completed sufficient work at reasonable performance levels. It is acceptable to compare a student's performance and progress relative to that of other students in the program or to individually negotiated schedules if consistently used. The following elements may be considered when evaluating a student's performance and progress:

- Performance and progress in the fulfillment of degree program requirements as outlined in the graduate program's documentation distributed to students upon enrollment.
- Maintenance of a minimum cumulative and quarterly 3.0 grade point average (GPA) while the student is enrolled in the UW Graduate School. A program may petition the Graduate School to consider exceptions to the 3.0 GPA minimum requirement for graduation if the student demonstrates steady and consistent progress.

Program faculty, the Graduate Program Chair/Coordinator (GPC), Graduate Program Advisor (GPA), or an advisory/supervisory committee designated by the graduate program, are responsible for regular reviews of student performance. At doctoral candidate level, the doctoral supervisory committee reviews student progress and does so, in consultation with the GPC, as needed.

- The graduate program faculty should review a student's performance and progress at least annually.
- The GPC and GPA should provide ongoing advising of students.
- For accelerated or shorter term graduate programs that are six quarters or fewer, student performance and progress should be reviewed quarterly. Unsatisfactory performance may require mid-quarter reviews and interventions.
- Students not meeting milestones, including those whose cumulative or quarterly grade point average (GPA) falls below a 3.0, should be reviewed quarterly.

- Students not meeting milestones should be provided with a written explanation of performance expectations, clear descriptions of performance benchmarks and outcomes that would demonstrate improvements, and a timetable for demonstrating progress or achievement of these benchmarks.
- For students in the research or fieldwork phase of a graduate program, program faculty should review student progress at least annually, with greater frequency as determined by program expectations and student performance.

Unsatisfactory Performance and Progress ([UW Graduate School Policy 3.73](#))

The following three status levels are used to indicate unsatisfactory performance, to communicate clear expectations to the student, and consequences should those expectations not be met in the time indicated. The goal of each step is to establish clear expectations and outline a path to return to satisfactory progress.

Academic Notification:

Formerly “Warn/Warning.” This is an early status for a student who has failed to meet expectations for performance or progress. Academic notifications are optional in the Academic Alert process and are managed internally by the program with a goal of resolving problems before escalating to academic alert. The program may issue multiple academic notification letters to a student and the UW Graduate School is notified. The Graduate School recommends that programs use the academic notification status prior to an academic alert status.

Academic Alert

Formerly “Probation.” This status is used for a student who has failed to resolve problems with student performance and progress that the program has previously documented and communicated to the student. Programs send an academic alert recommendation to the study with a copy to the UW Graduate School no later than the 10th business day of the academic alert quarter.

The Graduate school does a post review of academic alert letters sent to students by the department. At least one quarter of academic alert must be issued prior to **Final Academic Alert** (see below). Two additional quarters of academic alert may be issued at the program’s discretion and the Graduate school must receive documents supporting academic alert recommendations each quarter. All alert letters must cite:

- The reason for the academic alert.
- Steps the student must take to remove the academic alert.
- The consequences the student will face if steps were not taken to remove the academic alert.

Final Academic Alert

Formerly “Final Probation.” This status is used for a student who has failed to resolve the documented problems in the student’s academic alert status as submitted to the UW Graduate School. Programs send a final academic alert recommendation to the student with a copy to the Graduate School no later than the 10th business day of the final academic alert quarter.

The UW Graduate School will review the final academic alert letter and, if accepted, the Graduate School will send an additional letter from the Dean of the Graduate School to the student informing the student of final academic alert status. The graduate program must issue one quarter of final academic alert prior to a **Drop** (see below) from the program, except in clearly documented situations as discussed below. A program may request an additional quarter of final academic alert in extenuating circumstances. The Graduate School must receive documents supporting this recommendation and will send letters to the student informing the student of the final academic alert status. All final academic alert letters must cite:

- The reason for the final academic alert.
- Steps the student must take to remove the final academic alert.
- The consequences the student will face if steps are not taken to remove the final academic alert.

A graduate program may recommend a student be placed on academic alert status while the student is on leave. The program may not change a student's academic alert status while the student remains on leave. The student must apply for leave status each quarter which is then approved by the department ([UW Graduate School Policy 3.5](#)).

Additional considerations as described in the graduate program policy provided to students may result in an immediate recommendation to drop a student without progressing through Academic Alert and Final Academic Alert. The most common examples of this are unsatisfactory performance in the following:

- Qualifying or preliminary examinations as defined in a graduate program policy.
- Doctoral General Exam or Final Exam performance. If graduate faculty determine the student did not pass the general or final exam, the graduate faculty may indicate on the committee signature form that the student is recommended to be dropped from the program. See [UW Graduate School Policy 1.1](#) for general exam and final exam requirements.

To request a change to student status, the Graduate Program Chair/Coordinator must send a letter to the UW Graduate School with supporting documentation. A status change is recorded in the student record but does not appear on the student transcript.

A student in an academic alert status who is not on an approved On-Leave status may submit a request for reinstatement. If reinstated, the department will determine if the student will be reinstated with the academic alert status in place when the student left the university based on the program's internal academic performance and progress policy. See [UW Graduate School Policy 3.5](#) for leave policy to maintain graduate student status.

Academic Drop ([UW Graduate School Policy 3.7.4](#))

An **Academic Drop** is an official action that terminates a student's enrollment from a graduate program because either the student has failed to resolve documented problems in the student's final academic alert status, or the student has one of the performance issues outlined above.

Graduate programs should submit academic drop recommendations to the UW Graduate School prior to the start of the quarter but no later than the 5th business day of the drop quarter. The Graduate School approves the academic drop and drop status will appear on the student's official transcript.

Academic drop letters are sent to the student from the department and from the Dean of the Graduate School. When dropped, a student is not eligible to complete the program or return later to complete the degree. A student dropped from one graduate program may apply and enroll in a different graduate program if accepted.

Appeals ([UW Graduate School Policy 3.7.5](#))

Appeals must follow the process outlined in [UW Graduate School Policy 3.8](#) for the Academic Grievance Procedure.

I. Repeating a Course

Graduate students may repeat any course. Both the first and second grades will be included in the cumulative GPA. Subsequent grades will not be calculated but will appear on the permanent record. The number of credits earned in the course will apply toward degree requirements only once.

15. Campus Support

There are several campus resources that students can use to get additional support, either for counseling and mental health or for specific kinds of help, including reading, writing, math, and study skills.

Students are strongly encouraged to explore the HuskiesCare services available to them:
<https://tacoma.concerncenter.com>