

**Governors State University**

**GRADUATE STUDIES POLICY**

**I. OVERVIEW**

The following policy shall be in effect for graduate studies throughout the University.

Graduate level courses, certificates, master's degree programs, specialist degree programs, and doctoral degree programs shall be offered through the various colleges of the University, as approved by the faculty, administration, and governing boards.

Policies and procedures for graduate study shall be reviewed and recommended by the appropriate Faculty Senate committees in conjunction with the Graduate Council.

**II. PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AT GSU**

Graduate education is the pursuit of knowledge and skills at an advanced level. Graduate education is distinct and different from undergraduate education both in kind and in degree. It demands of students a greater intellectual maturity and autonomy, a sense of deeper responsibility for their own learning, more intense study, and the mastery of different and more complex skills. A graduate degree is a distinction to be earned. Award of the degree symbolizes both the student's accomplishment and the university's endorsement.

The differences between Master, Specialist, and Doctorate graduate degrees reside in the breadth and depth of the knowledge in the coursework and the requirements of their respective capstone experiences. The following policy sets minima, leaving graduate programs to differentiate knowledge and capstone experiences for the different levels of graduate degrees.

All students receiving a Graduate Degree must have demonstrated the following outcomes:

- A. an in-depth knowledge of significant theories, issues and findings, and mastery of appropriate skills, within their discipline;
- B. the ability to apply such knowledge and skills;
- C. the ability to read, interpret and evaluate research literature and to relate results to selected areas of interest;

- D. the ability to analyze problems and to critique attempted solutions, especially within their own discipline;
- E. the ability to integrate knowledge from a variety of disciplines;
- F. the ability to design and implement a research, scholarly, or creative project;
- G. the ability to communicate scholarly thought to professional colleagues through writing and discussion.

In addition, students must demonstrate outcomes specific to the programs in which they are enrolled.

### **III. GRADUATE FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND FUNCTIONS**

#### **A. Qualifications for Teaching Graduate Courses**

Faculty involved in graduate education must:

1. possess an earned doctorate or terminal degree equivalency in a field relevant to the subject matter of the courses to be taught. Exceptions are described in clause 4 below.
2. have teaching experience at the graduate level. Those who do not have previous teaching experience at the graduate level should be mentored by the appropriate division/department chairperson or by his or her designee; and
3. demonstrate research/creative/professional accomplishments as guided by the Division/Department Criteria (DC).
4. In unusual cases individuals who have demonstrated exceptional scholarly or creative activity or professional experience, but who do not possess the required academic credentials, may teach graduate courses upon the recommendation of division/department faculty and concurrence of the chair and dean. In no case may an exception conflict with the program's accreditation requirements.

#### **B. Functions**

1. Individuals meeting the above qualifications will be authorized to perform the following or similar functions:
  - a. teach 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000, or 9000 level courses;
  - b. serve as advisor for Master's, Specialist's, or Doctoral degree-seeking students;
  - c. serve as member of Master's, Specialist's, or Doctorate degree capstone experience committee, barring any conflict of interest.
2. The full-time qualified faculty:

- a. define, articulate, and disseminate, in collaboration with their colleagues and relevant professional groups, the goals, requirements, the content, and the pace of graduate education, including:
    - i. Admissions standards, core curriculum, assessment of students, and electives, if applicable;
    - ii. The specific programmatic requirements for candidacy usually defined as where the coursework ends and the capstone experience begins;
    - iii. Requirements for the completion of the graduate capstone experience; and
    - iv. Completion and graduation requirements.
  - b. communicate criteria for academic and degree requirements;
  - c. require that students meet established criteria and standards of the program and counsel out or recommend for dismissal those who cannot or will not do so.
3. Only tenured/tenure-track faculty may:
- a. serve as major professor/chair of a Master's, Specialist's, or Doctoral capstone experience committee;
  - b. initiate or modify existing graduate courses or curricula.

#### **IV. DETERMINATION OF GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES**

There shall be at least three distinct levels of instruction for which graduate credit shall be given. These levels should help to define the scope and sequence of program content.

- A. 5000 level courses are designed to introduce graduate students and advanced undergraduate students to fields of study above the undergraduate level. All work and competencies are at the graduate level. To register for a 5000 level course, undergraduates must meet the course prerequisites and obtain appropriate faculty and administrative permission. 5000 level courses may only be used for elective credit at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- B. Graduate level foundation courses (currently numbered 6000-6999) are open to undergraduate students who meet the course prerequisites and obtain appropriate faculty and administrative permission. All work and competencies are at the graduate level.
- C. Graduate courses at the intermediate and advanced levels (currently numbered 7000-9999) are not open to undergraduate students. Graduate level courses currently numbered 9000-9999 are reserved for post-master's level work.

#### **V. DETERMINATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT STATUS**

The University shall establish four categories of graduate students as follows:

#### A. Graduate Degree-Seeking Student

Graduate degree-seeking students are those who meet the established admission requirements of the University, college, and specific program for which the Doctorate, Specialist, or Master's Degree is sought and who have been officially admitted to that program. Admission to a graduate major does not carry with it, nor guarantee, admission to degree candidacy in the major.

#### B. Graduate Degree Candidate

Doctoral, Specialist, and Master's degree candidates are those who have completed an approved Graduate Study Plan, have completed the specified program pre-candidacy requirements, and have applied for and been admitted to candidacy by their program faculty. Pre-candidacy evaluation reflects the faculty's judgment of the student's ability to complete the degree program.

#### C. Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Seeking Student

Post-Baccalaureate certificate seeking students are those who meet the established admission requirements of the University, college, and specific certificate granting program and who have been officially admitted to that program. Admission to a certificate program does not carry with it, nor guarantee, certification or admission to degree program. Credits earned in a post-baccalaureate certificate may be applicable to the degree or additional certificate.

#### D. Graduate Non-Degree Seeking Student

1. Graduate non-degree seeking students are defined as those with a bachelor's or higher degree who do not intend to earn a degree from Governors State. Non-degree seeking students who subsequently decide to pursue a degree, may, upon approval by the appropriate academic dean, apply no more than six (6) credit hours taken as non-degree seeking toward the requirements of any graduate degree program. Such application will be subject to the degree requirements in effect at the time of admission to the specific major or certificate program.
2. Graduate non-degree seeking students cannot take graduate level courses designated by the program faculty as reserved for graduate degree candidates, majors, or certificate programs only.

## VI. REQUIREMENTS FOR A GRADUATE DEGREE

### A. Candidacy

1. All programs must establish written requirements for degree candidacy. Minimum program degree candidacy requirements must include: admission to the program through which the student intends to earn a degree; a completed

and approved Graduate Study Plan; successful completion of designated pre-candidacy coursework, and an application and admission to candidacy process.

2. Admission to candidacy is a pre-requisite to enrollment in the capstone experience designated for the program. Candidacy must be attained at least one term prior to the term during which the degree is to be awarded.

## **B. Examinations**

An oral, written, or combination examination meant to test a student's proficiency in some special field of knowledge may be used to determine a student's eligibility to enter a program, continue in the program, become a degree candidate, and/or graduate.

## **C. Graduate Capstone Experience**

1. Definition of Capstone: Capstones provide intensive experiences in critical analysis, research, and/or evaluation and provide an opportunity for integration of previous courses in the major. Graduate capstone experiences require graduate degree candidates to examine complex issues in substantial pieces of writing or other products as well as demonstrate synthesis of program content and mastery of program learning outcomes. Program faculty must designate at least one course in the program as a capstone course. Successful completion of this course is required for graduation.
2. Prerequisites of Capstones: Capstone experiences follow completion of other parts of the core curriculum and are, therefore, restricted to degree candidates. Registration for any graduate capstone experience requires degree candidacy as a prerequisite.
3. Faculty Committee for Capstones: Student work in a capstone must be evaluated and accepted by a committee of at least three qualified members and chaired by a Governors State University tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty member. No faculty member may serve as a member or advisor for a Master's, Specialist, or Professional Doctorate capstone if there is a potential or perceived conflict of interest, such as being former classmates.
4. Capstone Alternatives: Capstone alternatives are described below. Each program shall provide students a copy of detailed procedures and specify appropriate manuals of style for the capstone alternatives required in the program. Regardless of the alternative chosen, the evaluating committee must always be chaired by a tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty member.

These alternatives may vary from one program to another; however, each program shall determine and require one or more of the following:

- a. *Major Research Course:* A major research/project course is an individually registered course in which the candidate must present evidence of (a) a thorough review and understanding of the literature germane to the subject, (b) the ability to do independent research, and (c) the preparation of a manuscript which conforms to generally recognized standards of scientific and scholarly writing in the discipline. Common examples are a thesis or a dissertation.
- b. *Portfolio Course:* As a discipline standard for evaluating student mastery of graduate work in the creative arts, students in this kind of capstone develop a large portfolio of projects or pieces. For the degree, either a single piece is selected for evaluation or the entire portfolio of work is reviewed.
- c. *Project Course:* This type of capstone may feature individual or small-group projects developed to demonstrate the student's mastery of given domain. Examples of this alternative include but are not limited to directed readings, master's projects, graduate culminating seminars, software or educational program design and evaluation, case studies, simulations, or action research projects.
- d. *Fieldwork or Internship Course:* In an internship-style capstone course, the student participates in an internship, or works in the field, supervised by a Governors State University tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty member or appropriately credentialed member, as well as field supervisor.
- e. *Comprehensive Examination:* A comprehensive examination may be used in combination with one or more of the above alternatives. However, examinations alone may not be used as the total graduate (capstone) requirement.

#### D. Credit Hours

1. Students seeking the Master's Degree shall complete at least thirty-two (32) credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree. Those seeking the Specialist Degree shall complete at least sixty (60) post-baccalaureate hours. Those seeking the Doctoral Degree shall complete at least seventy-five (75) post-baccalaureate hours. Exceptions will only be made for doctoral programs with fewer than 75 credit hours prior to the academic year 2012-2013 that also have IBHE and/or HLC approval. Any graduate program must include a Graduate Capstone Experience of at least three (3) credit hours.
2. A minimum of sixty-seven (67) percent of the graduate program coursework must be in graduate-only courses, numbered 6000 – 9999.

3. A maximum of fifty (50) percent of the credit hours, counted toward graduate degree requirements, may be earned from the same faculty member, unless there is an approved exception by the dean for a degree program.
4. The study plans for a university-approved joint degree program may allow up to 20% of the combined credit hours to be applied to each degree. Students simultaneously pursuing two or more degrees that do not constitute an approved joint degree program may not apply the same credit to more than one degree.
5. A maximum of twenty-five (25) percent of credit hours may be earned in elective independent study or elective internship, unless there is an approved exception by the dean.

E. **Transfer Credits** (See Policy 30)

F. **Grades**

1. All graduate students shall maintain grades in accordance with the established University grading policy (Policy 26); however, in no case shall a grade of "D" or "F" be acceptable toward meeting degree requirements.
2. All graduate students must be in Academic Good Standing in accordance with University's academic standing policy (Policy 14) to be admitted to or to remain in the Graduate Degree Candidate status.
3. To graduate, all grades of incomplete (I or E) or continuing registration (CO) must be removed by the graduation processing date.

G. **Time Limits**

All requirements for the degree must be completed in a maximum of eight (8) academic calendar years, the equivalent to sixteen (16) consecutive semesters (excluding summer terms) of a student's acceptance into the program

Graduate degree programs may allow students to use the CO (Continued Registration) status to extend the time to complete their Capstone experience. (See Policy 26)

If there are extenuating circumstances, the student may petition the dean of the College to request an exception to these time limits. The dean of the college will consult with program faculty and chair prior to decision.

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