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# Guide to Graduate Handbooks

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This document should not be interpreted as constituting new policy or requirements, instead it is intended to serve as an explanation of already existing University policies that most commonly affect graduate students.

# How To Use This Guide

Graduate students rely on their graduate handbooks to guide them through each step of the process of obtaining a graduate degree. Even before they join a graduate program, prospective students will often review the pages of a graduate handbook to better understand program requirements, but also to get a feel for the culture of the department.

The very best handbook serves as an accurate, up-to-date, and thorough guide to your graduate program. It should be designed to anticipate the range of questions that current and potential students may have as they try to navigate graduate school. It provides detailed information on department-specific requirements, policies, and expectations; points the student to information on University policy and procedures; and provides a list of useful web resources and campus offices. It is not a replacement for in-person advising. Instead, a graduate handbook is most effective when used to reinforce in-person advising and complement information provided elsewhere, especially what is found in the Academic Catalog, the University Policy Library, and USRR Code.

Units still distributing hard copies of handbooks should consider whether this is truly necessary given the ease of uploading and accessing the document on a department website. Departments that choose to provide students with a hard copy (whether alone or in conjunction with an online version that includes hyperlinks to further policy information) should include a disclaimer noting that the hard copy is incomplete. Students should be referred to the online version, if available, or to the University Policy Library and COGA website where they may access further policy information.

Any listing of a program's degree requirements in the student handbook—including coursework, exams, theses and dissertations, and any other major milestones (e.g., qualifying exams)—must match exactly the requirements in the current University catalog. Changes to requirements must be approved through College governance (Committee of Graduate Studies and College Academic Council) before a change to program requirements may be made in the handbook. Information on the process for submitting program changes for review may be found on the [COGA website](#).

Procedural details, timelines, and general statements relating to expectations for student advising, mentoring, and progress through the degree are generally not considered degree requirements for the purposes of the catalog, although they are equally vital for inclusion in a graduate handbook.

As soon as a requirements change has been approved by College governance, it may immediately appear in a graduate student handbook and on program websites. Approved changes will appear in the Academic Catalog according to the annual revision timetable. For a requirement to be mandatory for any given student it must have been published in the Academic Catalog at the time of that student's first semester of enrollment. Students admitted under previous requirements may choose whether to opt into new requirements.

Because of the difficulty in accurately representing and updating University policy within a program handbook and the potential confusion a complex policy environment can cause for students, COGA strongly recommends that units separate university and program-specific policies and requirements within the graduate student handbook. Students should be able to quickly identify the level from which the requirement originates so they know where best to direct their questions.

To help you in this effort, COGA has created a UNIVERSITY POLICIES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS document, the contents of which can be cut and pasted directly into a University policy section of your existing handbook.

## Keys to an Effective Graduate Handbook

**DON'T** duplicate University policy.

**DON'T** provide print copies.

**DON'T** provide names or individual contact information for staff outside your unit in your directory section. Staff members change too frequently.

**DON'T** highlight maximum time limits for completing degree

**DON'T** provide or refer to previous requirements.

**DO** cut and paste COGA's UNIVERSITY POLICIES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS document (available on the [Grad Ed Toolkit](#) page of the COGA website) into your document and refer students to the relevant sections.

**DO** make it an online document, update the online version and direct students and faculty to that version before all graduate milestones or exams; OR, if you must provide a print copy, be sure to include a statement that the information is incomplete if hyperlinks are inaccessible.

**DO** describe the role of that office, provide situations in which students may contact them, and provide a direct link to that department's website. The document KEY GRADUATE OFFICES does this and can be cut and pasted directly into your existing directory.

**DO** tell students what normal expectations are and then refer them to the time limit policy online.

**DO** provide a single statement at the beginning of the handbook indicating the date that program requirements were most recently updated. Students who were admitted under previous requirements and who wish to adhere to those previous requirements should be referred to the DGS for advising. Departments should keep archived copies of previous graduate handbooks for reference.

## Essential Handbook Content

The remainder of this document details information on key content that should be included in every graduate handbook, as applicable to the specific program. Each section provides a brief explanation followed either by examples from KU department handbooks or sample text developed for this project based on common expectations and what we take to be effective practice. Sections should focus upon program-specific information while referring students to University policy. An accompanying Template may be found on the COGA website and provides a condensed version of this section in Word format for ease of use.

# Unit Directory

Provide a directory of contact information for key unit administration or staff. At minimum, the list should include the department staff members name, phone number, and email address. Adding brief information about each person's role in the department will help students understand who they should contact in any given situation.

Contacts might include:

- Chair
- DGS
- Office Staff by responsibility (e.g. graduate coordinator/administrator, general office administration, Shared Service Center representatives, etc.)

## Helpful Hint: Directory

See the [KEY OFFICES AT KU](#) document for content that may be cut and pasted directly into your department's handbook.

Provide a directory of key College and University contacts, and encourage the student to be proactive in seeking out information, familiarizing themselves with University policies and procedures, and learning what campus resources are available to them. Avoid naming specific contacts within the directory.

## General Department Policies & Procedures

### Admission

Describe required application materials and program-specific procedures and prerequisites. Do not duplicate information about University policies relating to admission in this section, e.g., policies on English proficiency requirements, GPA requirement (3.0) and transferring credit. Instead, refer the student directly to the University graduate admissions policy through hyperlinks or include a separate University Policies section.

KU does not require any student to take the GRE. If your unit has any GRE requirement, it should be included in this section of the handbook.

### Minimum Requirements & Prerequisites

It is especially important to alert students to any departmental admissions policies that are more stringent than University's policy (e.g., requiring a min undergraduate GPA of 3.25 for admission), as well as any degree or course prerequisites.

#### Sample Text

*In addition to the University Requirements for admission described in the University Policies & Degree Requirements section of this handbook, the Department also has the following pre-requisites for graduate admission:*

- *An undergraduate degree in the field of study OR at least 15 hours of coursework in the field of study and an undergraduate degree in a related social science discipline.*
- *A minimum GPA of 3.5 for undergraduate courses in the major.*

## Deadlines

Because each department at KU establishes their own deadlines for admissions, the handbook should include clear information on your program's process.

### Theatre

*To apply for Fall admission into the M.A. or Ph.D. program, please submit all application materials no later than: January 1 (to be considered for admission with financial support) or February 15 (for admission consideration without financial support.). The Department does not admit new students for the Spring or Summer terms.*

## Application Materials & Procedures

The only supporting documentation the University requires of all applicants to graduate programs is transcripts showing a bachelor's degree has been obtained or that one will be conferred by the end of the first semester of study. Approved proof of English proficiency is also required for non-native speakers of English.

Any documentation beyond these is at the discretion of the individual program. It is crucial that departments make clear any expectations for additional supporting documents.

### East Asian Languages & Cultures

Applicants to our program should complete the [KU Application for Graduate Study](#).

Please be aware that the following items will need to be prepared in advance and uploaded with the online application:

- A current C.V. (Curriculum Vitae) or resume
- A Statement of Purpose explaining your academic objectives: This statement should provide the graduate faculty with a sense of what you hope to encounter in the graduate school experience, your experience and general research interests at this point in your career, what skills you most need to work on, and what shape you think your career might take—in the academy or outside of it)
- A writing sample that demonstrates your writing skills and basic research capacity: A research paper from a previous upper-level undergraduate course will suffice.
- Name and email for 3 references, preferably from professors you have studied under, who will provide a Letter of Recommendation. The best letters are the most recent ones.
- Transcripts from all institutions from which a degree was obtained and from all institutions attended post-bachelor's. Official transcripts should also be sent from those previous institutions directly to KU:

By mail:  
Graduate Admissions  
213 Strong Hall  
1450 Jayhawk Blvd.  
Lawrence KS 66045-7535

Or by email:  
[graduate@ku.edu](mailto:graduate@ku.edu)

- An official Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score report. Although the online application will ask you to self-report your scores, official scores must also be sent directly from GRE. KU's University code is 6871.

## Non-Native Speakers of English

The Office of Graduate Studies and the Kansas Board of Regents determine what may serve as proof of English proficiency for non-native speakers for the purpose of admission and for employment with KU. Also, it is important to note that the requirement to prove English proficiency is not just for international students, but for any student, including American citizens, whose native language is not English.

### **Sample Text**

*The Office of Graduate Studies requires applicants, international or domestic, whose native language is not English to demonstrate English proficiency. See “Admissions” under the University Requirements and Policies section of this document for more information regarding the University’s requirements for providing proof of English proficiency.*

## Provisional Admission

If your department is willing to consider recommending students for provisional admission, this section may be used to describe the conditions under which you would make such a recommendation. The section should also include any program-specific requirements of those admitted provisionally. Additional information about provisional admission may be found under Admission section in THE UNIVERSITY POLICIES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS document.

### **Sample Text**

*On rare occasions the department may recommend an applicant who does not meet the University’s minimum requirements for provisional admission. This may occur, for example, if a student’s overall undergraduate GPA is deficient but the major GPA, GRE scores, and admissions essay suggest strong potential for success in graduate study. All recommendations for provisional admission are contingent on approval by the College and University.*

*To continue in the program, students admitted provisionally must meet with the DGS at the start of the academic term, must comply with any requests for additional meetings or communications, and must earn at least a 3.0 GPA in the first semester of graduate coursework at KU.*

## Admissions Contact Information

Provide contact information for those with admissions questions, e.g., the DGS or faculty advisor for academic program questions and the unit’s Graduate Program Assistant or Coordinator for technical questions regarding the online application and required documentation.

## General Guidelines

Describe the department's general practices, policies, or procedures that apply to all current graduate students. This is supplemental information about how your program interprets and implements University policies. It is information that your students will not typically find in the academic catalog. This section does not include coursework and exam requirements, which should be included in a separate Degree Requirements section discussed below.

## Grading

Describe any department-specific grading policy, including any that are more stringent than the University's. The University's requires a grade of C or higher for a course to count toward a graduate degree. See Grading in COGA's UNIVERSITY POLICIES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS SECTION for further information regarding University minimum grading requirements.

### **Philosophy**

*A grade of "B-" or higher must be achieved for a courses to count for a degree in our programs; however, only the grades of A or B are normally taken as indications that a graduate student has done satisfactory work in the courses in which he or she received them.*

*\* Students should also carefully review the University's grading policy, found under Grading in the [University Policies and Degree Requirements](#) section of this document.*

## Academic Integrity & Misconduct

Outline expectations for academic conduct and explain what constitutes academic misconduct. The information should clearly convey to the student ethical expectations of graduate work in your department and provide information on the consequences of academic misconduct.

### **Germanic Languages & Literatures**

*In the Department of Germanic Languages & Literatures, we consider academic integrity essential to our work and we expect students to adhere to its principles in conducting research. This means that students acknowledge the sources they use in their academic work and cite them fully and correctly; not acknowledging a source constitutes plagiarism. Students should consult with faculty well before due dates if they are not sure about how to handle a source. Academic integrity also means that work on examinations and assignments must be carried out by authorized means. Students are subject to sanctions by the University for Academic Misconduct if they violate these principles. Definitions are provided in the University Senate Rules and Regulations.*



## Good Standing

Provide an explanation of what constitutes "good standing" and/or satisfactory academic progress in your departments. It is useful to be explicit about expectations beyond the minimum GPA, for example, expectations relating to the timing and completion of key milestones.

### Helpful Hint: Good Standing

Departments with requirements for good standing that are more stringent than that of KU should still refer students to probation and dismissal in the University Policies & Degree Requirements section of your handbook.

### **Requirements Equal the University's**

#### **Sample Text**

*To be considered in "good standing" in any graduate program, the University requires graduate students to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or "B" average) and be making timely progress toward meeting their degree requirements. For additional information on good standing, as well as probation and dismissal procedures for those students that do not meet the requirements for good standing, see the [University Policies and Degree Requirements](#) section of this document.*

### **Requirements that are More Stringent Than the University's**

#### **Ecology and Evolutionary Biology**

*Graduate students in EEB are considered in good academic standing when two conditions are met: (1) a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 is maintained and (2) the most recent departmental annual evaluation rating was "satisfactory with warning" or better. If a student fails to meet one of these two criteria, (s)he will not be considered in good academic standing, and, according to University regulations, the student will not be eligible for a GTA, GRA, or CA appointment.*

## Advising & Mentorship

Provide a description of the advising process. Explain how advisors are selected and/or assigned in your department and the role that advising plays at each stage of graduate study: Advising on coursework selection, preparation for exams and the prospectus/proposal, and the preparation of theses and/or dissertations may all be discussed. If your department uses contracts, agreements, or written plans of study for students, include a detailed description of how those are developed and used. Describe what a student should do if they are having difficulties with their advisor and/or wish to change to a new advisor.

More generally, the mentoring relationship is critical to a graduate student's development as a scholar and his or her steady progress and timely completion of the degree. Consider providing a description of your program's approach to mentoring. Providing this information to students will often require identifying expectations that have been largely tacit and translating these into an explicit statement on mentoring practice. It may require faculty discussion to reach a measure of consensus about how to convey these tacit assumptions to graduate students.

Departments at KU such as EEB have also benefited from the development of a mentoring policy that describes a faculty member's professional obligations to his or her mentees. A document detailing their departments procedures is available on the COGA website.

Ideally your handbook's statement on mentoring will describe the unique role that mentoring plays in your field of study and your department's basic expectations of the mentoring relationship. What should students expect of their mentors? What will be expected of the mentee? If you make use of the College's [Mentoring Agreement](#) or would like to provide it to students as an option, include a link to it in your handbook. There are student guides available that discuss the role of mentoring in graduate education, some of which can be found on COGA's [website](#). Encourage students to invest some time in understanding and developing the mentoring relationship.

### **Clinical Child Psychology Program**

*The Director of the Program serves as the official Academic Advisor for all students in the program. As such, the Director bears responsibility for assisting the student in course selection, articulating career goals, assisting with program requirements (e.g., internship applications), and designing experiences consonant with career goals. However, as noted below, each student in the Clinical Child Psychology Program is assigned a Research Advisor who also provides guidance with regard to course selection, developing and articulating career goals, and designing experiences consonant with career goals.*

*During the first semester of enrollment in the CCPP, a Research Advisor will be selected by the student with the agreement of the faculty member and the Clinical Child Psychology Program Director. The Research Advisor will be responsible for involving the student in initial research activities and eventually for the master's thesis, task, and dissertation projects. The Research Advisor will be requested to provide information regarding the student's progress toward completing the Clinical Child Psychology Program requirements.*

*By the end (i.e., Stop Day) of the fall semester of the student's first year, the chosen Research Advisor must notify the Program Director of the mentorship relationship. The student is responsible for prompting the Research Advisor to notify the Program Director of this relationship. The Research Advisor may be changed during the student's academic career. If a student wishes to change Research Advisors, the student must notify the Program Director of this intent. A new Research Advisor may be selected by the student with the agreement of the faculty member and the Clinical Child Psychology Program Director.*

## **Annual Review**

Research on graduate education strongly suggests that a practice of periodic review of graduate students supports student learning and steady progress to degree. To achieve these goals, departments will have in place a process for regularly evaluating graduate students' academic standing and progress toward degree. Models vary widely. At a minimum, departments should establish a review process that 1) is conducted at least once per year, 2) includes all members of the graduate faculty or a representative graduate committee and 3) provides students with written feedback regarding their performance and status in the program and an opportunity to discuss those results with their advisor, DGS, or graduate committee.

The academic progress of all graduate students will be reviewed each February (additional evaluations may take place as warranted). The review will be conducted by the student's committee or the faculty of the respective subdisciplines. Grades, advancement in requirements, progress on the thesis or dissertation, and overall performance will be evaluated. Students will be notified of the review in advance so they may update their files. The outcome of the evaluation will be communicated by the advisor in writing to the student along with whatever recommendations the review committee chooses to make by March 15. A copy of the evaluation and recommendations will be placed in the student's file.

## Clinical Child Psychology Program

Student progress is evaluated continuously throughout the program. Multiple criteria are used in evaluation. Depending on the level of the student, these include: (1) performance in required and elective course work; (2) clinical functioning; (3) research progress; (4) thesis proposal and thesis defense; (5) preliminary examination (the Task); (6) dissertation proposal/comprehensive oral examination; (7) dissertation and oral defense; and (8) ethical and professional functioning. Goals and objectives for training outlined in this Manual form a basis for the reviews.

Prior to the annual Faculty Retreat, students will be informed of the need to meet with their Research Advisor(s) to discuss their progress in the program. Students will also be asked to provide the Program Administrative Associate with: a) an updated GAPS forms, and b) an updated curriculum vita. These materials, along with evaluation forms from clinical practicum supervisors, funding placement supervisors, GTA faculty supervisors, and the Research Advisor or research supervisors (if not in the CCPP core faculty), will be examined by the core faculty of the CCPP in their annual Faculty Retreat. Please see Appendix A for copies of evaluation forms.

The CCPP Core Faculty meet regularly during the academic year at which time students' progress and professional competencies may be discussed and evaluated. Results of such discussions may be shared with students at any time to facilitate their professional development.

Formal evaluations of students' progress toward degree and development of professional competencies occurs at the end of the fall semester (during a faculty meeting), and at the Annual Faculty Retreat at the end of each spring semester. Written feedback is provided at least once-per-year (usually after the Annual Faculty Retreat) or at any time that problems are perceived.

The student's Research Advisor typically conveys to the student the fact that her/his professional development was discussed and the content of the discussion. If problems are perceived, the student may be counseled as to possible or recommended courses of action.

In some cases, remediation will be advised. In the rare case where the magnitude of the problem is such that the faculty considers remediation unfeasible, the student will be counseled out of the Clinical Child Psychology Program. The procedure for this course of action is outlined in the program policy statement concerning Non-academic Failure of Graduate Students (below).

Students need to demonstrate standards of behavior consistent with licensure laws for professional psychology. The Director and faculty are frequently asked to complete evaluation forms that require judgment on numerous personal and professional qualities, including integrity, honesty, fairness, credibility, reliability, respect for others, respect for the laws of the state and nation, self-discipline, self-evaluation, initiative, and commitment to the profession of psychology. In order to complete these forms positively, the faculty need to observe unambiguous evidence that the student's behavior meets these standards of professional stance and demeanor.

## Professional Development

Just as graduate students benefit from quality advising and mentoring, they also benefit from clearly defined expectations regarding their professional development within the field. It is recommended that programs clearly define what is expected professionally of a student in their program (for the purposes of degree completion) and more generally as a practitioner of the discipline (for the purposes of employment and professional growth).

If the program has established a more or less formal professional development program, use this section to provide detailed information about these opportunities.

### **Communication Studies**

*On an annual basis, COMS offers eight 90-minute professional development workshops during the year. At the workshops, faculty and senior graduate students help graduate students develop key professional skills. The workshop topics and schedule were developed by the Graduate Affairs Committee in coordination with the Graduate Student Organization. The professional development workshop includes:*

*Basics of convention submission—this workshop covers the basics of submitting papers and panels to conventions in Communication Studies and related disciplines.*

*CV development—this workshop covers the basics of constructing an academic CV. Faculty and senior graduate students will provide models and tips for CV construction.*

*Library research skills—this workshop introduces students to available databases and search strategies for finding material to use in their teaching and research.*

*Job search process—this workshop outlines the job search process. The focus is on informing second- and third-year doctoral students on the process so that they can be prepared to search for an academic position in their final year in the doctoral program.*

*Convention presentations—this workshop provides practical tips for making an effective convention presentation. An effective presenter does more than read his/her paper; this workshop provides models for how to make a presentation stand out.*

*Job talks—this workshop provides guidance on how to make an effective job talk either in a phone or an on-campus interview. Job candidates are encouraged to practice their job talks with their advisor prior to the interview.*

*Nuts and bolts of research—this workshop covers the basic principles of how to submit an article and how to pick a journal for submission, as well as tips for how to develop a research program.*

*Work life balance—this workshop focuses on the challenges faced by young faculty members and provides strategies for addressing those challenges and building a successful and fulfilling career.*

This section may also be used to provide a more general overview of professional development milestones that the student may expect to complete during the course of their graduate study.

## History

*In addition to completing the formal requirements for the PhD, graduate students also need to develop a professional profile that will position them to succeed after graduation. This timetable lets you know what sorts of things you should be doing, along with degree requirements, and when you should do them.*

### **First Year (+ summer):**

- Begin to think about career options, including both a first and a second choice
- Begin following academic journals in your field
- Begin to attend lectures, seminars, workshops, job talks
- Attend an academic conference
- Read the central books/articles in your field and major theoretical works
- Begin to acquire a library of essential books in your field
- Upgrade your command of your primary research language
- Write your C.V.
- Attend CTE teaching workshops
- Attend a Hall Center grant-writing workshop
- Become acquainted with department faculty
- Find peer mentors among more senior graduate students
- Acquire a professional outfit

### **Second Year (+ summer):**

- Choose a dissertation topic
- Familiarize yourself with archives and libraries in your area
- Join professional associations
- Apply for a pre-dissertation research grant
- Read to fill out gaps in your command of the historiography
- Take a position in HGSO
- Start compiling a teaching portfolio
- Deliver a guest lecture in a course
- Further upgrade primary research language competence (speaking and writing)
- Do a preliminary research trip in the summer

### **Third Year (+ summer)**

- Present a paper (based on a seminar paper) at a regional conference
- Upgrade research skills (e.g. paleography, statistical methods)
- Attend a national academic conference
- Consult established scholars in your field outside KU, and ask them if they will recommend you
- Apply for external dissertation research grants
- Begin to network with established scholars and graduate students in your area
- Begin to develop your teaching profile—a variety of courses and classroom settings
- Mentor undergraduates
- Take a position on a department committee

### **Fourth Year (+ summer)**

- Travel to archives and libraries for intensive research
- Apply for external dissertation write-up grants
- Submit a research article to a refereed journal
- Publish a book review, encyclopedia article, abstract, or translation
- Present a paper at a national academic conference
- Give a presentation to a public audience or K-12
- Read job ads closely; follow department searches closely
- Prepare job application materials in summer: cover letter, teaching portfolio, dissertation abstract, revised C.V. and get faculty to vet them
- Arrange for letters of recommendation, including from non-KU scholars

### **Fifth Year**

- Apply for jobs and for post-doctoral fellowships
- Practice mock interviews
- Continue to network with established scholars and fellow students
- Submit another research article for publication
- Present another paper at a major conference
- Dream about future research projects
- Join a dissertation writing support/discussion group
- Mentor more junior graduate students
- Take a position on a dept. or university committee
- Acquire a professional wardrobe

## Multiple Career Pathways

Given the current state of the tenure-track job market in most fields, doctoral students will also benefit from any information the department can provide about professional development opportunities that support a wide variety of career paths appropriate to the discipline. Discussing this in your handbook also sends a clear signal to your doctoral students that it is acceptable to discuss the realities of the job market and career options with their advisor and/or DGS.

The following websites are good places for students to start exploring a range of career options beyond the tenure track, including professional positions in industry, non-profit, government, research, higher education administration, and others. The following links, as well as resources identified by your faculty as especially relevant to your discipline, should be provided in your student handbook:

**Chronicle of Higher Education** – Students can set up an account in Vitae, the Chronicle's job site, to receive updates on career-related news and create customized job searches. They may also access useful articles under the "Manager Your Career" column of the Advice section. Some Chronicle content is limited to subscribers.

**Inside Higher Ed** – Students can explore the dedicated Career section of the website. Content does not require a subscription.

**The Versatile PhD** - This is a subscription service with extensive content geared toward PhD students putting their skills to use in a variety of career paths. The service includes a number of active forums used by job seekers that can provide graduate students with an early glimpse of the non-academic job market. Students must login to myKU and follow the link under the "Services" menu.

**KU Career Center** – While undergraduates make more frequent use of the Center, the unit's career counselors can be especially helpful to graduate students as they explore sectors beyond academe, including useful websites to seek jobs in industry, government, and non-profit sectors.

## Grievance Procedures

All units within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences have established grievance procedures approved by the University. Provide a link to [your unit's official procedure](#) in the KU policy library.

### **French & Italian**

*The Department of French and Italian advises that graduate students make an attempt to resolve issues, especially matters concerning grades, directly with the instructor or party involved, or with the department chair. If a grievance arises that cannot be resolved directly, or if the student does not feel comfortable attempting to resolve the issue with the department chair, the student should then follow the department's official grievance procedure, which has been approved by the University and may be found by following the link below:*

[Department of French & Italian Grievance Procedure](#)

## Petitions

Programs should have in place a documented process for reviewing and ruling on student petitions at the department or program level. It is important that units distinguish between these internal processes and the College/University petition process, which is applicable among all units and programs in the College.

### Sample Text

*If a graduate student has compelling reason to seek exemption from program requirement or University policy, they may submit a petition to the graduate faculty.*

*Petitioners should write a letter, addressed to the graduate faculty, explaining the reasons why the student is seeking exemption from specific rules, as well as how the educational goals the rules reflect will still be fulfilled. Where applicable, this petition should be accompanied by a letter of support from the student's advisor and/or the appropriate supporting materials. The letter should be sent to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who then refers the petition to the graduate faculty, which will convene to consider the petition.*

*In cases where the policy or requirement is a departmental requirement (for example, a course requirement for degree) the graduate faculty will issue a final decision (for example, that the student may be exempt from a Ph.D. course requirement based on coursework taken at the M.A. level at a previous institution).*

*In cases where the policy or requirement being petitioned is a University policy, the graduate faculty will decide whether to support the student's petition. If the faculty is in support, the department will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs accompanied by supporting materials as required. The petition form specifies the supporting material needed for each kind of petition. These materials must accompany the petition sent to COGA. COGA's [petitions web page](#) provides additional information regarding University petitions, including supplemental documentation that may be required by the University. Additional information regarding the more common University petitions, such as Leave of Absence, Enrollment requirements, and Time Limit Extensions may also be found in the University Policies & Degree requirements section of this document.*

*In cases where the graduate faculty declines to support a University petition, no paperwork may be submitted to COGA. COGA only accepts student petitions in cases where there is documented departmental support and when the petition itself is submitted by a representative of the department.*

*Students should always consult with the DGS prior to submitting a petition to the graduate faculty to ensure that a petition is necessary and that all the appropriate supporting documentation is accounted for.*

# Information for Graduate Assistants

It is recommended that Units employing GTAs, GRAs, and/or GAs provide general information regarding what the student should expect of their assistantship. This might include information on teaching load, responsible conduct of laboratory research, and specific rules and procedures relating to the appointment. In some cases this may be best provided in a separate document. It is recommended that departments include guidance on the following:

## For GTAs:

- Lesson planning, syllabi development, and book selection
- Professional conduct, both in and outside of the classroom
- Procedures for faculty evaluation and mentorship
- Information on further training or development of teaching skills. The following are excellent resources to point to:
  - > [Mandatory GTA training](#)
  - > [KU Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#)  
The CTE is a University office dedicated to assisting instructors, including GTAs, to develop effective instructional techniques. The expert staff of CTE can introduce instructors to the pedagogical technology available at the University, and help instructors develop new approaches to teaching. CTE specialists work with instructors individually, and also offer a diverse array of workshops and discussions. They can also guide instructors to useful scholarly literature on the subject of college teaching and learning.
  - > [CTE Guide To Teaching at KU: A Handbook of Resources \(PDF\)](#)
- Conditions and procedures for reappointment (if applicable)

## For GRAs and GAs:

- Expectations of the student, including, but not limited to, scope of work, expected outcomes, and time commitment. This may include templates for GRA/ GA written contracts and should be in accord with those provided by funding agencies and/or national organizations (e.g., regarding authorship).
- Mentorship and collaboration that the student should expect to receive from their supervisor
- Research or professional skills the student should expect to develop and how those skills will directly benefit the students' dissertation research
- Procedures for regular communication between the graduate student and advisor to insure that the student is benefitting from the GRA or GA appointment
- Information on opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and/or professional development (e.g. opportunities for cross-disciplinary training, travel to professional meetings, or collaborations with outside investigators)
- Conditions and procedures for reappointment (if applicable)

## Resources

- [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\) \(PDF\)](#)

All GTA/GRA appointments are governed by the MOA between the University of Kansas, Lawrence, the Kansas Board of Regents, and the Kansas Association of Public Employees.

- [GRA, GTA, and GA Appointments: General Guidelines and Eligibility](#)
- [Full list of GTA/GRA/GA Benefits](#)
- [GTA/GRA/GA Health Insurance Information](#)
- [HR/Pay System](#)

### Helpful Hint: HR Pay System

Many GTA's are unaware that their paychecks are viewable in the HR Pay System. Accessing them the first time is a somewhat complicated process. We suggest providing some instruction in your handbook. For example, "GTA/GRA/ GA paychecks are available to view in HR/Pay the Monday before a pay day. If using the system for the first time, the system will need to register the login and then go through an update before any information is accessible. Log in and then log out. Wait a few hours and then log in again. The system has registered you as a user when the main home page menu shows the Self Service option. Navigate to Self Service --> View Paychecks. Current deductions and direct deposit information may also be viewed and updated via the HR/Pay system."



# Degree Requirements

Graduate handbooks should include a section dedicated to the specific curricular requirements a student must fulfill to obtain the degree, including coursework, exams, theses and dissertations, and other major milestones (e.g., qualifying exams, portfolios).

Procedural details, timelines, and general statements relating to expectations for student advising, mentoring, and progress through the degree are vital for inclusion in a graduate handbook. Changes to these procedures and general guidelines, assuming that they do not alter expectations for the quantity or quality of work that is expected to complete the degree program, may be modified upon agreement of the department's faculty and recorded in the handbook as appropriate.

## Helpful Hint: Program Changes

Information on the process for submitting program changes for review by faculty governance may be found on the [COGA website](#).

By contrast, any change in the degree requirements themselves must be submitted as a program change and reviewed by College governance. This includes review and approval by both the Committee on Graduate Studies and the College Academic Council. Approved program changes are then recorded in the next academic catalog cycle.

*The specific degree requirements listed in your student handbook must match exactly the requirements as listed in the current University catalog. They may not be added to a handbook until the academic year in which they first appear in the Academic Catalog.*

## Master's Degree Requirements

### Course Requirements

Use this space to describe curricular requirements for the Master's degree(s). At a minimum this section should contain the list of curricular requirements as found in the current academic catalog.

#### NON-THESIS OPTION

##### Requirements

If your program offers a non-thesis option, provide information that will help the student understand if this option is appropriate to their long-term plans. Explain how expectations differ from the thesis option, and provide clear information as to how the final exam for the non-thesis option is structured.

#### THESIS OPTION

##### Requirements

Describe any program requirements, including any department-specific expectations for thesis hour enrollment, beyond those described for the non-thesis master's.

## The Thesis

This section of the graduate handbook should provide a comprehensive guide to all program-specific expectations, procedures, and timelines related to the preparation of thesis and defense:

- Describe the nature of a thesis within of your unit's discipline. Be sure to include basic structural guidelines, including the recommended length and discipline-specific formatting requirements (APA, MLA, etc).
- Describe program-specific requirements with regards to approval of the topic.
- Describe program-specific procedures for committee member selection. Avoid duplicating University requirements for committees. Instead, refer students to the Exams section found in COGA's [UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS](#) document for further detail on committee requirements, including committee member composition and attendance.
- Provide expected timelines. Include topic and advisor selection, committee selection, chapter and draft submission. An even more detailed timeline regarding submission and editing of the final draft in the weeks leading up to the final defense can be especially useful. The timeline should include expectations not just for the students' milestones and submission of work, but also for the advisor and committee members' feedback.
- Clarify or update program requirements with regard to hard copies. Many program handbooks still stipulate that students must provide committee members with hard copies to review in advance of the thesis defense and provide the department with a bound copy after the defense. The University only requires an electronic copy, which is made available to all KU students, faculty and staff via the KU Library online. Given this, units are encouraged to take printed copy requirements under consideration. Units that still find value in providing bound copies, for example, in a departmental library, may consider whether that requirement should be at the students' expense.
- Refer students to the Graduation section in COGA's [UNIVERSITY POLICIES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS](#) document for information on University requirements for electronic formatting and submission.

### Helpful Hint: The Thesis

Refer to the section below titled "The Dissertation" under PhD requirements for more comprehensive information about what may be included in a discussion of expectations for the thesis.

## Joint Degree

A joint degree is, by definition, a shared degree, and in many cases procedures related to fulfilling requirements for a joint degree vary slightly from the traditional degree. For this reason, expectations should be made clear to students as early as possible. Use these guidelines to create a description tailored to your joint program:

- Describe instructions for admission in the joint program that differ from admission to the traditional track. Many joint degree programs require students to apply for the program after having completed a set number of hours in the first degree.
- Provide detailed instructions with regard to advising. Clarify expectations for communication among students and the advisors in each program. Explain how formation of a committee may vary from the traditional track in order to include faculty from both programs.
- Provide plan of study templates or timelines.
- Describe the nature of the final exam, project, or thesis and specifically how the process may differ from the traditional track.
- Ensure that your description of requirements and expectations is consistent with that of the companion program and the academic catalog. Programs should use this as an opportunity collaborate with the advisors in the companion department to guarantee students are receiving consistent advising.
- Include in the description a link to the website of the department or school with whom you share the joint program, as well as pertinent contact information.

## Ph.D. Degree Requirements

### Admission

Provide any requirements above those for the Master's degree and the University general requirements, such as a PhD qualifying exam process.

#### **Sociology**

*Students who have received an M.A. degree and completed a thesis from the Department of Sociology may pursue the Ph.D. degree by obtaining unanimous approval from members of their MA committee for admission into the Ph.D. program. After the thesis defense, each committee member will complete and submit to the Director of Graduate Studies a recommendation for admission to the Ph.D. program. In addition, students who have completed the MA and wish to be admitted to the Ph.D. program must submit a 2-3 page letter of interest to the Director of Graduate Studies and a copy of their completed thesis. Students who have earned a thesis-based Master's degree in sociology at another university may be admitted to the graduate program at the Ph.D. level if they completed a thesis which, according to the Graduate Studies Committee, meets the standards for such work at the University of Kansas.*

## Course Requirements

Use this section to describe the departmental course requirements for the PhD degree. At a minimum this section should contain the list of curricular requirements as found in the current academic catalog.

### Research Skills & Responsible Scholarship Requirement

Every department has identified specific Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship (RSRS) Requirements in consultation with the College and Graduate Studies. This requirement must be completed prior to the oral comprehensive exam. Models for what fulfills the requirement vary widely, but in all cases, the requirement must be fulfilled before the student is approved to take the oral comprehensive exam. As with other University requirements, departments may establish more stringent policies as appropriate to the program (e.g., a higher minimum grade for RSRS coursework).

#### Geography

*Research skills are important elements of any graduate program and should complement the student's research topic. Coursework necessary to meet this requirement should commence early in the program, but must be completed at minimum prior to the oral comprehensive exam. Selection of a particular Research Skills option must be approved by the student's advisor and student's committee members. A student's Research Skills requirement may be met by 1 of the following:*

1. *Demonstrate a reading, writing, and speaking capability in a single foreign language sufficient to enable the student to do field work without an interpreter. An examination for competence, including written and oral portions, will be conducted by the appropriate language department having expertise in that language.*
2. *Demonstrate a satisfactory capability in 1 research skill from the list below. The actual courses must be approved by the student's advisor and committee members.*
  - a. *Computer Science—complete a computer-programming course in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (e.g., C++, Fortran, or Visual Basic) with a grade of B or higher and create a substantial computer program that illustrates a geographic application of that language. Both the course and computer program must be approved by the Computer Programming Committee of the Department of Geography.*
  - b. *Mathematics—complete 9 hours of courses at the 500-level or above with a grade of B or higher.*
  - c. *Statistics—complete 9 hours of courses outside the Geography Department at the 500-level or above with a grade of B or higher.*
  - d. *An outside discipline relevant to the student's field(s) of specialization within geography (e.g. anthropology, biology, economics, geology, history, or psychology) – complete 9 hours of courses at the 500-level or above with a grade of B or higher (Atmospheric science courses may be used for this option, but not courses listed or cross-listed as geography.) Students may petition the Graduate Affairs Committee to have 9 hours of courses at the 500-level or above in multiple departments fulfill this requirement.*

*Students whose native language is not English may, in some cases, use their native language to fulfill Research Skills but only if the language is considered an adequate research tool for their program and is endorsed by the student's advisor and committee members. Using a native language to fulfill the Research Skills requirement must have GSC approval.*

## Oral Comprehensive Exam Procedures

Describe program-specific requirements and procedures for the oral comprehensive exam:

- Describe procedures for any internal written qualifying exams or papers. Provide time lines or suggested plans of study. Make it clear that procedures and outcomes related to the qualifying exam process are internal to the department and not governed by University requirements for oral exams, though they may be similar. Provide instructions on how to proceed if a student fails the qualifying exam.
- Describe program-specific procedures for the selection of an advisor and committee members. Avoid repeating University requirements for committees. Instead, refer students to the Exams section found in COGA's UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS document for further detail on committee requirements, including committee composition and attendance.
- Specify the preferred semester or time during the semester in which the student takes the exam, as applicable.
- Explain when and how scheduling takes place in your unit.
- Provide a portfolio checklist, if applicable.
- If your program requires a prospectus defense as part of the oral comprehensive exam, direct students to the separate section describing the dissertation process.

### Helpful Hint: Scheduling Exams

The COGA office requires departments to submit a pre-approval PTD AT LEAST 2 WEEKS prior to the date of the exam. Departments should have in place a process for scheduling exams that will begin well in advance of that two week deadline to avoid late pre-approval submission and to resolve any issues related to the requirements COGA looks for in the pre-approval. See the Exams section in the UNIVERSITY POLICIES & REQUIREMENTS document.

For departments with pre-qualifying exams, a firm date may need to be set for the oral portion of the exam before the qualifying exam has taken place. If the qualifying exam is not passed and must be retaken, the oral exam date may be changed to a later date. Contact the COGA office for questions in these cases.

## Post-Comprehensive Enrollment

Describe program-specific enrollment requirements for the semester of the oral comprehensive exam and for the semesters following successful completion of an exam. Specify expected course enrollment and clarify expectations with regards to communication between advisors and students who have reduced their enrollment and are no longer in resident study.

This section should also advise the student that they are responsible for abiding by University enrollment requirements during the post-comprehensive period. With the exception of department-specific requirements, COGA strongly discourages attempting to provide any explanation of the University's post-comp policy in the graduate handbook. Instead, refer students to the Post-Comprehensive Enrollment section under University Requirements & Policies. Students should be encouraged to contact COGA with any questions about post-comprehensive enrollment.

*While taking the portfolio and comprehensive examinations students may enroll in dissertation hours and after successfully passing the oral portion of the exam students begin working on their dissertation and enroll in dissertation hours (GERM 999) with their dissertation advisor. Prior to enrolling, students should carefully review the post-comprehensive enrollment information in the University Degree Requirements section of this document for important details regarding University enrollment requirements the semester of and the semesters following the oral comprehensive exam.*

## Preparation of the Dissertation

The dissertation stage is a time when effective mentoring can have a significant and positive impact on time to degree and completion rates. It is especially important that students receive clear guidance from their advisor regarding expectations for the dissertation. This section of the graduate handbook can be useful, tangible tool to support advisors in this effort:

- Describe of the nature of a dissertation within of your unit's discipline. Explore very broad, but important questions: What is the overall goal of a dissertation in your discipline? What should the student's goal be with regards to publication? How is a topic chosen, especially in light of the faculty and resources your unit has to offer? How and at what pace should research be conducted? What should a student expect with regards to support and feedback from their advisor?
- Be as explicit as possible as to how the program expects the dissertation to be structured, including the recommended or required length and discipline-specific formatting (APA, MLA, etc). Some departments have found it helpful to students to set a specific limit on the length of the dissertation.
- Explain to students [your program's Graduate Learner Outcome Rubric](#) (dissertation rubric) and the role that it plays in the final defense of the dissertation. Provide a copy of it in the appendix and give students a copy after passing their oral comp or prospectus defense.
- Describe program-specific procedures for committee member selection. Be sure to provide details about the selection of an advisor. Avoid repeating University requirements for committees. Instead, refer students to the Exams section found in COGA's [UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS](#) document for further detail on committee requirements, including committee composition and attendance.
- Describe program-specific requirements with regards to approval of the topic and/or proposal.
- Provide an expected timeline for completion of the dissertation. This should include the proposal or prospectus (if not already covered in the discussion of the oral comprehensive exam), committee selection, chapter submissions, and submission of the complete draft. The student should also be informed as to how long advisors and/or committee members will likely take to provide feedback at each stage.
- Clarify or update program requirements with regard to hard copies. Many program handbooks still stipulate that students must provide committee members with hard copies to review in advance of the defense and provide the department with a bound copy of the dissertation after the defense. The University only requires an electronic copy, which is made available to all KU students, faculty and staff via the KU Library online. Given this, units are encouraged to take printed copy requirements under consideration. Units that still find value in providing bound copies, for example, in departmental library, may consider whether that requirement should be at the students' expense.
- Many students may also benefit from the use of a [Mentoring Agreement](#) highlighted on page 8 of this guide. This Word document may be adapted for your purposes. It may provide the student with concrete milestones and engage the student and faculty advisor in a conversation about expectations both for the student and for the faculty member. If chosen to be developed in this way it may also provide a section on possible consequences should the student fail to meet the established milestones.

## Supporting Degree Completion

The Council of Graduate Schools' PhD Completion Project found that the following interventions were especially useful in helping students complete their dissertations in a timely manner:

- Work with the graduate writing consultant to craft writing programs
- Host dissertation “Boot Camps,” residencies, and retreats to provide students with focused activities that may include up to a week-long residential immersion experiences to assist their progress and practical strategies for completing their dissertation
- Provide workshops for students to help them get the most out of the dissertation advising process, including selecting a dissertation advisor, configuring a committee, and related topics
- Expand counseling groups that deal with general issues and issues specific to dissertation completion
- Develop dissertation writing institutes, e.g. in collaboration with university-wide writing institutes, to provide “intervention” assistance to students in need
- Discuss characteristics of outstanding dissertations to inform students about what is expected and required
- Provide departmental and university-level recognition for one or two “superior” dissertations each year
- Promote “Quality Circle Reviews” among four dissertation students external and internal to the candidate’s field who meet with the candidate to review and strengthen the candidate’s dissertation work
- Enhance writing consultancy through additional writing workshops and one-on-one support

## Final Defense

Describe program-specific requirements for the final defense:

- Provide a detailed timeline for the weeks leading up to the final defense, including submission of the final draft, when and how students will receive corrective feedback, editing of the final draft, and when and how scheduling of the defense takes place in your unit.
- Refer students to the Graduation section in the UNIVERSITY POLICES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS document for information on requirements for formatting and submission to UMI/ProQuest.

## Submission Timeline

### Germanic Languages & Literatures

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*Eight weeks (minimum) prior to expected time of final defense the final version of dissertation should be sent to committee members for review and member comment. It is the responsibility of the dissertation committee chair to ensure that corrective feedback is provided to the student in a timely manner. Committee members are invited to comment on individual chapters within a two-week time frame.*

*Six weeks (minimum) prior to expected time of final defense, corrective feedback for all chapters must have been given to the student. The committee Chair should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator to schedule the defense. Student should also contact the Graduate Program Coordinator at this time to begin the process of scheduling a date and time for the exam, as well as to review the University Graduation Requirements Checklist, also provided in the University Requirements and Policies section of document, under Graduation.*

*Two weeks (minimum) prior to date of final defense, the dissertation must have been approved by all committee members and a firm date set for the exam. At this time, the student must submit the corrected dissertation to the committee members. Also at this time, the dissertation may be made available on Hawk Drive for full graduate faculty comment, if desired.*

*A complete timeline for the Final Exam for Ph.D. can be found in the appendices of this document.*

## Graduate Certificate Requirements

When a department elects to offer a graduate certificate, it is important that details on the expectations for these programs also be included in the handbook. While the requirements are considerably abbreviated as compared to that of a graduate degree, the following information will be useful to your certificate students:

- Describe department-specific procedures for admission to the graduate certificate program, both for current KU and non-KU students. Advise students that prior planning is necessary as there are University limits on counting coursework taken prior to certificate admission toward a graduate certificate. Refer them to the University Policies and Degree Requirements section.
- Provide a list of both required coursework and approved electives.
- Explain how certificate students should seek advising on coursework selection, whether from the Director of Graduate Studies or some other designated faculty member.

## Certificate Requirements

### Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies

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*The KU Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Graduate Certificate requires 12 hours of coursework including two core courses: EITHER WGSS 800 History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; OR WGSS 801 Feminist Theory; PLUS WGSS 802 Feminist Methodologies; and two 3-hour electives chosen from a list of recommended graduate courses or approved by the graduate director.*



# University Policies & Degree Requirements

Provide a separate section on University policy. See the UNIVERSITY POLICIES & DEGREE REQUIREMENTS document for content that may be cut and pasted directly into your department's handbook.

## Suggested Appendices

- Program requirements checklists
- Plan of study timelines
- Exam procedures documents
- Portfolio checklists
- Doctoral Learner Outcome Dissertation Rubric(s)  
A link to all programs' rubrics may be found here: <https://assessment.ku.edu/rubric>  
Your KU online ID and password are required to access the link.
- Forms related to GTA evaluations or reappointment
- Nomination forms and/or a listing of desired qualifications for departmental
- Forms related to your unit's annual review of graduate students