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EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

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## **Graduate School Degree Program and Certificate Requirements Policy**

# **Policy Name: Graduate School Degree Program and Certificate Requirements Policy**

## **Policy Purpose**

This policy specifies the academic requirements for creating or revising a Graduate School program or certificate and provides faculty with a roadmap for graduate curriculum development or revision.

## **Applicability**

This policy is applicable to graduate faculty and admitted and enrolled students in the Graduate School. This policy does not apply to students who are exclusively enrolled in Quillen College of Medicine for the M.D. degree or the Gatton College of Pharmacy for the Pharm.D. degree.

## **Responsible Official, Office, and Interpretation**

The Graduate School is responsible for the review and revision of this policy. For questions about this policy, please contact the Graduate School. The Provost, in consultation with the Office of University Counsel, has the final authority to interpret this policy.

## **Defined Terms**

***A defined term has a specific meaning within the context of this policy.***

### [4XX7/5XX7 Level Course](#)

A course open to both senior undergraduate students and master's-level graduate students. These courses must include clearly differentiated requirements for undergraduate and graduate students, ensuring appropriate rigor for each academic level.

### [5000 Level Course](#)

A graduate-level course designed for introductory study of current topics within a discipline. Content requires significant independent thinking and provides opportunities for research. These courses are intended for students who have successfully completed an undergraduate degree. In addition to foundational and intermediate learning, students are expected to demonstrate analysis and evaluation, show knowledge of the discipline's literature, develop research questions or hypotheses, propose alternative methods or

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research designs, defend ideas related to research, and/or engage in research or appropriate professional practice.

## 6000 Level Course

An advanced master's-level course intended for students who have successfully completed an undergraduate degree and meet admission requirements that typically exceed those for undergraduate study. These courses require higher-order cognitive skills such as analysis and evaluation and may include the creation of original work evaluated by faculty. Students may be required to demonstrate knowledge of the discipline's literature, engage in field study or research, work independently to analyze and evaluate theses or research projects, and/or compare and contrast ideologies within the field.

## 7000 Level Course

A doctoral-level course requiring prerequisites from 6000-level courses and/or specific 5000-level courses. These courses prepare students for completion of a terminal degree and require engagement at the highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Instruction and evaluation are conducted by faculty with the highest level of academic preparation. Students are expected to demonstrate advanced application of discipline-specific knowledge, develop individual research interests, analyze and evaluate prior research to formulate unique contributions to the discipline, create a comprehensive research plan, and/or acquire advanced technical applications relevant to the field.

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## Policy

### 1. Academic Content.

Developing or revising a graduate curriculum is a faculty-driven activity. When faculty members create or revise graduate curriculum for a program or certificate, they must follow the ETSU curriculum process. Faculty must follow the procedures for curriculum development or revision as specified on ETSU's Curriculum Innovation Center website to have curriculum approved.

#### 1.1. Master's, Education Specialist, and Doctoral Program Content.

Post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and graduate degree programs must be progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs. The requirements detailed here align with the Graduate School Enrollment Policy for students. Faculty should refer to those policies when developing or revising curriculum.

At least 70 percent of all courses taken in a master's program must be 5000 Level Courses or 6000 Level Courses. Master's programs may include 5xx7 Level Courses that are co-listed with 4xx7 Level Courses; however, faculty must ensure that there is a clear distinction between the requirements for undergraduate students and graduate students. No more than 30 percent of all credit hours taken in a master's program may come from the 5xx7 series.

At least 50 percent of all courses taken in a doctoral program must be in the 6000 Level Courses and 7000 Level Courses. Education specialist and doctoral programs cannot include 5xx7 Level Courses.

Post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and graduate degree programs must be structured (a) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (b) to ensure engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training.

All graduate programs must require students to have at least one course on appropriate research/scholarly methods for their discipline. The research methods course can be inter- or cross-disciplinary and may or may not have the rubric of the program.

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## **1.2. Post-Graduate Certificate Program Content.**

Post-Graduate Certificate program content should consist of 5000 Level Course or 6000 Level Courses.

## **2. Student Learning Outcome for Graduate Level Work.**

As part of the curriculum process, ETSU graduate program and certificates must include student learning outcomes. The Council of Graduate Schools provides the following national student learning outcomes:

At the end of their graduate education, students should be able to:

- Think logically and consistently;
- Integrate and synthesize knowledge
- Access up-to-date knowledge and information within the discipline;
- Communicate in a clear, consistent, logical manner both orally and in writing;
- Understand the interrelationships between their discipline and other disciplines.
- Deal with ethical dilemmas within their profession;
- Apply knowledge of discipline to real-life situations; and
- Adapt to the dynamic requirements of their profession and the workplace.

Graduate programs and certificates may have accreditation student learning outcomes that overlap with or are in addition to the ones above.

## **3. Culminating Experience.**

### **3.1. Master's, Education Specialist, and Doctorate.**

When developing or revising curriculum for graduate degree programs, each program must include a culminating experience that helps students synthesize knowledge and

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skills acquired through the degree program. The culminating experience includes an evaluation of the student's performance. The culminating experience option(s) and evaluation process will be identified in the catalog.

## 3.1.1. Culminating Experience Requirements.

Each program must choose at least one culminating experience option appropriate to the discipline. Programs may have more than one option for students to choose (e.g., thesis or capstone project or examination). Culminating experiences may or may not involve academic credit.

### Options for Culminating Experiences:

- Master's thesis with defense
- Doctoral dissertation with defense
- Examination (written and/or oral)
- Capstone project
- Capstone course
- Artistic presentation
- Portfolio
- Analytical essay(s)
- Internship or other applied experience

Culminating experiences may be completed by an individual student or small groups of students, as determined by the program. When programs have more than one culminating experience option, they may allow students to change from one culminating experience option to another, but all program requirements must be met.

## 3.1.2. Evaluation of Culminating Experience.

Each student will receive an evaluation on the culminating experience. For thesis or dissertation students, this evaluation is typically part of the defense. The

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evaluation of a thesis, dissertation, or examination must involve at least 3 members of the graduate faculty; other culminating experiences may involve fewer members of the graduate faculty.

A student's performance on any culminating experience will be classified as: (1) pass; (2) fail with no opportunity for re-examination or re-evaluation; or (3) fail with an opportunity for further study and re-evaluation or re-examination. If a student fails with an opportunity for further study and re-evaluation or re-examination, a committee of graduate faculty in the program must provide the student with feedback that will assist the student in preparing for the re-evaluation or re-examination. A second failure will result in the student's dismissal from the program.

## 3.2. Certificates.

Certificate curriculum is not required to have a culminating experience.

## 4. Teaching in a Graduate Program.

Before teaching 4xx7/5xx7, 5000, 6000, or 7000 Level Courses or serving on a culminating experience/thesis/dissertation committee, an individual must hold current member, affiliate, or temporary graduate faculty status pursuant to Graduate Council requirements. Individuals submit their application for graduate faculty status following the process described on the Graduate School website.

## 5. Residency Requirement.

### 5.1. Doctoral Programs.

All doctoral programs must include a residency requirement. The purpose of the residency requirement is to provide doctoral students with significant time for sustained participation with peers and faculty members in scholarly and creative activities. Each doctoral degree program must specify how the residency requirement can be fulfilled.

### 5.2. Education Specialist, Master's Programs, and Certificates.

When developing or revising curriculum for Education Specialist degree, master's programs, and certificates, a residency requirement is not needed but may be

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appropriate as determined by the degree program. If required by a program, the program must specify how the residency requirement can be fulfilled.

## 6. Credit Requirements.

### 6.1. Doctoral, Education Specialist, and Master's Programs.

The following are minimum credit requirements for graduate degree programs:

Master's Degree	30 graduate credits
Education Specialist Degree	30 graduate credits beyond the master's degree
Doctoral Degree	50 graduate credits beyond the master's degree

### 6.2. Certificates.

Certificates must have a minimum of 9 graduate credits.

## 7. Additional Requirements.

Degree or certificate programs may have additional requirements beyond those required under this policy. Any program policies must be stated in the catalog and/or a program handbook. Program handbooks must be updated annually, provided to the student in either hard copy or digital format, and a copy submitted to the Graduate School for archiving.

## 8. Approval of Program Requirements.

Graduate Council must approve all programs of study, research requirements, and writing requirements for each program or certificate as part of the curricular process.

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**Procedures**

N/A

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## **Applicable Forms and Websites**

N/A

## **Authority and Revisions**

**Authority:** Focus Act, TCS § 49-8-203, et seq.; SACSCOC Standard 9.6: Post-baccalaureate rigor and curriculum; SACSCOC Core Requirement 9.2: Program length

**Previous Policy:** N/A

The ETSU Board of Trustees is charged with policy making pursuant to TCA § 49-8-203, et seq. On March 24, 2017, the Board delegated its authority to ETSU's President to establish certain policies and procedures for educational program and other operations of the University, including this policy. The delegation of authority and required process for revision to this policy can be found on the [Policy Development and Rule Making Policy webpage](#).

To suggest a revision to this policy, please contact the responsible official indicated in this policy. Before a substantive change to the policy section may take effect, the requested changes must be: (1) approved by the responsible office; (2) reviewed by the Office of University Counsel for legal sufficiency; (3) posted for public comment; (4) approved by either Academic Council or University Council; and (5) approved by ETSU's President.