Graduate Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy

Regular classroom attendance is expected of all students and individual faculty may require class attendance. Course grades reflect not only performance on written assignments and exams, but also participation during class periods. As discussions cannot be reproduced, many times absences cannot truly be made up. Excessive absences therefore have a negative effect on the student’s learning and performance. Students are responsible for all class work, and a student who misses a class is expected to have the initiative necessary to cover properly the material missed. Students must meet all course deadlines and be present for all quizzes, tests, and examinations.

Syllabus information will include a statement of the attendance policy for each course and the effect of nonattendance on grades. Reasonable provisions should be made by the instructor for documented representation at University-sponsored athletic or academic functions, mandatory military training and documented illness. The granting of provisions for other documented absences is left to the discretion of the faculty member.

Due to the nature of asynchronous courses, students are expected to participate in class, but in formats that may not require attendance at regular intervals.

Extended illness. The student should notify the Office of Student Ombudsperson Services (S.O.S.) when the student is going to be absent from classes for more than one week because of an illness. Student Ombudsperson Services will notify the student’s course instructors of the absence on his or her behalf.

Class Attendance by Guests

Statement: The propriety for non-student presence in the classroom will vary dependent upon the nature of curricular offerings, dangers inherent to certain classrooms and labs, the optimum classroom environment for each class, and the preferences of each instructor. Guidelines specifying whether non-student guests will be permitted in the classroom, which are consistent with departmental policy, will be established for each class by the instructor and included in the syllabus for the course. These guidelines will apply to each site at which the class is offered.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

Master’s and Education Specialist Students. Students who have completed all course work but are working during a given semester to complete other outstanding degree requirements (e.g. comprehensive examination, thesis, removal of an I or II grade) or wish to use University facilities and/or consult with faculty must be registered for at least one credit during that semester. In addition, graduate students must be registered for at least one credit hour in the semester in which they graduate. The program designated 998 course or GRAD 998 may be used to fulfill this requirement.

Registration for the required program designated 998 course or GRAD 998 is subject to the normal fees and regulations of the University.

Doctoral Students After Advancement to Candidacy. After successful advancement to candidacy, all doctoral students are required to be registered for at least one graduate credit hour each term (fall, spring, and summer) until the degree is completed, including the semester in which they graduate. GRAD 999 or the program designated 999 course may be used to fulfill this requirement. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in charges to the student’s account for one graduate credit hour plus required fees for each semester after advancement to candidacy. Students are not eligible for graduation until all charges are paid.

Master’s Degree Seeking Students with Assistantship Appointments in Their Final Semester. Master’s students holding graduate teaching, research or administrative assistantships who are in their final semester and who are within six hours of completing their degree requirements, may register for six or fewer graduate credit hours needed for the completion of their degree. Those who are completing a Master’s Thesis or Master’s Project but have not yet defended it, may register for one hour of graduate credit in their final semester. Such students will be considered full-time. Master’s students are eligible for reduced enrollment requirement for no more than one semester.

Additional Graduate Degrees Policy

Graduate students may pursue an additional graduate degree in any discipline at Old Dominion University. Students may request that graduate level course work used to fulfill requirements for one ODU graduate degree be applied to another graduate program. Such a degree may be sought subsequent to or concurrently with another degree. Approval of the graduate program directors and appropriate college deans is required.

Policy on Nondegree Credits to Complete a Degree

No more than 12 credit hours of graduate-level course work taken at Old Dominion University as a nondegree student may be applied toward a graduate degree or certificate. These 12 credit hours may include only coursework for which grades of B or higher are earned. These credit hours are in addition to the 12 credit hours that can be transferred from other institutions and through experiential learning.

Graduate Writing Proficiency

Each graduate department or program will develop specific policies and procedures for evaluating and, if necessary, upgrading student writing.

Graduate Pass/Fail

Master’s-level students may include pass/fail-graded experiences to fulfill a portion of their program requirements provided that they meet a University requirement of 24 credit hours of course work, of which at least 18 hours must be letter-graded course work, and any additional departmental or school requirements. The college, school and/or department administering the program shall determine which student course work shall be considered for pass/fail credit.

Doctoral students must take dissertation credit as pass/fail and may select from among the designated pass/fail-graded experiences a portion of their program requirements, provided that they take a minimum of 24 credit hours of letter-graded course work, of which at least 18 hours must be letter-graded course work, beyond the master’s degree, or equivalent, and meet any additional departmental or school requirements.

Deans may, at their discretion, designate courses as pass/fail, letter graded or both.

A student electing the pass/fail option for a particular course cannot change his or her registration and elect to take the course for grade point credit after the end of the “add” period. Similarly, courses cannot be elected as pass/fail after the end of the “add” period.

Graduate Policy on GPA and Course Credit Following Separation and Readmission to the Institution

Students newly admitted to a graduate program following six or more continuous years of separation from the University may apply to have all previous course grades and credits removed from the calculation of GPA in the new degree program.

Students who wish to apply must complete the Policy on GPA Following Separation Form and have it approved and signed by the graduate program director, the department chair, and the college dean before submitting it to the Office of the University Registrar.

If approved, all previous graduate courses and grades will remain on the transcript but will not be used in calculating the GPA for the new graduate degree program.
Declaratin or Change of Major or Program

A provisional or regular graduate student who wishes to change to a program other than the one of original admission must make the request in writing to the main campus Admissions Office or to his/her site director. The student’s graduate record will be examined to ascertain what, if any, other supporting credentials must be submitted (e.g., test scores, letters of recommendation) prior to consideration for admission to the new program. If it is determined that no other supporting credentials are necessary, the student’s record will be submitted to the graduate program director of the new program, with a request for consideration of admission. The student will be notified in writing of the decision. If not admitted to the new program, the student will be retained as a provisional or regular student in the original program.

When the new program requires other and/or additional supporting credentials, the student must submit these before consideration can be given to the change.

Credits earned toward a degree or certificate for the original program may or may not be accepted by the director of the new graduate program. All grades earned in the original program remain on the student’s transcript but only grades of B or higher are used to compute the GPA in the new program.

Conversion from Doctoral to Master’s Program

A student in a doctoral program may be converted to an appropriate master’s program in special situations. The doctoral student making satisfactory progress but wishing to leave the University may apply in writing to the new master’s program director, with copies to the current program director and the applicant’s committee. The new program director, in consultation with the current program director, will review the request following program policy and procedures.

In the case where a doctoral student fails to pass or complete a particular degree requirement, the student’s committee may recommend the student to a master’s degree program. The student will follow the procedure outlined in the preceding paragraph, except that this approach requires supporting documentation from the current committee.

Once the student is accepted, the new program director will send a memorandum and a Notice of Change of Status Form, to the Office of the Registrar. The memo should clearly note which of the Old Dominion University credits and approved transfer credits may be applied to the master’s degree, and which, if any, should be reserved for future doctoral work.

Normal Course Load

Every graduate program of study requires prior approval of the graduate program director or the approved faculty advisor. The minimum load for a full-time graduate student is nine graduate credit hours per semester. No more than 12 credit hours may be carried, except in unusual circumstances and with the permission of the graduate program director. In summer sessions, six credit hours constitute a full load.

Unsupported graduate students registered for fewer than nine credit hours during regular semesters or fewer than six credit hours in summer sessions are classified as part-time graduate students. During regular semesters, six credit hours is considered three-fourths time, four credit hours is half-time, and three credit hours is quarter-time. During the summer term, four credit hours is considered three-fourths time, three credit hours is half-time, and one hour is quarter-time.

For students that are appointed as teaching, administrative, or research assistants, there are two categories of enrollment requirements:

1. Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Administrative Assistants are required to be enrolled each fall and spring semesters of their appointment and must register for and complete a minimum of nine hours of graduate course work per semester and three hours in the summer.

2. Graduate Research Assistants are required to be enrolled each fall and spring semesters of their appointment and must register for and complete a minimum of six hours of graduate course work per semester and three hours in the summer.

For administrative purposes, Graduate Research Assistants will be paid from non-S5 funds. Graduate Teaching Assistantships and fellowships paid from University accounts other than Ledger 1 accounts must register for and complete a minimum of six hours of graduate course work per semester and three hours in the summer.

Doctoral assistants who have successfully advanced to candidacy and need only to complete the dissertation, must register for at least one hour of dissertation (899 or 999) every semester through graduation. Master’s assistants in their final semester and who are within nine hours of completing their degree requirements, may register for nine or fewer graduate credit hours needed for the completion of their degree. Those who are completing a Master’s Thesis or Master’s Project but have not yet defended it, may register for one hour of graduate credit in their final semester. Such students will be considered full-time. Master’s students are eligible for reduced enrollment requirement for no more than one semester.

Course-Load Distribution

Graduate students should take care that the major portion of their course work is selected from 600- and 700-level offerings in pursuit of the master’s degree and from 800-level offerings for an education specialist or doctoral degree. At least three-fifths of the course work must be completed at these levels, and some programs have instituted more stringent requirements. Reference should be made to the appropriate section herein, and individual questions concerning the course-load distribution should be directed to the advisor.

Submission of Written Work To More Than One Class

In general, it is not acceptable for a piece of work such as a term paper to be submitted to more than one class for credit. In cases where submission of the same paper is appropriate, prior approval must always be obtained.

An example of a situation in which the same paper might appropriately be submitted would be one in which a student was enrolled in two classes, in both of which a given research topic was not only of interest to the student but was completely appropriate to both classes. In such circumstances, the student would approach the instructors of the two classes and obtain approval to submit the same term paper to both classes, based on prior agreement concerning the depth of the study, amount of material covered, and the length of the paper to be submitted (which should be longer than a paper submitted to one class).

Re-Validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit

Academic credit granted outside the time limit established for graduate degrees (six years for master’s and education specialist degrees and eight years for doctoral degrees) must be re-validated by an examination before the work can be applied toward the requirements of a degree program.

To be re-validated, the work must have been completed at Old Dominion University or be acceptable as transfer credit in lieu of an Old Dominion University course.

The following procedure shall be used to re-validate out-of-date work:

1. The student must receive the permission of his or her graduate program director and the chair of the department/school or dean of the college in which the course is offered to validate the course credit. The form for re-validation of out-of-date credit shall be used to record all transactions and must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office upon completion of validation of work.

2. The graduate program director, department/school chair or dean shall make appropriate referrals to faculty member(s) (an individual or a committee) teaching the course to request that an examination be
prepared and evaluated. Before the examination, the faculty member(s) shall inform the student of the area of knowledge or course content on which he or she is to be examined.

3. After the examination has been completed, the validation form shall be filled out, signed by the examining faculty member(s), and forwarded to the dean of the academic college offering the graduate degree program for approval.

4. Copies of the completed form shall be sent to the student, the graduate program director, and the university registrar.

5. Re-validation for any given course can be sought only once.

Final Examinations
The University firmly believes that a comprehensive evaluation of a student’s achievement in a course is a vital part of the educational process. Final examinations, if given, are to be given at the time and in the location given on the Registrar’s Office website at www.odu.edu/registrar. Upon request of the instructor, exceptions to this regulation may be made only by the dean.

In the event that a final examination is changed to other than that of the scheduled time, provisions will be made by the instructor for any student who cannot comply with the schedule change.

Any student who has three examinations scheduled in one calendar day and is unable to resolve the problem informally with the instructor or instructors may petition the dean for relief.

All examinations are to be retained for one year by the faculty members. Students have the privilege of requesting conferences with the instructors in regard to their final grades.

Students enrolled in asynchronous, video streaming, CD-Rom, or like courses that may not follow the traditional semester timetable will be required to adhere to the examination schedule set by the professor. In addition, students not associated with a distant learning site, higher education center, or with main campus will need to secure a proctor to administer all tests, quizzes, and final exams. A postal fee will be incurred by the student for this service. For more information on proctoring, contact the Office of Distance Learning at 1-800-968-2638.

Probation and Suspension (Continuance)
The requirements and regulations set forth are to be construed as the minimal requirements established by the University. Students also are obligated to meet all additional requirements established by the appropriate graduate program.

Students who believe the probation or suspension was due to an error in a grade assigned should contact the Office of the University Registrar.

Degree Seeking Students
At the end of each semester-fall, spring, and summer- the records of students who do not maintain a 3.00 cumulative grade point average (GPA) are reviewed. Students who do not have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 will be placed on probation.

Probation/Suspension Policy
Graduate students on probation will have 12 credit hours to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.00. If they fail to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.00 after completing the next 12 credit hours, they will be placed on indefinite suspension and prevented from enrolling in graduate courses. This does not affect the student’s status with regard to undergraduate courses.

Reinstatement Policy
All conditions must be satisfied before reinstatement is authorized:

1. The student is responsible for initiating each of the following aspects of the request for reinstatement to the university:
   a. Developing a plan of study in consultation with and approved by the appropriate Graduate Program Director (GPD) of the program that the student is seeking to either continue enrollment or to be newly admitted. The plan of study must specify the initial 12 credit hours to be taken and the steps necessary to complete the degree requirements within the six-year (master’s) and the eight-year (doctoral) time period as required by University policy. This plan should recognize that all prior courses in which grades of B- or less were earned must be repeated or replaced with an approved substitution. If reinstated, the student’s GPA will revert to 0.00 and courses with a grade of B or above will be treated as internal transfer credit and therefore will have no bearing on the GPA. Upon reinstatement, the student must achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 in the next 12 credit hours of graduate credit attempted.
   b. Providing to the GPD a written explanation and documentation of the factors and circumstances that contributed to the failure to achieve the academic standards as well as evidence that these issues have been resolved. Students who wish to maintain confidentiality regarding special medical or other personal issues, must obtain a letter from the division of student engagement and enrollment services certifying their validity and contribution to the suspension and that these issues have been or will be satisfactorily resolved prior to the reinstatement.

2. The GPD is responsible for each of the following steps of the request for reinstatement:
   a. Reviewing the student’s letter and any written documentation the student provides, assisting in the development of the proposed plan of study, and assessing the student’s potential for successful completion of the program.
   b. Assessing the potential impact of reinstatement on departmental resources.
   c. Submitting a recommendation on the student’s request to the department chair. Note: (The GPD and the chair must agree for the student to be reinstated at the department level.)

3. If reinstatement is approved, the student will be informed in writing and the steps outlined in 1.a. and 1.b. of this policy shall be followed. A copy of the letter and the approved plan of study shall be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies. The Office of Graduate Studies will work with the Office of the Registrar to ensure the academic record is updated so the student may resume his or her study.

4. Upon reinstatement:
   a. All courses with grades of B- (2.70) or below will be dropped from consideration in the calculation of the grade point average for continuance or graduation. These grades will remain on the student’s transcript, but the courses will not be counted toward the degree.
   b. Courses with grades of B or above may be counted toward the degree but they will not be used in the calculation of the GPA.
   c. Reinstated students must achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 upon completion of the next 12 hours of credit attempted. Subsequent performance will be monitored by the GPD.

5. If the student’s request for reinstatement is denied the student must be informed in writing. A copy of the letter shall be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies along with original materials submitted by the student. The student has the right to appeal the decision to the Graduate Appeals Committee. The student must resubmit the written letter and documentation as outlined in 1.a and 1.b to the Graduate Appeals Committee.

6. The Graduate Appeals Committee will request a written evaluation from the GPD. The GPD’s evaluation must address the reasonableness of i) the proposed plan of study; ii) the potential for successful completion of the program, and, iii) the potential impact of reinstatement on departmental resources.

7. The Graduate Appeals Committee will render its decision and inform the Office of Graduate Studies. The Office of Graduate Studies will send a letter to the student, with a copy to the GPD, informing him or her of the Graduate Appeals Committee’s decision. If the Graduate Appeals Committee supports the GPD’s original decision, the student shall remain separated from the program. If the Graduate Appeals Committee approves reinstatement, the steps outlined in 1.a. of this policy shall be followed. The decision of the Graduate Appeals Committee is final.

Old Dominion University
8. A student may be reinstated only one time.

Non-degree Students

Certificate and Licensure Program Students

Probation/Suspension Policy

Students who have been permitted to pursue a certificate or licensure program must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.00 after six or more credit hours of graduate coursework. If they fail to do so, they will be placed on probation and must raise their cumulative GPA to 3.00 within the next six credit hours. Students who fail to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.00 after completing the additional six credit hours will be indefinitely suspended and prevented from enrolling in graduate courses. This does not affect the student’s status with regard to undergraduate courses.

Reinstatement Policy

A suspended certificate or licensure student seeking reinstatement should follow the procedures outlined earlier in this policy under Reinstatement Policy for Degree Seeking graduate students.

Life-long Learners

Probation/Suspension Policy

Students who have not been formally admitted into a degree granting program, a certificate or licensure program but desire to take graduate courses are defined as life-long learners. Life-long learners must achieve a GPA of at least 3.00 after six credit hours. Students who fail to achieve a 3.00 after completing an additional six credit hours will be indefinitely suspended and prevented from enrolling in graduate courses. This does not affect the student’s status with regard to undergraduate courses.

Reinstatement Policy

A life-long learner who has been suspended from graduate study must formally apply and be admitted into a degree program, a certificate or a licensure program before being allowed to take additional graduate courses.