University Requirements for Graduate Degrees

Completion of Requirements

Graduate students who complete their master’s or education specialist degree requirements within six years, and doctoral students who complete degree requirements within eight years, following admission to Old Dominion University will qualify for the degree by fulfilling the requirements in the catalog in effect at the time of their first enrollment. (See military service exception under Requirements for Graduate Degrees.) Students (including part-time) who do not complete their graduate degree requirements within these time periods must project their graduation and fulfill the requirements in the catalog in effect during any of the six or eight years, respectively, preceding graduation. If a catalog other than the catalog of the year of initial enrollment is to be used, written permission of the graduate program director and dean must be obtained. Graduate students should consult their advisors to determine if any out-of-date credits may be re-validated by examination.

In all cases, students must have been duly admitted to the University and an academic program of study and meet all of the requirements for graduation in one catalog. Students may not create their own degree requirements by selecting partial requirements from more than one catalog.

Prior Learning Assessment Credit Options at the Graduate Level

Old Dominion University offers a program for assessing college-level knowledge gained through work and life experience and self-study. Students should meet with their advisors or distance learning representative to determine how prior learning assessment credit affects their degree planning. A student may earn a maximum of six semester hours at the graduate level through the following mechanisms:

1. Knowledge-based examinations.* Upon approval of the student’s graduate program director and the appropriate chair and/or dean of the college involved, a student may take a knowledge-based examination, and with a satisfactory score, receive academic credit for the course(s).

2. External examinations. Upon approval of the student’s graduate program director and the appropriate chair and/or dean of the college involved, a student may submit satisfactory scores of professional examinations that are evaluated and recommended for graduate-level credit by the American Council on Education, and receive academic credit for the relevant course(s).

3. Credit for training. Upon approval of the student’s graduate program director and the appropriate chair and/or dean of the college involved, a student may submit documentation of completion of professional and/or military training that is evaluated and recommended for graduate-level credit by the American Council on Education, and receive academic credit for the relevant course(s).

4. Portfolio development. Upon approval of the student’s graduate program director and the appropriate chair and/or dean of the college involved, a student may develop a portfolio for a graduate-level credit by the American Council on Education, and receive academic credit for the relevant course(s).

5. No letter grades be entered on the student’s transcript for prior learning assessment credit, but that this credit be treated in the same way as transfer credit with “Pass” (P) and not be counted in the student’s grade point average.

6. A student request prior learning assessment credit as early as possible upon admission to degree status. A student must meet with the degree program advisor and the director at the beginning of his or her academic career at Old Dominion University to determine how the prior learning assessment program may be applicable to the degree.

7. Satisfactory scores for knowledge-based examinations and professional examinations are determined by the appropriate department/school and/or dean of the college involved.

8. A maximum of six semester hours of graduate credit may be earned through prior learning assessment mechanisms. The six hours is included in the maximum number of graduate credits that may be transferred into a graduate program at Old Dominion University. Prior learning assessment credit does not count toward the University’s residency requirement. The student must meet the minimum residency requirements of Old Dominion University and program requirements of the degree. The student must be aware of individual degree program requirements.

9. A student in a certificate or endorsement area may earn a maximum of six credit hours through prior learning assessment credit to apply to a certificate, endorsement or teacher licensure program. Prior learning assessment hours gained in these programs would be applicable to approved degree programs at Old Dominion University. In an approved graduate degree program at Old Dominion University, a graduate student who has earned six credit hours in a certificate or endorsement program that is applicable to the degree program has met the maximum number of prior learning assessment credit hours. No additional prior learning assessment credit may be applied to that graduate degree program.

10. Prior Learning Assessment credit earned at another institution will be re-evaluated by Old Dominion University faculty to determine whether credit may be awarded at Old Dominion University.

Procedures for Prior Learning Assessment

Students wishing to receive academic credit for departmental examinations, training or portfolio development through Prior Learning Assessment should do the following:

1. Contact the Prior Learning Assessment representative in the College of Continuing Education and Professional Development to discuss possible challenges. The Prior Learning Assessment representative and student will discuss guidelines on requesting approval to challenge a course(s) through the available Prior Learning Assessment options.

2. Submit an extended resume and other documentation demonstrating learning outcomes based upon prior learning to the representative in the College of Continuing Education and Professional Development.

3. The Prior Learning Assessment representative will submit the documentation to the department chair, or a designated faculty assessor, who will examine the request and determine eligibility to challenge the course(s). The department’s decision will be forwarded to the Prior Learning Assessment representative who will then notify the student.

4. Once determination is made that the student is eligible to challenge the course(s) through Prior Learning Assessment, the student will complete and return to the Prior Learning Assessment office the appropriate intake request form. At this time, the student’s account will be billed, and the appropriate Prior Learning Assessment fee should be paid. Specific instructions for completing the process will be available from the Prior Learning Assessment Office.

If the conclusion for the portfolio assessment process results in a negative decision of the award of credit, a student may appeal the decision to the college having the responsibility for the course(s) for which credit is sought. The basis for a portfolio assessment appeal is the student’s charge that the
assessment decision was awarded through prejudice or caprice. The burden of proof rests with the student.

Students must initiate appeals in writing within three weeks of receiving the completed portfolio evaluation form. The appeal must be written to the Prior Learning Assessment representative in the College of Continuing Education and Professional Development.

The Prior Learning Assessment representative will forward the appeal letter to the appropriate department chair. The chair will review the student’s appeal. The chair will get input from the student and from the faculty assessor and may form an independent committee to review the appeal. The chair makes the decision on the validity of the appeal. If the chair concludes there is no cause for complaint, the student has the right to appeal to the dean of the college.

If the faculty assessor is the chair, the student may go directly to the dean. The dean will follow the procedures as outlined above. The decision of the dean of the college is final.

External Examinations. External examinations, including CLEP and DANTES, are administered through the University Testing Center. Students wishing to receive academic credit for external examinations should contact the Testing Center at 757-683-3697. Additional information is available from the website at https://www.odu.edu/academics/academic-records/score-analysis/clep-dantes.

Prior Learning Assessment Fees*
Students participating in the Prior Learning Assessment program are responsible for assessment fees as follows:

1. External Examination
   Students are responsible for the testing fees for external examinations such as CLEP and DANTES, and should check with the University Testing Center at Old Dominion University for fee information. There is no additional Prior Learning Assessment fee for the granting of academic credit for external examinations.

2. Departmental Examination
   The Prior Learning Assessment fee is equal to 30% of the current approved in-state on-campus rate for undergraduate and graduate courses.

3. Training Evaluation
   The assessment fee for training not previously evaluated by Old Dominion University is equal to 20% of the current approved in-state on-campus rate for undergraduate and graduate courses. For information about training programs that have been evaluated by Old Dominion University (and therefore incur no additional fee), see the Prior Learning Assessment web site at https://www.odu.edu/academics/academic-records/evaluation-of-credit/prior-learning.

4. Portfolio
   Portfolio assessment fee equal to 50% of the current approved in-state on-campus rate for undergraduate and graduate courses.

Fees are based on the credit hours attempted and are not refundable if the student does not receive credit as a result of the evaluation. There is no appeal of the fee charge. The fees must be paid at the time the student is approved to submit a portfolio, departmental examination or training documentation for evaluation.

For more information call (757) 683-6554, visit the web site at https://www.odu.edu/academics/academic-records/evaluation-of-credit/prior-learning or email priorlearning@odu.edu.

* All fees are tentative and subject to final approval by the Board of Visitors and/or the president. Current Prior Learning Assessment fees are available on the website at http://www.odu.edu/.

Graduate Credits by Transfer
A maximum of 12 semester hours of graduate credit may be applied into a graduate degree program from graduate credits earned through prior learning assessment credit options and graduate credits earned at another accredited institution. Exceptions are allowed in the case of an approved interinstitutional program.

Transfer credit will be given only for those courses that are certified as being applicable toward a comparable degree or certificate at the institution that offered the courses, and that were completed with a grade of B or better. Specifically, in-service courses that are established especially for groups of teachers and are not intended by the home institution to be part of a degree program will not be acceptable for transfer at Old Dominion University. Exceptions to this regulation may be made only with the approval of the graduate program director and, the dean of the college. In case of doubt, it is the responsibility of the student to show that the course in question would be acceptable toward a comparable degree at the home institution.

No credit toward a graduate degree may be obtained by examination (except through the prior learning assessment options noted above) or correspondence study.

A student who wishes to transfer credit earned prior to admission to a degree program at Old Dominion University must submit a special request for evaluation of transfer credits through the graduate program director to the Registrar’s Office. Following admission to the degree program, the student should obtain written permission from the graduate program director before registering for a course at another institution with the intention of transferring the credit for that course toward a graduate degree at Old Dominion University.

In no case is a transfer of credit final without the signed approval of the graduate program director and the academic dean on the Evaluation of Transfer Credits Form.

Evaluation of Transfer Credits
In the case of a student who has changed programs of study at Old Dominion University, the graduate program director of the new program may or may not accept any previously transferred course work or work completed in the former programs.

Credits accepted for transfer from another institution will satisfy partial hour requirements, but grades earned in such courses are not calculated in the student’s overall grade point average.

No credits will be accepted toward the degree or certificate if more than six years old (eight years for doctoral application), unless properly validated by examination.

Graduate Assessment Requirement
Old Dominion University has developed an institution-wide plan to assess the quality of its graduate academic degree programs. In addition, students are asked to assess their experiences with support services, University administration, and other aspects of their University experience. Students will complete the assessment at the end of their graduate degree program. Prior to the completion of degree requirements, all graduate students must complete their assessment. Students will receive advanced notice of their eligibility to complete the measures, which may be accessed through the University’s site at www.odu.edu. Failure to complete the assessments normally precludes the student’s right to receive his or her graduate degree. Assessment results are used to improve student learning and the educational experience at Old Dominion University, and they do not become part of students’ records. Confidentiality is assured, as only aggregate data are reported and used in analyses.

Responsible Conduct of Research Policy
1. All graduate students who were admitted or readmitted to a degree or graduate licensure program as of fall 2010 must complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) basic course. The basic course includes the following modules: Misconduct (falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism); Data acquisition, management, sharing and ownership; Mentor/trainee relationships; Publication practice and responsible authorship; Peer review; Conflicts of interest; and Collaborative research. Completion of the RCR modules will be tracked University Requirements for Graduate Degrees 2
through the CITI website and is a graduation requirement. The RCR
modules must be completed prior to completion of 12 semester hours.
Students who fail to complete this requirement will have a registration
hold placed on their records. As appropriate to their general field of
study, students may complete the Biomedical Social and Behavior
Research, Physical Science, or Humanities RCR track offered by CITI
to fulfill this requirement.

2. All investigators conducting human subjects research protocols (both
Exempt and Non-Exempt) as well as all graduate students enrolled in
Thesis and Dissertation projects involving human subjects are required to
complete the CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative)
Program for Human Subjects Research.

3. All investigators conducting animal subjects research protocols as
well as all graduate students enrolled in Thesis and Dissertation
projects involving animal subjects are required to complete the LATA
(Laboratory Animal Training Association) training program.

Master’s Degree
This section specifies the minimum requirements for a master’s degree
from Old Dominion University. Some colleges, schools and departments
have requirements in addition to the requirements described below. In
seeking a master’s degree, each master’s student accepts responsibility for
the following University requirements as well as any imposed by the major
department.

The master’s degree is awarded in recognition of the candidate’s command
of a comprehensive body of knowledge and ability to perform productively
in the field of study. All master’s degrees require a minimum of 30 semester
hours of graduate credit. No more than 12 credit hours taken at other
institutions may be counted toward a master’s degree at Old Dominion
University.

Thesis and Non-Thesis Option
Candidates for the master’s degree at Old Dominion may have the choice
of two options: the thesis option or the non-thesis option. The choice
will depend upon the availability of the two options within the selected
discipline, the professional interests of the candidate, and the advice and
approval of the appropriate graduate program director.

Thesis Option
A minimum of 30 semester credits is required, including 24 semester credits
in approved course work and six semester credits in research. The candidate
is required to prepare and present a thesis or equivalent creative work. A
final oral examination covering the research is required. A comprehensive
written and/or oral examination covering the program of study may be
required.

Non-Thesis Option
A minimum of 30 semester credits of approved course work is required,
including one or more courses at the conclusion of study that deal directly
with special topics and/or training related to current problems or research
in the discipline. A comprehensive written and/or oral examination, or an
approved equivalent, on the program of study is required.

Time Limits
All requirements for a master’s degree must be completed within a six-year
period. Exceptions to these time limits must be approved by the graduate
program director, the college dean. Academic credits older than six years
at the time of graduation must be re-validated by an examination before
the work can be applied to a master’s degree. See the “Policy on Re-
validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit.” Students whose graduate study
is interrupted by military service will be granted an extension of time for the
period of their military service, not to exceed five years.

Student Advising
The Master’s Degree
The graduate program director in consultation with the student, will
assign a graduate advisor who must be certified for graduate instruction.

An annual evaluation may include student’s performance in courses,
assistantships (teaching, research), the development and re-evaluation of his/
her plan of study, guidance in selecting projects and mentors, preparation
and scheduling of qualifying/comprehensive or equivalent exams, time
management, and obtaining employment or further education. The advisor’s
annual evaluation and recommendation will be shared with the student and
the graduate program director.

Program of Study
Prior to completion of 12 semester hours, the degree candidate is required
to prepare a program of study with the guidance of the advisor. The purpose
of the program of study is to ensure that the student organizes a coherent,
individualized plan for the course work and research activities. The program
of study is to be consistent with the requirements for the degree as described
in the catalog and must be approved by the graduate program director. The
successful completion of the program of study, along with the collateral
reading, research, practica, etc., will enable the student to demonstrate the
high level of professional competence required of all graduate students in
their respective fields.

Master’s Examination
A comprehensive written examination and/or oral examination, or its
equivalent, is required under the non-thesis option and, depending on the
program, may be required under the thesis option. The examination tests
the candidate’s competence in the fields covered by the program of study.
The nature of the master’s examination will depend on the degree sought
and the requirements of the major department and examining committee. A
program may propose, through the appropriate college graduate committee
and academic dean, replacing the master’s examination with an equivalent
requirement. Such equivalent requirements shall be approved by the dean of
The Graduate School. For further information, the student should consult the
section on requirements under each degree program.

The examining committee is appointed by the graduate program director
with appropriate notification to the student. The examining committee is
composed of a minimum of three members who may or may not be those
who serve as advisors or members of the thesis committee. Members are
expected to be certified for graduate instruction in the major department/
school and college. This examination may not be scheduled until all major
requirements have been satisfied except the final semester completion of the
course work and/or the thesis.

The results of the examination must be received in the Office of the
University Registrar at least two weeks prior to the end of the semester. In
order to pass the final examination or approved equivalent, a master’s degree
candidate must have a favorable vote from a majority of the examining
committee. A student who has failed the examination may repeat it once.
Students who fail the comprehensive examination twice cannot subsequently
elect a thesis option. At the discretion of the graduate program director, a
student who passes the examination but does not graduate within twelve
months may be required to repeat the examination.

Thesis Committee
The graduate program director, in consultation with the student, appoints
a thesis committee of at least three full-time Old Dominion University
faculty who are graduate certified at the appropriate level and who have
the academic backgrounds and research interests necessary to counsel,
direct, and evaluate the student’s proposed research and progress toward
completion of the program of study and the thesis.

The committee chair must be full-time Old Dominion University faculty, be
certified for graduate instruction at the appropriate level, and be an authority
in the field of specialization of the proposed thesis. Faculty who hold
adjunct appointments in connection with their research positions at affiliated
institutions that are specifically designated by memoranda of understanding,
such as the Jefferson Laboratory, may serve as committee chair.

The committee should have at least three Old Dominion University faculty
who are certified for graduate instruction at the appropriate level. Committee
membership may be extended to a non-University person with special
knowledge of the thesis subject area. Voting privileges can be provided

University Requirements for Graduate Degrees
such specialists upon the recommendation of the chair and approval of the graduate program director and the college dean or his or her designee. No more than one-third of the committee’s membership can be individuals external to the University. Adjunct and/or emeriti Old Dominion University faculty who are certified for graduate instruction at the appropriate level may be appointed as voting members of the committee upon the recommendation of the chair of the thesis committee and approval of the graduate program director and the college dean or his or her designee. External, adjunct, and/or emeriti faculty may serve in the role of committee co-chair with the approval of the graduate program director and the dean or his or her designee. The thesis and the oral defense of the thesis must have the majority approval of the thesis committee.

**Thesis**

The candidate for the master’s degree whose program of study includes a thesis is required to prepare and present a thesis (or equivalent in creative work) acceptable to the thesis director and committee, the graduate program director, and the appropriate academic dean. The thesis must represent in content and methods the skills, disciplines and knowledge required for graduate study, including competence in written language. The character of the final work must testify to the distinction of the student and standards of the University. The thesis or equivalent creative work must be worthy as a culminating experience for graduate study. Candidates will be required to defending the thesis in an oral examination. The Thesis Acceptance Form must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar upon completion of Part A of this form. The Thesis Delivery Form must accompany this form.

The candidate should consult the Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations available from the Office of Graduate Studies’ web site or from the Dean’s office of the appropriate college.

**Change From Thesis to Nonthesis Option**

A student who wishes to change from the thesis option to the nonthesis option for the master’s degree must obtain the permission of the thesis advisory committee and the graduate program director. The permission must be forwarded to the Office of the University Registrar prior to the last semester for the intended graduation using the Change of Status Form. The candidate must meet all requirements of the nonthesis option. A maximum of three credits earned in thesis research can be counted toward the degree requirements for the nonthesis option. The thesis advisory committee must indicate that the thesis research work was productive in and of itself and warrants credit as a special problem or special topics course.

**Departmental Requirements**

Individual colleges and/or programs may establish requirements above and beyond those set by the University as minimum. Students are obligated to follow the requirements of the appropriate graduate program section of the catalog in effect at the time of their first enrollment for this degree.

**Education Specialist Degree**

The Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.) normally is granted at the end of the sixth collegiate year of study and as such falls between the master’s degree and the doctorate in time; however, it is not necessarily viewed as intermediate between the two degrees. The education specialist degrees provide advanced professional preparation for various positions in education.

For admission to an education specialist program, the University requires a master’s degree from an accredited institution and a minimum grade point average of 3.00. Some programs have additional requirements such as a minimum Graduate Record Examination (GRE) aptitude score, grade point average, and graduate courses in specific areas.

The education specialist degree requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate credit beyond a master’s degree. A program may range from 30 to 39 hours, depending on the background and needs of the student. All requirements for the degree must be completed within a six-year period. Students must pass a written comprehensive examination and satisfy research requirements. Specific course requirements are found in the appropriate section of this catalog.

**Doctoral Degrees**

Old Dominion University offers four doctoral degrees:

1. Doctor of Engineering (D.E.)
2. Doctor of Nurse Practice (D.N.P.)
3. Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.), and the
4. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

**Doctor of Engineering**

The Batten College of Engineering and Technology offers a Doctor of Engineering program in addition to traditional Doctor of Philosophy programs. The purpose of the Doctor of Engineering program is to provide the Commonwealth and the nation with exceptionally educated engineering practitioners. These individuals will have developed high-level capabilities to provide innovative solutions in specialized engineering endeavors. The graduates of the program will meet the highest standards for advanced level engineering and leadership positions in industry and government.

The curriculum consists of a minimum of 48 credit hours of graduate work beyond the Master’s degree including 18 credit hours of common courses (Methodologies for Advanced Engineering Projects, Project Management, Engineering Leadership, Engineering Ethics, Financial Engineering, and Engineering Corporate Management), 18 credit hours of graduate coursework in the student’s area of specialization, and 12 credit hours of applied doctoral project.

**Doctor of Nurse Practice**

**Doctor of Nurse Practice (D.N.P.) – Advanced Practice**

This program is designed to develop the roles and practice skills of advanced practice nurses including nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, clinical nurse specialists and nurse anesthetists. Nurses enrolled in this program will be prepared to serve as leaders, researchers, business owners and expert clinicians capable of transforming lives and the healthcare of the communities they serve. Specific emphasis is on addressing the needs of underserved and vulnerable populations.

**Doctor of Nurse Practice (D.N.P.) – Nurse Executive**

This program is designed to prepare the top level nurse executive for health system. The program outcomes are consistent with the American Organization of Nurse Executive guidelines for nurse executive practice. Content focuses on executive leadership skills, working with vulnerable populations, fiscal and human resource management, quality magnet achievement, emerging technology and organizational research in clinical issues. Students participate in executive internships throughout the program in their home area. Upon program completion, graduates are eligible to take the national certification examination.

**Doctor of Physical Therapy**

Old Dominion University offers a professional doctorate degree in physical therapy (D.P.T.) that provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and clinical internship experiences required to sit for licensure in any jurisdiction in the United States. This curriculum is comprised of a series of required didactic and clinical education courses prescribed in a specific sequence that offers students the knowledge, professional skills and competencies necessary for entry into the practice of physical therapy. In the place of a dissertation, each student is required to develop a selected case study based upon the observations of a patient examined and treated during one of the clinical internships, a research proposal, and a research project with platform and poster presentations. In addition to satisfactorily completing the didactic and clinical education curriculum, students must pass both written and oral comprehensive examinations prior to graduation.

The curriculum consists of 117 credit hours over a three-year, nine-semester period of time including summers. There are five full-time clinical internships in the three years of study totaling 40 weeks. For details on admission and program requirements see the School of Physical Therapy and Athletics section of this catalog.
Doctor of Philosophy

Programs leading to the Ph.D. are designed to help superior students develop the capability to become creative leaders in their chosen fields. The degree is awarded on mastery of the subject area, the development of appropriate research skills, and a concentration of knowledge in the field of specialization.

It is important to recognize that the attainment of this degree is not a matter of accumulating course credits and satisfying residency and language or research skill requirements, even though minimum requirements for these categories are set forth by the University. The final basis for granting the degree shall be the candidate’s knowledge of the field of study and his or her demonstrated ability to do independent, original, scholarly research.

Each graduate program is responsible for setting out the requirements and procedures appropriate to its area of study. The requirements and regulations set forth below 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.

Prerequisites for Admission

The applicant must complete the appropriate application for admission, submit official transcripts of all college- or university-level work, and supply letters of recommendation and official results of test scores as specified by the individual program. Baccalaureate and post baccalaureate work must reflect superior performance.

Minimum Requirements

Minimum degree requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy which must be considered in preparing the preliminary plan of study are:

1. Satisfactory completion of at least 48 semester hours of post-master’s course work, including the dissertation or equivalent level of performance course work;
2. Demonstrated competency in research skills as required by the specific graduate program;
3. The passing of written and oral candidacy examinations at the end of the program of course work;
4. The completion of a dissertation representing independent, original research worthy of publication in a refereed scholarly journal; and
5. The successful oral defense of the dissertation before an appropriately selected committee of faculty knowledgeable in the field of the dissertation research.

Time Limits

All requirements for a doctoral degree must be completed within eight calendar years from the date of beginning the initial course following admission to the doctoral program. Exceptions to these time limits must be approved by the graduate program director and the college dean. Academic credits older than eight years at the time of graduation must be validated by an examination before the work can be applied to a doctoral degree. See the “Policy on Re-Validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit.” Students whose graduate study is interrupted for military service will be granted an extension of time for the period of their military service, not to exceed five years.

Student Advising

The Doctoral Degree

Before completion of nine semester hours, the graduate program director, in consultation with the student, will assign a program advisor or advisory committee. The advisor of advisory committee members must be certified for graduate instruction and will meet with the student to evaluate student’s academic progress. Among the advisor’s/advisory committee’s responsibilities are a review of student’s performance in courses, assistantships (teaching, research), the development and reevaluation of his/her plan of study, guidance in selecting projects and mentors, preparation and scheduling of qualifying/comprehensive or equivalent exams, time management, and obtaining employment or further education. These annual evaluations are signed by the advisor/advisory committee and the student. The evaluation is filed in the student’s record and a copy given to the graduate program director.

Before completion of nine semester hours, the graduate program director, in consultation with the student, will assign a program advisor or advisory committee. The advisor or advisory committee members must be certified for graduate instruction and will meet with the student at the end of each semester to evaluate student’s academic progress. Among the advisor’s/advisory committee’s responsibilities are a review of student’s performance in courses, assistantships (teaching, research), the development and reevaluation of his/her plan of study, guidance in selecting projects and mentors, preparation and scheduling of qualifying/comprehensive or equivalent exams, time management, and obtaining employment or further education. These annual evaluations are signed by the advisor/advisory committee and the student. The evaluation is filed in the student’s record and a copy given to the graduate program director.

Plan of Study

Before completion of nine semester hours, the student shall prepare a plan of study with the aid and approval of the advisor or advisory committee. The plan of study also should be approved by the graduate program director to ensure that it meets established requirements. Failure to present the plan on time may prolong the period of study for the degree. Before drawing up and approving the plan the graduate program director should verify that there is on file a set of transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work the student has taken. When appropriate, a diagnostic examination also may be used in developing a plan of study.

The successful completion of all work indicated on the approved plan of study is a fundamental prerequisite to the granting of the degree.

Institutional Credit Requirements for Graduate Degrees

A majority of the total credits for completion of the master’s and doctoral degree must be courses offered by ODU. Some colleges, schools and departments may have additional requirements that must be fulfilled. Students interested in the opportunity to apply transfer or experimental learning should refer to the policy on Experimental Learning Credit Options and the policy on the Evaluation of Transfer Credit in the University Graduate Catalog.

Research Skills

Program skill requirements reflect the University’s expectations of one or more significant skills distinct from the dissertation but fundamental to doctoral and postdoctoral research. Specific skill requirements vary with programs. Traditionally, a reading knowledge of one or more foreign languages has been required; more recently a demonstrated proficiency in computer science or quantitative methodology has been introduced.

Under University policy, each academic program leading to the Doctor of Philosophy establishes its own requirements for research skills. Responsibility for the level of competency, the nature of validating the competencies, and the standards utilized in the evaluation rests with the department/school that offers the program. Descriptions of individual programs should be consulted for appropriate regulations and procedures. Information about schedules of examination, standards, and general procedures is available from all departments/schools and graduate program directors.

The research skills requirement must be met before taking the candidacy examination. For specific information, the student should consult the appropriate program, school or college.

Candidacy Examination

The written and oral examinations qualifying a student for candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy are comprehensive in nature. The graduate program director is responsible for coordinating the administration of the written and oral candidacy examinations and will appoint a committee to administer the exams. The examination committee will be made up of at least three faculty members, all of whom must be graduate certified. Before taking the qualifying examinations, the student must meet the appropriate
departmental, school and college requirements and have the recommendation
of the advisor or advisory committee. The examinations are taken near the
end of the student’s coursework. The candidacy examinations are usually
taken during the semester in which the last formal graduate courses listed in
the study plan are taken.

When the student and the advisor or advisory committee have determined
that the examinations should be taken, the student should obtain a Request
for Permission to Take the Ph.D. Candidacy Examination no later than one
month before the date of the first examination. The student should secure
the signature of the advisor or advisory committee and submit the form to
the graduate program director, who will verify that the student meets the
prerequisites for the candidacy examinations. The graduate program director
should be consulted on the schedule of the examinations. Once permission
has been granted, postponement of the examinations must have the approval
of the graduate program director.

After successful completion of the written examination, an oral examination,
which must be taken prior to the end of the next semester, is given
addressing topics discussed in the written examination and possible
additional materials. The oral examination is a serious and integral part of
the qualifying procedure.

A student must pass both the written and oral candidacy examinations. The
written examination must be passed before the oral examination may be
taken. For either the written or oral examination, more than one negative
vote from the examining committee will result in a failure. A failed written
examination must be retaken successfully within one year. A student who
passes the written examination on the first attempt need not repeat the
written exam in the event of failing the oral exam. A failed oral exam, which
also may be attempted a second time, must be retaken prior to the end of the
next semester.

Neither the written nor the oral examination can be passed conditionally.
A pass cannot be made contingent upon doing extra courses, additional
projects, etc.

The examination committee will report, in writing, to the graduate program
director and the dean the results of the examinations.

Students must be registered in any semester in which they are scheduled to
appear for the examination.

Dissertation Committee
After the candidacy examinations have been passed, the dissertation
committee is formed to supervise the dissertation research. Membership of
the dissertation committee may overlap with the advisory committee if one
has already been established (see section under Student Advising). Faculty
who agree to serve on a dissertation committee understand that they are
committed to serve until the dissertation is completed. The committee must
have approval of the graduate program director and the college dean using
the Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation Committee form. Replacement
of the dissertation committee chair or any other substantial change in the
composition of the dissertation committee initiated by the student requires
that the reconstituted dissertation committee re-evaluate and re-approve the
dissertation prospectus.

The committee chair must be full-time Old Dominion University faculty, be
certified for graduate instruction at the appropriate level, and be an authority
in the field of specialization of the proposed dissertation. Faculty who hold
adjunct appointments in connection with their research positions at affiliated
institutions that are specifically designated by memoranda of understanding,
such as the Jefferson Laboratory, may serve as committee chair.

The committee should have at least three Old Dominion University faculty
who are certified for graduate instruction at the appropriate level; one faculty
must be from outside the major department/school. Committee membership
may be extended to a non-University person with special knowledge of the
dissertation subject area. Voting privileges can be provided such specialists
upon the recommendation of the chair and approval of the graduate program
director and the college dean or his or her designee. No more than one-third
of the committee’s membership can be individuals external to the University.
Adjunct and/or emeriti Old Dominion University faculty who are certified
for graduate instruction at the appropriate level may be appointed as voting
members of the committee upon the recommendation of the chair of the
dissertation committee and approval of the graduate program director and
the college dean or his or her designee. External, adjunct, and/or emeriti
faculty may serve in the role of committee co-chair with the approval of the
graduate program director and the dean or his or her designee.

The dissertation and the final oral defense of the dissertation must have the
majority approval of the dissertation committee.

Change in Dissertation Committee
Changes must be made in advance of the oral dissertation defense. Changes
made in the dissertation committee are made only with the approval of the
graduate program director and the college dean.

Advancement to Candidacy
Advancement to candidacy is a formal step that occurs after the student:

• Passes the Ph.D. written and oral candidacy examinations,
• Submits a topic that is approved by the dissertation committee chair, and
• Completes formal course work.

Once these requirements have been met, the graduate program director must
file the “Advancement to Candidacy” form with the Office of the University
Registrar. Please check with the appropriate graduate program director for
further information.

Dissertation Preparation
General regulations and procedures governing the submission of a
doctoral dissertation are given in the Guide for Preparation of Theses
and Dissertations. Full information, including detailed procedures and
qualifications for undertaking a doctoral dissertation, is available in the
student’s major/school and should be obtained by the student and the
dissertation advisor at the beginning of the planning for research and writing
of a dissertation.

After approval of the dissertation proposal, the chair of the dissertation
committee shall recommend the student’s admission to candidacy to the
graduate program director and the dean.

Oral Dissertation Defense
The format of a defense is determined by the dissertation committee with
the approval of the graduate program director. The defense is chaired by the
class of the dissertation committee. The chair will act as moderator, ruling
on questions of procedure and protocol that may arise during the defense.
The chair of the defense represents the college dean, to whom he or she
makes a complete and prompt report on the defense. The chair should also
promptly notify the graduate program director of the results of the defense.

The oral dissertation defense is scheduled for the time and place approved in
the request for the dissertation defense. A two-week lead time is required for
scheduling. This information is published in the appropriate University news
media. The oral dissertation defense is open to the University community; all
interested members are encouraged to attend the examination.

The aim of the defense is to explore with the candidate the methodological
and substantive contributions of the already approved dissertation. Majority
approval by the examiners constitutes successful completion of the defense
of the dissertation. In case of failure, the dissertation committee may
recommend that the candidate be dropped or be allowed re-examination no
earlier than three months after the first examination.

Satisfactory performance on this examination and adherence to the
regulations outlined above complete the requirements for the degree. The
Dissertation Acceptance and Processing Form must be submitted to the
Office of the Registrar with the completed dissertation upon completion of
requirements for the degree.

Dissertation Load Registration
All doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy are required to
be continuously registered for an appropriate number of dissertation
units during each semester and summer session. (See “Graduate Student Registration Requirement.”)

**Leave of Absence**

A candidate who finds it necessary to be excused from registration for a semester must report formally, before the beginning of the semester, to the dissertation committee and the graduate program director and request by petition a leave of absence using the Leave of Absence from Doctoral Program form. A leave of absence may not exceed one year and may not be repeated. During a leave of absence, the candidate will not be entitled to assistance from the dissertation committee or to the use of University facilities. The granting of leave of absence does not change the candidate’s responsibility for meeting the time schedule for the completion of degree requirements.

**Thesis and Dissertation Procedures**

Graduate students who plan to write theses or dissertations should obtain a copy of the Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations from The Graduate School's web site (http://www.odu.edu/graduateschool) for use in conjunction with any style manual preferred or required by their respective departments/schools or colleges. Minimum University requirements for the preparation of theses and dissertations are contained in the guide; departments/schools and/or colleges may set additional requirements.

Information regarding compliance with policies regulating research involving human subjects, animals, radiation, potential biohazards (e.g., recombinant DNA), lasers, controlled substances, or hazardous materials and policies regarding intellectual property can be found on the Office of Research web site at https://www.odu.edu/researchoffice.

All research involving human subjects, animal care and use, radiation, potential biohazards, lasers, controlled substances, or hazardous materials requires the approval signature of the appropriate review committee chair or designee, or safety officer, prior to the initiation of any research activities.

Students should be aware that in most cases, the University owns intellectual property created with University resources and can claim an interest in the intellectual property. Intellectual property must be disclosed to the Office of Research using an invention disclosure form. In order to fulfill its contractual obligations, and to adhere to the Policy on Patents and Copyrights, it may be occasionally necessary for the University to temporarily delay publication of a thesis or dissertation that contains potentially patentable information in order to ensure the availability of worldwide patent protection. Such situations would arise when a faculty member directing the research, under his/her duty as a University employee, discloses potentially patentable subject matter to the Office of Research. A student’s degree requirements can still be fulfilled even though publication of the thesis or dissertation is delayed.

Presentation of a thesis or dissertation in partial fulfillment of degree requirements necessitates submission of the finished original work to the dean of the college for final approval, following oral defense and signature approval by the thesis/dissertation committee and graduate program director. Approval of the dean of the college should be obtained prior to reproduction of the original work, in the event corrections need to be made.

Upon final approval, the student must arrange for reproduction of four additional copies of the thesis or dissertation, for a total of five for submission to the Office of the Registrar for binding. Certain doctoral programs require more than five copies; students should consult appropriate graduate program directors.

A final, approved, error-free original and four copies (more are required by some programs) of the thesis or dissertation must be received by the Office of the University Registrar no later than the day prior to the beginning of the final examination period; that is, the last day of classes of the semester in which the degree will be taken. The completed document, approved by the dean, and copies should be accompanied by the following forms: Binding Fee Receipt, Thesis/Dissertation Acceptance, Results of the Comprehensive Examination, and Thesis/Dissertation Delivery. The date on the title page of the thesis/dissertation should be within the same semester that the student intends to graduate.

A microfilming fee is also required of dissertation writers; a copyrighting fee is optional.

The student may order additional copies of the thesis or dissertation by making payment to the Office of Finance at the same time the required copies are ordered.

**Certificate of Recognition or Achievement for Terminally Ill and Deceased Students**

When a student has completed all degree requirements but dies before graduation, the university awards the degree posthumously.

**Certificate of Recognition**

In those instances when a student who is close to completing a degree is terminally ill or dies before completing the degree, the university may award a Certificate of Recognition. The following criteria must be met for receiving the Certificate of Recognition. Any exceptions must be approved by the president.

**Graduate Students**

1. The student must be degree seeking.
2. The student must have completed at least 75% of the requirements for the degree (for the master’s student this will be a minimum of 24 credits; for the doctoral student this will be a minimum of 36 credits).
3. The student must be in good academic (3.00 GPA) and disciplinary standing.
4. The student must be enrolled at ODU at the time of death or diagnosis of terminal illness.
5. The dean of the appropriate college recommends the award of the certificate.

**Certificate of Achievement**

In those instances when a student is terminally ill or dies before completing the degree but does not qualify for a Certificate of Recognition, the university may award a Certificate of Achievement. The following criteria must be met for receiving the Certificate of Achievement. Any exceptions must be approved by the president.

**Graduate Students**

1. The student must be in good academic (3.00) and disciplinary standing.
2. The student must have completed the equivalent of two semesters of full-time study (18 credits) at Old Dominion University.
3. The student must have died or been diagnosed with a terminal illness within 12 months of the last registration.
4. The certificate may be recommended by a faculty member or at the request of others, but the next of kin must approve.
5. The president or delegate will communicate with the next of kin.
6. The certificate will be presented only to the next of kin or their delegate.