

# Graduate Degrees

## General University Requirements

To complete a graduate degree, a student must complete the General University Requirements (GURs) for graduate degrees, school or college requirements, and program requirements. GURs for all graduate degrees are as follows:

1. A student must be admitted to the degree program and establish an approved graduate studies plan (GSP).
2. No more than 9 credits may be completed in the student's graduate program before program admission, unless a student wishes to apply credits from a previous graduate certificate in the same or closely related subject area.
3. The student must complete at least 30 approved semester credits beyond the baccalaureate degree for a master's degree, and must complete at least three years of post-baccalaureate study for a doctoral degree. For a master's degree, individual programs may place limits on the number of credits derived from thesis, individual research and/or independent study courses. No more than 45 credits may be required by any master's degree program, unless specifically approved by the University of Alaska Board of Regents. The actual number of credits required for each graduate degree program, including prerequisites for required courses, are specified in the current catalog. While no minimum or maximum credits are specified for doctoral programs, a student is expected to be affiliated with the university for at least two years. On approval by the dean of the Graduate School and college dean, an official GSP may stipulate other course credit requirements, including leveling courses.
4. Up to 9 semester credits not used toward any other degree (graduate or 400 level) may be transferred to UAA from an accredited institution and counted toward a graduate degree. In the case of a second master's degree, up to 9 credits may be transferred from a previous master's degree. In the case of a doctoral degree, up to 21 credits may be transferred from previous graduate study. Acceptance of transfer credit toward program requirements is approved by individual programs, college deans and the Graduate School.
5. Only 400- and 600-level courses approved by the graduate student's advisor, graduate studies committee and dean or designee may be counted toward graduate program requirements. Courses at the 500 level are for professional development and are not applicable toward any degree.
6. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 must be earned in courses identified in the official GSP.
7. In 600-level courses, a grade of C is minimally acceptable, provided the student maintains a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 (B) in all courses applicable to the graduate program. At least 21 credits must be taken at the graduate level (600) for any master's degree, including thesis credits. For performance comparison only, in 600-level courses a grade of P (pass) is equivalent to a minimum grade of B, but does not enter into the GPA calculation.
8. Courses taken as credit by examination, or graded credit/no credit (CR/NC) do not count toward graduate program requirements. They may, however, be used to satisfy prerequisites or establish competency in a subject, allowing the advisor or committee to waive certain courses in an established program as long as the total credits in the program remain the same.
9. All credits counted toward the degree, including transfer credits, must be earned within the consecutive seven-year period for a master's degree or the consecutive 10-year period for a doctoral degree prior to graduation. If these requirements are not met, admission expires and the student must reapply for admission and meet the admission requirements in effect at that time (see Catalog Year in Graduate Degree Policies (<https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/degree requirements/policies/>)).
10. Students must be continuously registered throughout their graduate program (see Continuous Registration in Graduate Degree Policies (<https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/degree requirements/policies/>)).
11. Students must complete all requirements established by the program and must pass a written or oral comprehensive examination; an evaluation of independent scholarship, project or thesis defense; or similar evaluation as established by the program. For programs with a thesis option, selection of that option will be indicated on the GSP and on the annual progress report. The evaluation, examination or defense must be approved by all graduate committee members as passing the requirement. For programs with projects that result in a written record, those records will be maintained by the programs for one year and are subject to review by the Graduate School. After the completion of a written or oral comprehensive exam, a thesis or a project, the student's graduate committee chair must submit an exam or defense report. (See Examinations below.)
12. When an oral comprehensive examination, project or thesis defense, or evaluation of independent scholarship is required, the student may select an outside reviewer approved by the dean of the Graduate School and college dean to participate in the evaluation. An outside examiner is required for a doctoral defense. Typically, the outside examiner is a faculty member from another department in the university, or another qualified individual in the area in which the student is seeking a degree.
13. All theses and dissertations must have final approval by the dean of the Graduate School.

## Examinations (Requirement Determined by Program)

### Qualifying Examinations

Some graduate degree programs require the student to complete a written and/or qualifying examination before advancement to candidacy. This examination is an interim evaluation of academic progress; the student may pass unconditionally or conditionally. A conditional pass indicates specific weaknesses that the student must remedy before degree requirements are completed. The Annual Report of Graduate Student Progress and Advancement to Candidacy Form should indicate mechanisms for addressing these weaknesses.

## Comprehensive Examinations

Some graduate programs require that students pass a comprehensive examination, given to determine whether a graduate student has integrated knowledge and understanding of the principles and concepts underlying major and related fields, in order to achieve advancement to candidacy. For master's degrees, the graduate student's advisory committee may choose to give a written and/or comprehensive examination prior to advancement to candidacy. For doctoral degrees, written comprehensive examinations are normally required, although the student's committee may additionally choose to give an oral examination. A Report on Comprehensive Exam must be submitted to the Graduate School indicating date of completion, and approved by the graduate advisor and committee, program chair, college dean, and the Graduate School.

## Defense of Project

Graduate students who are required to complete a project in fulfillment of degree requirements may be required to pass an oral defense of the project. Defense dates must be submitted to the Graduate School and publicly posted one week before the defense. The defense will consist of a presentation followed by questions on the research, analysis and written project presentation. All committee members must be present at the project defense. A Report on Project Defense must be submitted to the Graduate School indicating date of completion, and approved by the graduate advisor and committee, program chair, college dean, and the Graduate School.

## Defense of Thesis

Graduate students who are required to complete a thesis in partial fulfillment of degree requirements must pass an oral defense of the thesis. Defense dates must be submitted to the Graduate School and publicly posted one week before the defense. The defense will consist of a presentation followed by questions on the research, analysis and written thesis presentation. The Graduate School will not accept a thesis for final submission until the student has successfully defended it. All committee members normally must be present for the defense of thesis, either physically present or through electronic media. A Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense must be submitted to the Graduate School indicating date of completion, and approved by the graduate advisor and committee, program chair, college dean, and the Graduate School.

## Examination Committee

In most cases, the student's graduate advisory committee prepares and gives the examinations under guidelines formulated by the program in which the degree is being taken.

## Outside Examiner

The outside examiner represents the dean of the Graduate School. The examiner must be regular faculty with a doctoral degree. Their role is to determine that a stringent, unbiased examination/defense is fairly administered and evaluated. Outside examiners must complete a Report of the Outside Examiner and submit it to the Graduate School within five business days after the defense.

## PhD Dissertation Defense

Outside examiners are required for all PhD dissertation defenses and must be from a different department than the student and the chair of the advisory committee. The Graduate School Dean will appoint the outside examiner for PhD dissertation defenses.

## Doctoral Project Defense

Outside examiners are required for all Doctoral project defenses. They must be external to the project committee and have a substantive understanding of the concepts of doctoral level quality improvement projects. The Graduate School Dean will appoint the outside examiner based on the recommendation of the program's chair or director.

## Advancement to Candidacy (Requirement Determined by Program)

Some master's programs and all doctoral programs require students to apply for advancement to candidacy. Advancement to candidacy status is a prerequisite to graduation and is determined by the program chair or designee. Candidacy is the point in a graduate study program at which the student has demonstrated an ability to master the subject matter and has progressed to the level at which a GSP can be approved. For doctoral program students, an Advancement to Candidacy Form serves as the final GSP.

To be approved for candidacy, a student must:

- Be in good academic standing.
- Demonstrate competence in the methods and techniques of the discipline, which may include passing a comprehensive examination.
- Receive approval of the independent scholarship, thesis or research project proposal from the student's graduate committee.
- Satisfy all prerequisites, remove all academic deficiencies and satisfy all terms of provisional admission.
- Submit an approved final official GSP.

## Thesis Review

Before final acceptance, all members of a student's thesis committee, department/program chair/director, college dean, and the Graduate School dean must approve the thesis, as required by the student's graduate program. Changes or corrections to the thesis may be required at any of these levels. The thesis committee is primarily responsible for thesis evaluation, grammar, punctuation, usage, and formatting, and the department chair/director and college dean will also conduct reviews to monitor the quality of theses and check for any needed revisions. The Graduate School checks that the Title Page and preliminary pages conform to UAA standards. The Graduate School dean reviews all theses and will give final approval once all required corrections are made. Thesis credits will be given a deferred grade (DF) until all requirements are met.

## Project Review

Before final acceptance, all members of a student's project committee, department/program chair/director, and college dean must approve a project as required by the student's graduate program. Changes or corrections to the project may be required at any of these levels. The project committee is primarily responsible for project evaluation,

grammar, punctuation, usage, and formatting, and the department chair/director and college dean will conduct reviews to monitor the quality of projects and check for any needed revisions. Students should check with their programs for required formatting. The Graduate School checks that the Title Page and preliminary pages conform to UAA standards. Both the Graduate School Dean and the college dean review all projects. The college dean will give final approval once all required corrections are made. Project credits will be given a deferred grade (DF) until all requirements are met.

## **Graduate Student Research**

Graduate students planning to conduct research that involves the use of human participant subjects and/or human participant data, vertebrate animals, hazardous chemicals, biohazards, and/or radioactive materials are required to complete the Research Compliance and Intellectual Property (RCIP) Form. Also, if graduate students are planning research that will lead to intellectual property with commercial potential, they should complete the RCIP Form. At the same time, all graduate students are expected to respect the copyright, license and intellectual property rights that may attach to files of any media type, including software, texts, databases, images, video, music and other audio files, especially when using university computing and/or networking resources. For further information, contact the UAA Research Compliance Office or the associate vice provost for Research Administration and Commercialization.