

# Degree Requirements

- 5.1.1 Age of Courses (p. 1)
- 5.1.2 Transfer & Other Credits (p. )
- 5.1.3 Auditing a Course (p. 2)
- 5.1.4 Challenging a Course (p. 2)
- 5.1.5 Course Appeals (p. 3)
- 5.1.6 Video Conferencing (p. 3)
- 5.1.7 Dual Degrees (p. 3)
- 5.1.8 Enroute and Continuing Students (p. 3)
- 5.1.9 Special Courses (p. 3)
  - Graduate Consultation (589)
  - Independent Study (592)
  - Internship Course (598)
  - Pass/Fail
  - Professional Development (588)
  - Reading and Research (689)
  - Special Topics (591)
- 5.1.10 Co-Convended Courses (p. 4)
- 5.1.11 Courses Not Approved For Use (p. 5)

- 5.2.1 General Credit Requirements (p. )
- 5.2.2 Special Requirements (p. )
- 5.2.3 Research (Thesis) Master's (p. )
- 5.2.4 Professional (Non-thesis) Master's (p. )
- 5.2.5 Master's Committee (p. )
- 5.2.6 Optional Graduate Representative (p. )
- 5.2.7 Program of Study (p. )
- 5.2.8 Comprehensive Examination (p. )
- 5.2.9 Defense of Thesis (p. )

## 5.3 Doctoral Requirements (p. 8)

- 5.3.1 General Credit Requirements (p. )
- 5.3.2 Doctoral Committee (p. )
- 5.3.3 Optional Graduate Representative (p. )
- 5.3.4 Program of Study (p. )
- 5.3.5 Comprehensive Examination (p. )
- 5.3.6 Defense of Dissertation (p. )
- 5.3.7 Dissertation Requirements (p. )
- 5.3.8 Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD) (p. )

## 5.4 Certificate Requirements (p. 11)

- General Requirements (p. 12)
- Credits (p. 12)
- Certificate Program of Study (p. 12)

## 5.5 Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (p. )

- 5.5.1 Approval of ETDs (p. )
- 5.5.2 Publication of ETDs (p. )

## 5.6 Commencement and Degree/Certificate Completion (p. )

- 5.6.1 Graduation Application (p. )
- 5.6.2 One-credit Extension (p. )
- 5.6.3 Eligibility to Participate in Commencement (p. )
- 5.6.4 Diplomas and Transcripts (p. )
- 5.6.5 Withdrawing & Reapplying for Graduation (p. )
- 5.6.6 Financial Obligations (p. )

## 5.1 General and Courses

- 5.1.1 Age of Courses (p. 1)

- 5.1.2 Transfer & Other Credits (p. )
- 5.1.3 Auditing a Course (p. 2)
- 5.1.4 Challenging a Course (p. 2)
- 5.1.5 Course Appeals (p. 3)
- 5.1.6 Video Conferencing (p. 3)
- 5.1.7 Dual Degrees (p. 3)
- 5.1.8 Enroute and Continuing Students (p. 3)
- 5.1.9 Special Courses (p. 3)
  - Graduate Consultation (589)
  - Independent Study (592)
  - Internship Course (598)
  - Pass/Fail
  - Professional Development (588)
  - Reading and Research (689)
  - Special Topics (591)
- 5.1.10 Co-Convended Courses (p. 4)
- 5.1.11 Courses Not Approved For Use (p. 5)

4XX LEVEL COURSES — Up to nine (9) credits at the 4xx-level are allowed on a Graduate Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form under two circumstances:

- They were taken as a graduate student, or
- They were reserved for graduate credit as a bachelor degree-seeking student.

Certificate programs - A maximum of one-third (1/3) of the coursework may be 4xx-level.

For further credit-use restrictions, see Special Courses (p. 3).

UNDERGRADUATE CREDITS — 3xx (or lower numbered) courses are not applicable to graduate degree or certificate requirements. See the MSU Catalog section on Registration, Undergraduate Student Petitions for Registration and Reservation of Certain Courses (<http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Registration>).

5XX LEVEL COURSES — The number of 5xx-level course credits must be equal to two-thirds (2/3) of the total graded coursework, including Research credits (590) or Professional Paper/Project credits (574, 575).

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.1 Age of Courses

CERTIFICATE — The age of courses at the time of certificate completion may not exceed six (6) years.

MASTER'S — The age of courses at the time of graduation may not exceed six (6) years.

DOCTORAL — The age of courses at time of graduation may not exceed ten (10) years.

---

**NOTE: In the case of the Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.) age of courses at time of graduation may not exceed seven (7) years.**

---

Courses aged up to one year beyond the Age of Courses limit at the time of graduation can be appealed for use toward a degree by submitting a policy appeal which includes a rationale and support from the student's chair and department head (known as an "appeal packet;" see Policy Appeals (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policytext-graduate-students-rights-responsibilities/#appeals>) for specific appeal information).

In the event of the birth or adoption of a child, a student can request an extension to Age of Courses policy up to one year by submitting a letter citing the date of birth/adoption and claiming the exception. They do not need to submit an entire appeal packet.

Similarly, a student can request an extension due to military duty up to one year by submitting a letter of explanation and claiming the exception. They do not need to submit an entire appeal packet.

If a student would like to include courses aged more than one year beyond the Age of Courses limit at the time of graduation, the appeal must include documentation of current knowledge of the appealed courses (e.g. working in the field of study) which is supported by both the chair and department head.

Credits from a conferred master's degree to be used toward a doctoral program at MSU are not subject to Age of Courses policy. See General Doctoral Credit Requirements (p. 8) for more information.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.2 Transfer & Other Credits

**TRANSFER** — Transfer credits are defined as credits coming from an external academically-accredited institution.

New faculty who are bringing graduate transfer students to Montana State should email The Graduate School ([degreesandcertificates@montana.edu](mailto:degreesandcertificates@montana.edu)) for transfer information specific to your situation.

**NON-DEGREE** — Non-degree credits are credits taken in a non-degree status at MSU.

**RESERVED** — Reserved credits are credits reserved for graduate credit at MSU while pursuing a bachelor's degree. Registration, Undergraduate Student Petitions for Registration and Reservation of Certain Courses (<http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Registration>).

A combined total of no more than nine (9) non-degree, reserved, and transfer credits can be applied to a degree-seeking program of study. A combined total of no more than three (3) non-degree, reserved, and transfer credits can be applied to a certificate program of study. See example.

All eligible credits to be transferred are subject to approval by the graduate student's committee, department head, and The Graduate School. Unless official transcripts were submitted with the initial application for admission, official transcripts of proposed transfer credits coming from an external academically-accredited institution must be filed with a program of study. The program of study is to be filed by the end of the first term for certificate students, second term for master's students, and third term for doctoral students. See Program of Study (Certificate (p. 11), Master's (p. ), Doctoral (p. 8))

The following credits cannot be transferred to MSU:

- Credits awarded by academic institutions in the United States that lack regional accreditation;
- Courses with a grade of pass, no credit, or satisfactory (non-traditional grades);
- Courses older than six (6) years for certificate and master's students and ten (10) years for doctoral students;
- Courses with a grade below a "B" (including non-degree courses and reserved credits taken at MSU);

- Credits awarded by academic institutions for life experience;
- Credits awarded by academic institutions for courses taken at non-collegiate institutions (e.g. government agencies, corporations, and industrial sponsored agencies);
- Credits awarded by academic institutions for non-credit courses, workshops, and seminars as part of continuing education or professional development programs;
- Credits on an undergraduate transcript (undergraduate status);
- Credits used for completion of a degree at another academic institution.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.3 Auditing a Course

Graduate students may audit courses for zero (0) credit with the permission of the instructor. The following policies apply to audit courses:

- They will have the designation on the graduate transcript as "AU" in place of the grade. The AU is not included in the calculation of the GPA.
- They may appear on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form as a course that is not required by the department, and does count towards degree requirements.
- They are subject to full tuition and fees, and may not be covered by GTA/GRA tuition waivers.
- They will count toward the total credit load when considering residency.
- They will not count toward the total credit load when considering financial aid.
- They may be changed to graded courses up to the tenth (10th) class day. After the tenth (10th) class day the audit status cannot be changed.

Graduate students may request a course to be changed to a status of audit (AU) by submitting an Add/Drop Request ([https://www.montana.edu/registrar/add\\_drop.html](https://www.montana.edu/registrar/add_drop.html)) with the instructor's and chair of their graduate committee's signatures to the Registrar's Office (<https://www.montana.edu/registrar/>).

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.4 Challenging a Course

The policy on challenging a course provides the opportunity to earn college credits and quality points without formal course enrollment. A fee of \$30.00 per credit is assessed. A graduate student accepted into a degree program may challenge a graduate course through their department or program. A graduate student may challenge a course only if the prerequisites for the course have been met.

- Master's students may challenge no more than a total of six (6) term credit hours and apply those credits to a degree program.
- Doctoral students may challenge no more than a total of nine (9) term credit hours, including those hours successfully challenged for a master's degree.

See Advanced Standing ([http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Credits\\_for\\_Degree\\_Completion](http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Credits_for_Degree_Completion)) on the Office of the Registrar's site for more information.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.5 Course Appeals

Graduate students seeking exceptions from established Graduate School academic policies such as admission, retention, or graduation requirements may do so by submitting an appeal packet to The Graduate School for review. See Policy Appeals (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-graduate-students-rights-responsibilities/>).

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.6 Video Conferencing

Videoconferencing is available for all students but is at the discretion of the committee.

The Graduate School requirements for video conferencing during all examinations and defenses are as follows. This policy applies only to committee members and the student:

- The conference must have two-way video with audio for its duration. Neither the student nor any committee member is allowed to participate in the conference via telephone (or audio only). Video for a committee member can be off while the student is screen-sharing a presentation.
- If communication is broken during the examination or defense the conference must be paused until connection is re-established. If the video connection cannot be re-established within 30min, the examination or defense must be terminated and rescheduled for completion at a later time/date.
  - The 30 minutes is cumulative. If connection is lost and reestablished multiple times that add up to 30 minutes, consider that the interruptions might not be in the best interest of the student and reschedule.

Suggested best practices:

- Confidentiality should be considered for sensitive topics.
  - An RSVP can be utilized for the public portion.
  - The public can be removed after the public portion or a separate link can be used for the private portion.
- To allow the student to focus on their examination or defense, another designated person, such as the committee chair, should be responsible for initiating and implementing the conference process.
- If bandwidth becomes an issue, you might suggest that people who are not required participants (e.g. the public) turn off their video except when they are speaking.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.7 Dual Degrees

See Dual Degree ([http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-admissions/#dual\\_degree](http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-admissions/#dual_degree))

---

**Note: Dual degree is when an applicant is seeking two (2) graduate degrees simultaneously.**

---

CONTINUING CREDITS — Students may “double count” up to twenty (20) percent of MSU-Bozeman credits across degree programs (i.e. six (6)

credits for a thirty (30) credit master’s degree). Research Credits may not be double counted.

A degree program may overlap with only one other program for the purpose of double-counting credits. In other words, credits may never be counted for three or more certificates or programs. If a student seeks a third certificate or program, it must be treated as an independent certificate or program.

Individual departments and programs may establish their own limits on double-counting, up to the general Graduate School maximum, or they may prohibit double-counting altogether.

CREDIT TRANSFER — Up to nine (9) hours of transfer credits from another institution may be applied to one of the two degree programs, or divided between the two degree programs. The nine (9) hours of transfer credit cannot be applied to each degree program separately.

AGE OF COURSEWORK — The age of courses at the time of graduation may not exceed six (6) years for certificates and masters, and ten (10) years for doctorate.

CHAIR AND COMMITTEES — The student must have a separate chair and committee for each degree program.

DUAL DEGREE FORM PROCESS — Separate graduate forms must be filed with The Graduate School for each degree program. This includes; Application for Graduate Admissions, Graduation Application, Graduate Program of Study and Committee, Program of Study Revision, Committee Revision, Report on Comprehensive exam/Thesis Defense form, and forms for submitting an Electronic Thesis/Dissertation.

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES — There will be two separate diplomas awarded upon completion of all degree program requirements.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.8 Enroute and Continuing Students

DEFINITION OF ENROUTE — Student applies and is accepted into a Ph.D. program with the option to be awarded a master’s degree while in the Ph.D. program.

DEFINITION OF CONTINUING — Student applied and is accepted into a Master’s program. Student is awarded master’s degree and plans to pursue a doctoral degree within same department.

---

**Note: Students who are in a master's program and plan on continuing to a Ph.D. are not considered enroute.**

---

**Note: Enroute only pertains to students who are enrolled in a Ph.D. program.**

---

Back to top (p. )

### 5.1.9 Special Courses

GRADUATE CONSULTATION (589) — These **courses cannot be applied towards degree requirements** on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (592) — These courses may be included on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/>)

gradschool/forms.html) form. The total allowable number of (592) credit hours is limited as follows:

- Doctoral: six (6) credits
- Master's Research (thesis): four (4) credits
- Master's Professional (non-thesis): six (6) credits
- Certificate: The total count of credits that include Seminar (594/500), Internship (598/576), and, Independent Study (592/570) credits may not be more than one-third (1/3) of the minimum required credits.

INTERNSHIP COURSES (598) — These courses may be included on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form. The allowable number of (598) credit hours is limited as follows:

---

**Note: The total count of credits that include Seminar (594/500), Internship (598/576), and Independent Study (592/570) credits may not be more than one-third (1/3) of the minimum required credits.**

---

PASS/FAIL COURSES — These courses are those offered solely on a Pass/Fail basis. Examples include, but are not limited to, thesis research (590), graduate seminar (594), and dissertation research (690).

#### Registration

- Registration for Pass/Fail only courses is the same as traditional graded courses.
- For courses the student desires to change to a Pass/Fail basis, the student must complete the Request for Pass/Fail Grade (<http://www.montana.edu/registrar/Forms.php>) form provided by the Registrar's Office (<http://www.montana.edu/registrar/>). The form must be submitted prior to the tenth (10th) day of university instruction of the term.

#### Grading

- For Pass/Fail only courses, grades of "P" or "F" are given.
- "P" grades on the student's transcript are not computed in the GPA.
- "F" grades are computed in the GPA.
- "N" grades can be given for thesis research (590) (p. ) and dissertation research (690) (p. ).

#### Credit Limitations

- Up to a maximum of three (3) Pass/Fail credits may be included on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form, excluding 575/590/675/690 credits.

#### Transfer of Credits

- Pass/Fail and other non-traditional graded courses may not be transferred from another academic institution.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (588) — These **courses cannot be applied towards degree requirements on a** Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form.

READING AND RESEARCH (689) — Such courses may be used by doctoral students who are reading research publications in the field in preparation for doctoral dissertation research. As such, these courses may

be included in a doctoral Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form.

SPECIAL TOPIC COURSES (591) — The total number of Special Topics (591) courses that may be taken during a graduate student's tenure varies by degree program. Such courses may be included on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.10 Co-Convended Courses

Definitions:

**Co-Convenging:** Refers to convenging graduate and undergraduate courses on the same topic

together (in the same room, at the same time). For example, "Current Topics in Biology might be listed as both BIOL 4xx and BIOL 5xx.

**Learning Outcomes:** The expected capabilities of students upon successful completion of course material. [Target group + will be able to + action verb + object].

Co-convenging of courses allows departments flexibility in their curricula.

Departments offering co-convenged courses must design such courses to meet the elevated learning outcomes expected of graduate-level coursework at MSU. Departments must keep in mind that graduate students enrolled in co-convenged courses are typically working towards a Doctoral or a Master's degree; in order to meet MSU's goals as an R1 research institution, graduate students must be given the highest level of coursework preparation possible.

To meet these goals, co-convenged courses should provide graduate-level classroom content and experiences designed to satisfy the needs and ambitions of graduate students. At the same time, such co-convenged courses allow qualified and highly motivated undergraduates to specialize their knowledge and participate in graduate-level discussions and projects while working towards their own degree completion.

Co-convenging is permitted under the following circumstances:

- 1) Only 400 and 500 level courses may be co-convenged.[1]
- 2) The syllabus of a co-convenged course must be geared to offer students a course experience commensurate with their degree. In order to do so, the course syllabus must articulate specific sets of learning outcomes for graduate students and for undergraduate students. Achievement of these learning outcomes should be demonstrated through assignments and grading criteria tailored to each set of students. Adding an extra assignment to a class designed for undergraduate students is not sufficient to provide graduate students with course content commensurate with their degree.[2]
- 3) All co-convenged 500-level courses must be approved by the University Graduate Council. The attached syllabi in the course proposal must include both the 500-level and 400-level learning outcomes, assignments, and grading criteria to distinguish the graduate level course from the undergraduate course. Existing co-convenged courses that require updates, must provide revised syllabi, with the above information.
- 4) If a student takes a co-convenged course at the undergraduate level, they may not retake the same course at the graduate level (and vice versa).

[1] Certain graduate programs may require 300 level courses as leveling coursework. These courses should not be co-convenged to allow graduate students to place them on the Program of Study as 500 level courses and use tuition credits to cover tuition costs. Instead, in cases when graduate

students need leveling course work, programs may apply to the Graduate School for an exception to use tuition credits for 300 level courses on a Program of Study.

[2] The course instructors and academic units should thoughtfully review student course evaluations to ensure that the course experience meets the expectations and needs of the graduate students and of the undergraduate students.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.1.11 Courses Not Approved for Use

The following courses are NOT approved for use on a Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form:

- 490 Undergraduate Research/Creative Activity Instruction
- 470/492 Undergraduate Independent Study
- 400/494 Undergraduate Seminars
- 476/498 Undergraduate Internship
- 588 Professional Development
- 589 Graduate Consultation

Back to top (p. )

---

## 5.2 Master's Requirements

- 5.2.1 General Credit Requirements (p. )
- 5.2.2 Special Requirements (p. )
- 5.2.3 Research (Thesis) Master's (p. )
- 5.2.4 Professional (Non-thesis) Master's (p. )
- 5.2.5 Master's Committee (p. )
- 5.2.6 Optional Graduate Representative (p. )
- 5.2.7 Program of Study (p. )
- 5.2.8 Comprehensive Examination (p. )
- 5.2.9 Defense of Thesis (p. )

A Master degree (M), Master of Art (M.A.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), Master of Engineering (M.Eng.), Master of Fine Art (MFA), Master of Nursing (MN), and Master of Science (M.S.) are earned after completing discipline-specific coursework, and in some fields comprehensive exams, thesis and/or professional paper.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.2.1 General Credit Requirements

- All master's candidates are expected to be familiar with both The Graduate School and their specific academic college and department degree requirements.
- The minimum credit requirement for master's degrees is thirty (30) credits; individual degree programs may require more.
- Only those courses listed on an approved graduate Program of Study (p. ) are applicable toward graduate degree credit requirements.
- In all non-thesis programs, a minimum of thirty (30) credits (or more as determined by the department) must be for coursework and not thesis credits.
- See Minimum Enrollment (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policies-text-enrollment-registration-residency/>).

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.2.2 Special Requirements

- Conversion of thesis credits to professional paper credits: If a master's student changes from a research (thesis) master's to a professional (non-thesis) master's, a maximum of six (6) credits of thesis (department rubric 590) may be converted to six (6) credits of Professional Paper (department rubric 575). Students wishing to make this change must submit a Program of Study Revision ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) form to the Graduate School.
- Conversion of professional paper credits to thesis credits: Professional paper credits cannot be converted to thesis credits.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.2.3 Research (Thesis) Master's

This is a research-oriented master's degree. In some professions, the master's is a necessary step to the doctorate.

**THESIS REQUIREMENTS** — A thesis, written by the student seeking the degree and based on original research, is a requirement for all research (thesis) master's degree programs.

**COMMITTEE COMPOSITION** — A master's committee is comprised of a minimum of three (3) members who guide the thesis. A tenured or tenure-track faculty member serves as the chairperson of the student's graduate committee. See Committee (p. ).

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION** — In the research (thesis) master's, a comprehensive examination and thesis defense are required. These may be combined and offered simultaneously.

**SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL THESIS** — The thesis must be submitted in final form to The Graduate School by the published deadlines (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/dates-deadlines.html>) (no later than fourteen (14) working days before the end of the term in which graduate work is completed).

**THESIS (590) CREDITS** —

- Ten (10) thesis credits must be completed successfully for thesis plan programs. An unlimited number of 590 credits may be taken. However, only ten (10) 590 credits count toward degree requirements along with a minimum of twenty (20) content coursework credits.

---

**Note: A department may require more than thirty (30) credits for degree completion.**

- 
- If a student is using faculty time or university facilities to work on their thesis, they must be registered for thesis credits.
  - 590 credits are pass/fail or N grade.
    - "N" grades ([http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Credits\\_and\\_Grades](http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Credits_and_Grades)) may be assigned to students enrolled in specified continual or ongoing courses only (for example 590 and 690 thesis courses). This grade indicates that, although students have made progress, they have not completed the course objectives successfully. These students must re-enroll in the course immediately in order to continue with the course work and complete the course objectives. The N grade does not affect the GPA.

**CONVERSION OF THESIS CREDITS TO PROFESSIONAL PAPER CREDITS** (p. )

**ELECTRONIC THESIS/DISSERTATION (ETD)** — The thesis must meet all formatting requirements set forth by the Graduate School. Final authority for approval or denial of a thesis rests with the Graduate Dean.

See Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD) (<http://www.montana.edu/etd/>)

Back to top (p. )

**5.2.4 Professional (Non-thesis) Master's**

For students in professional or terminal degree programs, a professional paper or project is sometimes part of the program. For other programs, only courses are required. A minimum of thirty (30) approved coursework credits is required. See Degree Programs (<https://www.montana.edu/academics/graduate/>) for more information.

**PROFESSIONAL PAPER/PROJECT (575) CREDITS** —

- A maximum of six (6) professional paper/project credits can be taken. See department for how many can be counted toward professional paper/project degree requirements.
- If a student is using faculty time or university facilities to work on their professional paper/project, they must be registered for 575 credits.
- 575 credits can be graded or pass/fail. See department requirements.

**CONVERSION OF PROFESSIONAL PAPER CREDITS TO THESIS CREDITS** (p. )

Back to top (p. )

**5.2.5 Master's Committee**

This committee advises the student on academic matters and is the examining committee for the master's comprehensive and/or thesis defense examinations.

**COMMITTEE CHAIR** — A tenured or tenure-track faculty member serves as the chair of the student's graduate committee and acts as a channel of communication within the degree-granting department. In the event that the student does not select a chair of their graduate committee within the first (1st) term of attendance as a master's student, the department head will appoint a temporary advisor. This advisor will advise the student until a tenured or tenure-track faculty member is selected as the graduate committee chair.

**CO-CHAIR** — A co-chair is not required. If a student elects to have a co-chair serve on their committee, they may choose one of the following committee compositions:

1. Chair, co-chair, and members
2. Co-chair, co-chair, and members. If there are two co-chairs, at least one must be tenured/tenure-track faculty. For information regarding non-tenure track committee members, see section below.
3. More than two co-chairs and members. If there are more than two co-chairs, the majority must be tenure/tenure-track faculty.

**COMMITTEE COMPOSITION** — Master's committees should be formed in the best interest of the student. For a research master's (i.e. those with a thesis or a research paper) a master's committee is composed of a minimum of three (3) members. The majority of the committee and the committee chair should be from the degree-granting academic unit or be affiliated with the academic unit. The chair must hold a master's or doctoral

degree and sufficient expertise to supervise student work. For a professional master's (i.e. those with a professional paper or course-based) the graduate committee can be one faculty member from the degree-granting academic unit and upon matriculation each student should be assigned at least one faculty advisor. The graduate committee chair and the academic unit head recommend the committee composition to The Graduate School. Final approval of committee composition rests with The Graduate School. See Graduate Program of Study ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) or Committee ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) forms.

**EXPECTED ROLES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The expected roles of the committee chair are to

- Ensure that all graduate program and Graduate School standards and requirements relative to the graduate degree are met, and that any conditions set by the committee are fulfilled.

The expected roles of committee members are to

- Provide diverse opinions and advice on the student's scholarship
  - Members should have expertise in the subject area as defined by the direction of the student's scholarship.
  - Each committee member should be available to serve as a resource for the student, independent of the chair. Every committee member should be able to provide valuable insight and advice to students on their scholarship.
- Express their independent evaluation of the scholarship
  - On a committee where there exists a potential for a lack of independent evaluation the academic unit head should request a graduate representative to join the committee. The role of the graduate representative is to monitor that the work of the committee adheres to graduate school policy, but not necessarily to provide expertise in the subject area.
  - If the student believes that there exists a potential for a lack of independent evaluation, the student may ask the academic unit head to request a graduate representative for their committee.

**NON-TENURE-TRACK COMMITTEE MEMBERS** — Committee members not holding tenured or tenure-track faculty status at MSU must be approved by the student's department head. In some cases, these committee members may act as co-chairs of a student's committee.

**CHANGES TO THE COMMITTEE** — The student may make changes to their committee composition, using the Graduate Committee Revision ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) form. Committee makeup should not be changed simply to accommodate short term scheduling issues.

**COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT DEADLINE** — The committee composition must be submitted to The Graduate School by the end of the student's second (2nd) term of graduate attendance.

See Graduate Program of Study ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) form.

See Fees & Holds ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/fees\\_holds.html](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/fees_holds.html)).

Back to top (p. )

**5.2.6 Optional Graduate Representative**

The Graduate Representative is an optional member of the graduate committee. The criteria for selection of the Graduate Representative and their responsibilities are listed below.

If the committee chair or a committee member or the student wishes to add a Graduate Representative to the student's committee, they should contact The Graduate School ([degreesandcertificates@montana.edu](mailto:degreesandcertificates@montana.edu)) for assistance. If the committee chair or committee member or student cannot agree on the choice of the Graduate Representative, one will be appointed by the Graduate School Dean.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTION** — Criteria for selecting a Graduate Representative are as follows:

- A Graduate representative must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member at MSU who is not a member of the student's degree-granting department.
- The student and the committee chair(s) are responsible for selecting and inviting the Graduate Representative to serve. The Graduate Representative must sign off on the student's Program of Study & Committee form.
- The Graduate School has the final approval on the eligibility of all Graduate Representatives.

**GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE'S RESPONSIBILITY** — The primary responsibility of the Graduate Representative is to ensure that examinations and defenses are conducted in a fair and satisfactory manner. The Graduate Representative is to attend all examinations and defenses with the exception of the written examination. The Graduate Representative, however, must be a participant in any reviews of the results of the written exam. At examinations and defenses the Graduate Representative has the same privileges to ask questions and offer comments that are accorded to any other committee member.

**EXAM REPORT** — An exam report is not required but will be recorded if submitted. See Graduate Representative Report ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)). Reports should be submitted to The Graduate School ([degreesandcertificates@montana.edu](mailto:degreesandcertificates@montana.edu)). Comments also may be made regarding the student's performance. The Graduate School will consider carefully any written comments submitted by the Graduate Representative.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.2.7 Program of Study

The program of study acts as a contract between the student, the department, the college, The Graduate School, and the University. The program of study, jointly developed by the graduate committee and the student, defines the minimum requirements for the degree. Other requirements as determined by the student's graduate committee may also be listed. Once a course is graded, it cannot be removed from a program of study. Courses applied toward one degree may not be used for another. Students may take classes beyond those listed on their program of study.

**PROGRAM APPROVAL** — The program of study must be recommended by the student's graduate committee chair and department head. Final approval rests with The Graduate School.

---

**Note: Approval comes with a fee. See Fees & Holds** (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

---

**FILING DEADLINES** — The program of study must be submitted on an official Graduate Program of Study (<http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/forms.html>) form to The Graduate School by the end of the student's second (2nd) term of graduate attendance. A one-time fee is associated with the filing and approval of this form. See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>). See Degree Requirements/General/Other Credits (p. 1).

A student must have an approved, not just submitted, Program of Study and Committee form on file with The Graduate School prior to sitting for any portion of the comprehensive exam or defense.

**CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM OF STUDY** — The program of study may be amended through the course of the student's graduate study. Changes to a student's program of study must be made through the Program of Study Revision ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) form and recommended by the graduate committee chair and the department head. Final approval rests with The Graduate School. No fee is associated with this form.

**HOLDS** — See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.2.8 Comprehensive Examination

The major department may administer a comprehensive examination. The form of this examination may be either or both oral and written sections. The purpose of this examination is to determine if the student has attained sufficient mastery of their discipline. In the research (thesis) master's (p. ), a comprehensive examination and thesis defense are required. These may be combined and offered simultaneously. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all committee members are available when scheduling an exam.

---

**Note:** Video Conferencing Policy (p. 3). ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq\\_general.html#degreq\\_general\\_video/](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html#degreq_general_video/))

---

**PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION** — Examinations for professional licensure or certification may not be used for or in place of the comprehensive examination.

**MINIMUM REGISTRATION** — The student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits at MSU during the term in which the examination is taken. If the student wishes to sit for the comprehensive examination during the time between terms, then the student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits in the term prior to or immediately following the time between terms.

**DEADLINE** — The last day to sit for the comprehensive examination is on or before the fourteenth (14th) business day prior to the end of the term the student intends to graduate.

**COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION** — See Committee (p. )

**GRADING** — The comprehensive examination is graded with either a passing or failing grade determined by a majority vote of the student's approved graduate committee.

**REPORTING THE RESULTS** — The committee and department head are responsible for submitting written notice of the results of the comprehensive examination to the student and to The Graduate School

no later than five (5) business days after the examination is held or after each section is administered. The Report on Comprehensive Exam/Thesis Defense (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) is to be submitted to The Graduate School by the department, not the student.

**ACCEPTABLE AGE** — The maximum time allowed between the comprehensive examination for research (thesis) master's (p. ) students and degree completion is five (5) years.

**FAILED EXAMINATION** — The student is allowed two (2) total attempts to pass the comprehensive examination. At least two (2) months must elapse before the second (2nd) attempt at the examination. Failure to pass the second (2nd) attempt results in termination of graduate study and dismissal from the academic program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a second (2nd) failed attempt are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.2.9 Defense of Thesis

In research (thesis) master's (p. ), the thesis defense examination is required. The student's approved graduate committee carries out this examination. The student should have prepared and distributed a draft of the thesis to the committee at least fourteen (14) business days prior to date of defense.

---

**Note:** Video Conferencing Policy (p. 3).

---

**MINIMUM REGISTRATION** — A student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits at MSU during the term in which the defense is held. If the student wishes to sit for the thesis defense during the time between terms, then the student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits in the term prior to or immediately following the time between terms.

**DEADLINE** — The last day to defend a thesis is on or before the fourteenth (14th) business day prior to the end of the term the student intends to graduate.

**COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION** — See Committee (p. )

**INVALID DEFENSE** — A thesis defense held in the absence of the chair of the student's graduate committee will be considered invalid and the defense will have to be rescheduled.

**GRADING** — The thesis defense is graded with either a passing or failing grade determined by a majority vote of the student's approved graduate committee.

**REPORTING THE RESULTS** — The graduate committee and department head are responsible for providing written notice of the results of the defense to the student and to The Graduate School no later than five (5) business days after the defense is held. The Report on Comprehensive Exam/Thesis Defense ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)) is to be submitted to The Graduate School by the department, not the student.

**FAILED DEFENSE** — The student is allowed two (2) total attempts to pass the defense. At least two (2) months must elapse before the second (2nd) attempt takes place. Failure to successfully pass the second (2nd) attempt results in termination of graduate study and dismissal from the academic program. Students who are dismissed from the program due

to failure to pass the defense are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program.

See the following sections for addition degree information:

Degree Requirements/General/Age of Courses (p. 1)  
Commencement & Degree/Certificate Completion (p. )  
Special Courses (p. 3)

Back to top (p. )

---

## 5.3 Doctoral Requirements

- 5.3.1 General Credit Requirements (p. )
- 5.3.2 Doctoral Committee (p. )
- 5.3.3 Optional Graduate Representative (p. )
- 5.3.4 Program of Study (p. )
- 5.3.5 Comprehensive Examination (p. )
- 5.3.6 Defense of Dissertation (p. )
- 5.3.7 Dissertation Requirements (p. )
- 5.3.8 Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD) (p. )

The Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) are awarded on evidence of a particular field of knowledge, the ability to carry out independent research, and the ability to present the results of such research in a scholarly manner.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.3.1 General Credit Requirements

- All doctoral students are expected to be familiar with both The Graduate School and their specific academic college and department degree requirements.
- All students earning a doctoral degree from MSU must complete a minimum of sixty (60) credit hours post-baccalaureate, of which eighteen (18) to thirty (30) must be dissertation credits. The satisfactory completion of certain courses is stipulated by the department.
- Only those courses listed on an approved Graduate Program of Study (p. ) are applicable toward graduate degree credit requirements.
- A maximum of thirty (30) credits from a previously earned master's degree (from MSU or another accredited University) may be applied toward the sixty (60) credit minimum required for the doctoral degree.
- A minimum of thirty (30) credits applicable to the degree must be taken from MSU. The combined total of credits considered from an external master's degree and any transfer credits (p. ) may not exceed thirty (30) credits.
- New faculty who are bringing graduate transfer students to Montana State should email The Graduate School ([degreesandcertificates@montana.edu](mailto:degreesandcertificates@montana.edu)) for transfer information specific to your situation.
- See Minimum Enrollment (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-enrollment-registration-residency/>)

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.3.2 Doctoral Committee

The graduate committee advises the student on academic matters and is the examining committee for the oral and/or written doctoral comprehensive examination and dissertation defense.



---

**Note: If a doctoral student is not registered for three (3) consecutive terms, not counting summer, they will be considered inactive and the graduate representative on their committee will be released. Once a student has been reactivated (via an Intent to Register (<https://www.montana.edu/registrar/Returning.html>) form) they will need to confirm their committee is valid. See Re-enrollment/Registration (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-enrollment-registration-residency/>).**

---

**COMMITTEE CHAIR** — A tenured or tenure-track faculty member serves as the chair of the student's graduate committee and acts as a channel of communication within the degree-granting department. In the event that the student does not select a chair of their graduate committee within the third (3rd) term of attendance as a doctoral student, the department head will appoint a temporary advisor. This advisor will advise the student until a tenured or tenure-track faculty member is selected as chair of the graduate committee.

**CO-CHAIR** — A co-chair is not required. If a student elects to have a co-chair serve on their committee, they may choose one of the following committee compositions:

1. Chair, co-chair, and members.
2. Co-chair, co-chair, and members. If there are two co-chairs, at least one must be tenured/tenure-track faculty. For information regarding non-tenure track committee members, see section below.
3. More than two co-chairs and members. If there are more than two co-chairs, the majority must be tenure/tenure-track faculty.

**COMMITTEE COMPOSITION** — Doctoral committees should be formed in the best interest of the student. A research doctoral committee is composed of a minimum of four members. For professional doctorates (e.g. DNP), upon matriculation each student should be assigned at least one faculty advisor and before a professional doctoral student registers for a professional paper and/or a comprehensive exam they must form a graduate committee with a minimum of two members and have an approved program of study on file.

For all doctoral committees, the majority of the committee and the committee chair should be from the degree-granting academic unit or be affiliated with the academic unit. The chair must hold a doctoral degree. The graduate committee chair and the academic unit head recommend the committee composition to The Graduate School. Final approval of committee composition rests with The Graduate School.

A student and committee can elect to add a graduate representative to the student's graduate committee. See Optional Graduate Representative (below).

#### EXPECTED ROLES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The expected roles of the committee chair are to

- Ensure that all graduate program and Graduate School standards and requirements relative to the graduate degree are met, and that any conditions set by the committee are fulfilled.

The expected roles of committee members are to

- Provide diverse opinions and advice on the student's scholarship
  - Members should have expertise in the subject area as defined by the direction of the student's scholarship.
  - Each committee member should be available to serve as a resource for the student, independent of the chair. Every committee

member should be able to provide valuable insight and advice to students on their scholarship.

- Express their independent evaluation of the scholarship
  - On a committee where there exists a potential for a lack of independent evaluation the academic unit head should request a graduate representative to join the committee. The role of the graduate representative is to monitor that the work of the committee adheres to graduate school policy, but not necessarily to provide expertise in the subject area.
  - If the student believes that there exists a potential for a lack of independent evaluation, the student may ask the academic unit head to request a graduate representative for their committee.

**NON-TENURE TRACK COMMITTEE MEMBERS** — Committee members not holding tenure or tenure-track faculty status at MSU, including people from outside MSU, must be approved by the student's department head. In some cases, these committee members may act as co-chair of a student's committee.

**CHANGES TO THE COMMITTEE** — The student may make changes to their committee, using the Graduate Committee Revision (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form. Committee makeup should not be changed simply to accommodate short term scheduling issues.

**COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT DEADLINE** — The committee composition must be submitted to The Graduate School by the end of the student's third (3rd) semester of graduate attendance. See Graduate Program of Study & Committee form. See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

Back to top (p.       )

---

### 5.3.3 Optional Graduate Representative

The Graduate Representative is an optional member of the graduate committee. The criteria for selection of the Graduate Representative and their responsibilities are listed below.

If the committee chair or a committee member or the student wishes to add a Graduate Representative to the student's committee, they should contact The Graduate School ([degreesandcertificates@montana.edu](mailto:degreesandcertificates@montana.edu)) for assistance. If the committee chair or committee member or student cannot agree on the choice of the Graduate Representative, one will be appointed by the Graduate School Dean.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTION** — Criteria for selecting a Graduate Representative are as follows:

- A Graduate representative must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member at MSU who is not a member of the student's degree-granting department.
- The student and the committee chair(s) are responsible for selecting and inviting the Graduate Representative to serve. The Graduate Representative must sign off on the student's Program of Study & Committee form.
- The Graduate School has the final approval on the eligibility of all Graduate Representatives.

**GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE'S RESPONSIBILITY** — The primary responsibility of the Graduate Representative is to ensure that examinations and defenses are conducted in a fair and satisfactory manner. The Graduate Representative is to attend all examinations and defenses with the exception of the written examination. The Graduate Representative, however, must be a participant in any reviews of the results of the written exam. At

examinations and defenses the Graduate Representative has the same privileges to ask questions and offer comments that are accorded to any other committee member.

**EXAM REPORT** — An exam report is not required but will be recorded if submitted. See Graduate Representative Report ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms\\_pos](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html#forms_pos)). Reports should be submitted to The Graduate School ([degreesandcertificates@montana.edu](mailto:degreesandcertificates@montana.edu)). Comments also may be made regarding the student's performance. The Graduate School will consider carefully any written comments submitted by the Graduate Representative.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.3.4 Program of Study

The program of study acts as a contract between the student, the department, the college, The Graduate School, and the University. The program of study defines the minimum requirements for the degree. Approval of a program of study is a two-step process. The first step is the submission to The Graduate School and the second step is a review by the ODP.

The graduate committee and the student together develop the Graduate Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>). Once a listed course is taken and graded, it cannot be removed from a program of study. Courses applied toward one degree may not be used for another. Exception: the graduate committee may recommend that up to thirty (30) credits obtained from a master's degree can be applied to a doctoral degree.

Students may take classes beyond those listed on their program of study. Other requirements as determined by the student's graduate committee may also be listed.

**PROGRAM APPROVAL**— The program of study must be recommended by the graduate committee chair and department head. Final approval rests with The Graduate School.

---

**Note: Approval comes with a fee. See Fees & Holds** (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

---

**FILING DEADLINES** — The program of study must be submitted on an official Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form to The Graduate School by the end of the student's third (3rd) semester of graduate attendance. A one-time fee is associated with the filing of this form. See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>). See Requirements/General/Other Credits (p. 1).

A student must have an approved Program of Study and Committee form on file with The Graduate School prior to sitting for any portion of the comprehensive examination or dissertation defense.

**CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM OF STUDY** — The program of study may be amended through the course of the student's graduate study. Changes to a student's program of study must be made through the Program of Study Revision (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form and recommended by the graduate committee chair and department head. Final approval rests with The Graduate School. No fee is associated with this form.

**HOLDS** — See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.3.5 Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination is the major academic examination during the doctoral study that assures that the student has attained sufficient mastery of their discipline. Some departments use the passing of the comprehensive examination as the examination that admits the doctoral student to candidacy. This examination is valid for five (5) years from the term of successful completion.

---

**Note: See Video Conferencing Policy** (p. 3).

---

**WRITTEN AND ORAL** — The comprehensive examination requirements are department specific. A student must have approved Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) forms on file with The Graduate School prior to sitting for any portion of the comprehensive examination or dissertation defense. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all committee members, including the graduate representative if applicable, are available when scheduling the comprehensive examination. See Optional Graduate Representative. (p. )

**MINIMUM REGISTRATION** — The student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits at MSU during the term in which the examination is taken. If the student wishes to sit for the comprehensive examination during the time between terms, then the student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits in the term prior to or immediately following the time between terms.

**DEADLINE** — The last day to take the comprehensive examination is on or before the fourteenth (14th) business day prior to the end of the term that the student intends to graduate.

**COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION** — See Committee (p. )

**GRADING** — The comprehensive examination is graded with either a passing or failing grade determined by a majority vote of the student's approved graduate committee.

**REPORTING THE RESULTS** — The graduate committee and department head are responsible for submitting written notice of the results of the comprehensive examination to the student and to The Graduate School no later than five (5) business days after the examination is held or after each section is administered. The Report on Comprehensive Exam/ Dissertation Defense (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) is to be submitted to The Graduate School by the department, not the student.

**FAILED EXAMINATION** — The student is allowed two (2) total attempts to pass the comprehensive examination. At least six (6) months must elapse before the second (2nd) attempt at the examination. Failure to pass the second (2nd) attempt results in termination of graduate study and dismissal from the academic program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a second (2nd) failed attempt are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program.

---

Back to top (p. )

### 5.3.6 Defense of Dissertation

All doctoral candidates must defend their dissertation, with the exception of Ed.S. candidates. The defense usually consists of a public presentation and an oral examination of the candidate's research. The candidate must have approved Graduate Program of Study & Committee (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) forms on file with The Graduate School prior to the defense of dissertation. The public is invited to the oral presentation of the defense. Following the public portion of the defense, the committee chair will excuse the public from the defense. The graduate committee then will examine the candidate's knowledge of the research in depth.

---

**Note:** See Video Conferencing Policy (p. 3).

---

**DEADLINE** — The last day to defend a dissertation is on or before the fourteenth (14th) business day prior to the end of the term the candidate intends to graduate.

**COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION** — See Committee (p. )

**MINIMUM REGISTRATION** — The candidate must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits at MSU during the term in which the defense is held. If the candidate wishes to sit for the dissertation defense during the time between terms, then the student must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits in the term prior to or immediately following the time between terms.

**NOTIFICATION OF THE DEFENSE DATE** — Each member of the graduate committee must be given a minimum of fourteen (14) business days prior to the defense date to read the dissertation. The graduate committee chair should discourage a candidate from defending if the candidate is not adequately prepared.

**ADVERTISING THE DEFENSE** — The candidate and the major department are responsible for submitting an announcement to the MSU calendar (<http://calendar.msu.montana.edu/>) at least seven (7) business days prior to the defense with the following information:

- candidate's name,
- dissertation title,
- defense time and place, and
- dissertation location.

---

**Note: Announcements must be tagged with the correct presentation code so they appear on the Graduate School website. Complete instructions, with screen shots, can be found in this "How To" document.** ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/resources/how-to/create\\_defense\\_event.pdf](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/resources/how-to/create_defense_event.pdf))

---

**INVALID DEFENSE** — A dissertation defense held in the absence of the candidate's graduate committee chair will be considered invalid and the defense will have to be rescheduled. See Optional Graduate Representative. (p. )

**GRADING** — The dissertation defense is graded with either a passing or failing grade determined by a majority vote of the candidate's approved graduate committee.

**REPORTING THE RESULTS** — The graduate committee and department head are responsible for providing written notice of the results of the defense to the candidate and to The Graduate School no later than five (5) business days after the defense is held. The Report on Comprehensive Exam/Dissertation Defense (<https://www.montana.edu/>

[gradschool/forms.html](#)) is to be submitted to The Graduate School by the department, not the candidate.

**FAILED DEFENSE** — The candidate is allowed two (2) total attempts to pass the defense. At least two (2) months must elapse before the second (2nd) attempt takes place. Failure to pass the second (2nd) attempt successfully results in termination of graduate study and dismissal from the academic program. Candidates who are dismissed from the program due to failure to pass the defense are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program.

**AGE OF DEFENSE** — The dissertation defense must be conducted no later than five (5) years from the term of successful completion of the comprehensive examination.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.3.7 Dissertation Requirements

A dissertation, written by the candidate seeking the degree and based on original research, is a requirement for all doctoral degree programs. The final dissertation must be presented in an acceptable form. See Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD) (<http://www.montana.edu/etd/>).

**DISSERTATION (690) and SCHOLARLY PROJECT (675) CREDITS**

---

- Only eighteen (18) to thirty (30) dissertation (690) credits are applicable to degree requirements. Fourteen (14) credits of dissertation (690) are required for Ed.D. candidates.
- DNP students must take DNP scholarly project (675) credits. See College of Nursing (<https://www.montana.edu/nursing/graduate/>).
- If a candidate is using faculty time or university facilities to work on their dissertation, they must be registered for dissertation (690) credits.
- Dissertation credits are pass/fail or N grade
  - "N" grades ([http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Credits\\_and\\_Grades](http://catalog.montana.edu/curriculum-enrollment-graduation/#Credits_and_Grades)) may be assigned to students enrolled in specified continual or on-going courses only (for example, 590 and 690 thesis courses). This grade indicates that, although students have made progress, they have not completed the course objectives successfully. These students must re-enroll in the course immediately in order to continue with the course work and complete the course objectives. The N grade does not affect the GPA.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.3.8 Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD)

The dissertation must meet all formatting requirements (<https://www.montana.edu/etd/>) set forth by The Graduate School. Final authority for approval or denial of a dissertation rests with the Graduate Dean.

See Degree Requirements/General/Age of Courses (p. 1)

See Special Courses (p. 3)

See Commencement & Degree/Certificate Completion (p. )

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.4 Certificate Requirements

General Requirements (p. 12)

Credits (p. 12)

## Certificate Program of Student (p. 12)

Graduate level certificates are offered as coursework-based programs for students seeking further knowledge in a discipline. Currently, certificate options are offered by several departments. See Graduate Areas of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/academics/graduate/>).

All graduate certificates shall require a minimum of 12 credits. The Graduate School may permit an academic unit exception for a certificate program requiring 9-11 credits if such an amount is sufficient to obtain licensure or continuing education credits necessary to secure or maintain employment credentials. (Updated 11/5/2020)

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Credit requirements are specific to each graduate certificate program.
- Only those courses listed on an approved Graduate Certificate Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) are applicable.
- Students in graduate certificate programs may pursue a master's or doctoral degree concurrently.
- Graduate certificate students are subject to the same probation and suspension policies as graduate degree candidates. See Grades and Academic Standing/Probation and Suspension (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-grades-academic-standing/>).

## CREDITS

- A maximum of one-third (1/3) of the coursework may be 4xx-level.
- A combined total of three (3) credits of coursework on the program of study can be transfer or non-degree or reserved credits. See Degree Requirements/General/Other Credits (p. 1).
- Seminar (594/500), Independent Study (592/570), Internship (598/576) and departmental practicum courses may not comprise more than one-third (1/3) of the minimum required credits for a graduate certificate.
- Special Topics (591/580) course(s) may be included.
- 3xx (or lower numbered) courses are not applicable.
- Pass/Fail credits are not applicable.
- Undergraduate Independent Study (492/470), Professional Development (588), or Undergraduate Seminars (494/400) are not counted toward requirements for the graduate certificate.
- Registration in Graduate Consultation (589) is permitted only for graduate certificate students who need additional faculty or staff time to complete the requirements for the certificate. Credits in 589 are not counted toward requirements for the graduate certificate.

**CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OF STUDY**—The program of study acts as a contract between the student, the Department, the College, The Graduate School, and the University. The program of study defines the minimum requirements for the certificate. Other requirements, as determined by the student's major department, also may be listed. The Graduate Certificate Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) is developed jointly by the graduate certificate program lead, a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, and the student.

**PROGRAM APPROVAL** — The head of the student's department must approve the program of study. Final approval rests with The Graduate School.

---

**Note: A fee is associated with the approval of this form.**

See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

---

**CHANGES TO PROGRAM OF STUDY** — The program of study may be amended through the course of the student's graduate study. Changes to a student's program of study must be made through the Graduate Program Change (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form and approved by The Graduate School. A course listed on an approved program of study, if graded, cannot be removed.

**FILING DEADLINE** — The program of study must be submitted on a Graduate Certificate Program of Study (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form to The Graduate School by the end of the first (1st) semester of graduate study. See Fees & Holds (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-fees-and-holds/>).

See the following sections for additional degree information:

Degree Requirements/General/Age of Courses (p. 1)  
Commencement & Degree/Certificate Completion (p. )  
Special Courses (p. 3)

Back to top (p. )

---

## 5.5 Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD)

- 5.5.1 Approval of ETDs (p. )
- 5.5.2 Publication of ETDs (p. )

---

### 5.5.1 Approval of ETDs

All theses and dissertations are for partial fulfillment of the degree program requirements. The Graduate School's Formatting Advisor is responsible for recommending approval of the thesis or dissertation to The Graduate School Dean.

Theses and dissertations must meet all requirements in The Graduate School General Guidelines for Electronic Theses and Dissertations (<http://www.montana.edu/etd/>). Copy quality, punctuation and spelling, the subject researched, and completeness of the research are the responsibility of the student's department and Graduate Committee. The Graduate School Dean has the authority to deny final approval of the thesis or dissertation on grounds of non-satisfactory overall quality.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.5.2 Publication of ETDs

**SCHOLARWORKS** - All ETDs (theses and dissertations) are published by ScholarWorks (<http://scholarworks.montana.edu/xmlui/>) through the MSU Library. Students may choose to either have their ETD available worldwide, or withheld from the public for a period of up to one (1) year. After one (1) year, all ETDs will be available online to the general public. Under special circumstances, a request for an extension of time may be granted at the discretion of the Graduate Dean.

The Graduate School will transmit all theses and dissertations to the MSU Library following approval of the document by The Graduate School Dean.

**UMI/PROQUEST** - Dissertations can optionally be submitted for publishing by ProQuest (<http://www.proquest.com/>) Dissertation Publishing.

**PROCEDURE OF SUBMISSION** — The Graduate School requires all students to submit the electronic version of their thesis or dissertation to The Graduate School instead of paper copies. A final copy of a thesis or dissertation, in portable document format (PDF), is to be completed and submitted to The Graduate School's Formatting Advisor by 5:00 pm on the

published deadline of the semester of graduation. See Dates & Deadlines (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/dates-deadlines.html>).

**PROFESSIONAL PAPERS** — The Graduate School does not require submission of professional papers. If submission is required by the department, the student must follow the formatting requirements (<http://www.montana.edu/etd/>), procedures, and deadlines.

**THESIS/DISSERTATION PATENT POLICY** — Patent or provisional patent filings based on data and results included in a thesis/dissertation should be submitted to the U.S. Patent Office (USPTO) prior to submission of the thesis/dissertation to The Graduate School. If a patent or provisional patent is not filed prior to the submission of the thesis/dissertation, the student, the graduate committee chair, and the department head may submit a written request to The Graduate School to withhold the thesis/dissertation from the ScholarWorks website. Upon receipt of notice from the USPTO that the patent has been received and filed, the department head shall inform The Graduate School that the thesis/dissertation is to be released for public access on the ScholarWorks website.

Back to top (p. )

---

## 5.6 Commencement and Degree/Certificate Completion

- 5.6.1 Graduation Application (p. )
- 5.6.2 One-credit Extension (p. )
- 5.6.3 Eligibility to Participate in Commencement (p. )
- 5.6.4 Diplomas and Transcripts (p. )
- 5.6.5 Withdrawing & Reapplying for Graduation (p. )
- 5.6.6 Financial Obligations (p. )

MSU confers degrees and certificates three (3) times a year: December, May, and August. Diplomas are dated the last day of the term in which the requirements for the degree are completed.

---

**Note: Candidates receiving a certificate do not receive a diploma.**

---

Candidates must be enrolled in at least three (3) credits at MSU the term they intend to complete their degree. Certificate students are required to be in at least one (1) credit at MSU the term they intend to complete their certificate. Candidates may confirm their current degree or certificate program and major by logging into MyInfo ([https://prodmyinfo.montana.edu/pls/bzagent/twbkwbis.P\\_GenMenu/?name=homepage](https://prodmyinfo.montana.edu/pls/bzagent/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu/?name=homepage)) and viewing their unofficial transcript.

Auditing and review of degree or certificate requirements begins after the graduation application deadlines. Candidates can expect to receive email notification from the Office of Degree Programs & Certificates once audit and review are complete.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.6.1 Graduation Application

The candidate must file a Graduation Application (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) form with The Graduate School in the term of intended graduation. A fee (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policystext-fees-and-holds/>) is associated with the filing of this form.

**DEADLINES** —  
 Fall - September 20  
 Spring - February 5

Summer - June 10

A letter of explanation from the chair or student will be required for all late Graduation Applications.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.6.2 One-credit Extension

A One-credit Extension allows students additional time past the intended term of graduation up to the first day of the following term. Appropriate reasons to utilize the One-credit Extension are as follows:

- To satisfactorily complete all coursework (including "I" grade make-ups).
- To complete a comprehensive exam or defend thesis/dissertation past the published deadline for the intended term.
- To satisfactorily complete all of the recommended corrections to the thesis/dissertation and submit all required copies in final format to The Graduate School past the published deadline for the intended term.
- Approval of the thesis/dissertation by the Graduate Dean.
- Successful completion of all other degree requirements as determined by the department and The Graduate School, including submission of all documentation required for graduation.

To use the One-credit Extension, the student must do the following:

- Withdraw their Graduation Application ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/withdraw\\_app.html](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/withdraw_app.html)) for the original term of graduation on The Graduate School website by the end of the current term (if applicable);
- Submit a new Graduation Application (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>) for the following term indicating you are using the One-credit Extension by the end of the current term; and
- Register for one (1) credit the following term. *To register for the one (1) credit, you may be able to do this yourself or contact your department admin or committee chair to register you for the appropriate credit/course.*

The degree will not be conferred until the end of the following term. If all degree requirements are not met by 5:00 p.m. on the published deadline, the student will be required to register for an additional two (2) credits to meet the minimum of three (3) credits and to complete graduation requirements.

Back to top (p. )

---

### 5.6.3 Eligibility to Participate in Commencement

MSU allows only those candidates who have completed all requirements for the degree (coursework, examinations, and final papers, including approval of the thesis or dissertation by the Graduate Dean) and who have applied to graduate by the deadline to participate in commencement exercises. Candidates listed in MSU's commencement book are those who have identified themselves as eligible to graduate. Being listed in the commencement book does not imply completion of the degree.

---

**Note: Candidates receiving a certificate do not participate in commencement.**

---

Candidates utilizing the one-credit extension, and who have documentation from their committee chair that assures completion of degree requirements

by the one-credit extension deadline, may participate in the current term's ceremony.

Candidates who participate in commencement must wear appropriate academic caps and gowns. These may be purchased from the MSU Bookstore.

See Commencement (<https://www.montana.edu/commencement/>)

Back to top (p. )

---

#### 5.6.4 Diplomas and Transcripts

All candidates should log into MyInfo ([https://prodmyinfo.montana.edu/pls/bzagent/twbkwbis.P\\_GenMenu?name=homepage](https://prodmyinfo.montana.edu/pls/bzagent/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=homepage)) and update their mailing address and legal name for their diploma. Diplomas are dated the last day of the term in which the requirements for the degree are completed.

Transcripts may be ordered online through the Registrar's Office (<http://www.montana.edu/registrar/transcript/>).

Back to top (p. )

---

#### 5.6.5 Withdrawing & Reapplying for Graduation

Candidates who have applied to graduate and are unable to meet the requirements for the term of intended graduation must withdraw their Graduation Application. Withdrawal requires completing and submitting the Withdraw Graduation Application ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/withdraw\\_app.html](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/withdraw_app.html)) form. The deadline to withdraw is the last day of the term of intended graduation.

In addition, if a student plans to use the One-credit Extension (p. ) they also must 1) withdraw their Graduation Application and 2) submit a new Graduation Application by the end of the original intended term of graduation. Otherwise, students have until the normal posted term deadlines to apply for graduation.

Back to top (p. )

---

#### 5.6.6 Financial Obligations

All candidates for degrees must fully satisfy their financial obligations to the University (or make arrangements with MSU for doing so) as a condition for completing their degree. Candidates failing to comply with this requirement shall not be eligible for graduation, diplomas, degrees or any transcripts of their records.

Back to top (p. )