

NDSU GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate Student Handbook



NDSU Graduate School
106 Putnam Hall
1349 12th. Ave. NW
Fargo, ND 58105

Admission and Business Operations Teams: ndsu.grad.school@ndsu.edu
Academic Support Team: ndsu.gsa@ndsu.edu

Ph: (701) 231-7033
Fax: (701) 231-6524

Office Hours: Monday-Friday
8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (academic year)
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. (summer/University breaks)



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Non-discrimination Policy

North Dakota State University (NDSU) does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to: Vice Provost, Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 201, NDSU Main Campus, Fargo, ND, 58108, 701-231- 7708, [ndsuet.toaa@ndsuet.edu](mailto:ndsuetoaa@ndsuet.edu).

This publication is available in alternate format upon request. Please contact the owner of the publication (701) 231-5945 or ndsuet.gsa@ndsuet.edu.

NDSU Land Acknowledgement

We collectively acknowledge that we gather at NDSU, a land grant institution, on the traditional lands of the Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda) and Anishinaabe Peoples in addition to many diverse Indigenous Peoples still connected to these lands. We honor with gratitude Mother Earth and the Indigenous Peoples who have walked with her throughout generations. We will continue to learn how to live in unity with Mother Earth and build strong, mutually beneficial, trusting relationships with Indigenous Peoples of our region.

Code of Student Conduct

The "[Rights and Responsibilities of Community: A Code of Student Conduct](#)" sets forth the expectations of student behavior and details the rights afforded within the conduct process at NDSU.

[Acceptable Use Guidelines for Electronic Communication Resources](#)

The College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies houses the Graduate School, the Center for Writers, and interdisciplinary programs.

The Graduate Student Handbook is a resource for policies and procedures for graduate students. As the handbook is updated and published twice each academic year, policies and/or procedures may change in between publication times. Contact the Graduate School with questions or concerns regarding any of the information contained in this handbook.

Admission

The Graduate School admits students to pursue a single specified degree program beginning in the semester stated admission letter. There is no transfer process between programs. To pursue a degree in a different program requires a new application and application fee.

Degree objective changes are allowed within the same graduate program. If a student wishes to continue to higher degree in the same program, a [Continuation of Program](#) form must be submitted. If a student chooses to change their degree objective within the same program, the [Degree Objective Change](#) form is used. Note that some programs may require the student submit a new application to make either of these changes.

A student may pursue two credentials concurrently. If the credentials are from two different programs, the student is responsible to notify both programs of their dual program status. A student pursuing multiple graduate programs must maintain continuous enrollment in each program.

Accelerated Degree Programs

An undergraduate student admitted to an accelerated master's degree program must meet all policies and guidelines for both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. For additional information, see the [combined/accelerated degree programs of study](#) page.

Admission Status

Graduate students are admitted under one of the following classifications:

Full Graduate Standing

These students have met all requirements for admission and have been accepted by a program leading to a graduate degree. A student must have full graduate standing to receive a graduate degree.

Conditional Standing

Students in conditional standing do not meet all requirements for admission or have

deficiencies in prerequisite course work; however, they show potential for successful graduate study. Upon admission in conditional standing, the student's program must specify conditions to be satisfied for a change in status to full graduate standing. The Graduate School places admitted students with an undergraduate cumulative GPA below 3.0 at the time of admission in conditional standing. The condition placed by the Graduate School requires the student to earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in their first nine graduate didactic credits; additional conditions may be placed by the student's academic program.

Students admitted under conditional status are automatically placed on academic warning until the conditions of admission are met. A registration hold is applied to subsequent semesters until the first semester grades are reviewed. If a student on academic warning fails to achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 in the first semester of attendance, the student is placed on academic probation. The student may not earn more than 12 semester hours of graduate credit while in conditional status.

Non-Degree Enrollment

This category is for individuals who desire to pursue study beyond the baccalaureate degree for personal growth and improvement of skills but not to work toward an advanced degree objective.

Non-degree students who wish to become degree-seeking students must complete the admission process through the Graduate School (including a new application and fee). No more than 10 credits earned as a non-degree student may be used toward a graduate degree, and the student's adviser, supervisory committee (if applicable) and the dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Programs must approve these credits.

The Role of the Graduate School

The Graduate School is the processing center for all documents necessary for completion of the graduate degree, from admission to graduation. Graduate School staff work with students to provide policy interpretation, assistance with completing forms, auditing of completion requirements, and disquisition review. In addition, the Graduate School offers opportunities for professional development, support services, and funding.

[Graduate School Staff Directory](#) is available on the [Graduate School website](#).

We want you to be successful in your graduate studies!

Academic Support Specialists

The academic support staff work with specific colleges and the departments within those colleges. They serve as liaisons among the Graduate School, students, and departments;

monitor student progress; interpret policies; serve as a resource for academic departments; and review all student documents to ensure they follow Graduate School policies and procedures.

Business and Operations Team (tuition waivers/assistantships)

Business coordinators process graduate assistantship hiring and payroll forms, including contracts and tuition waivers. They also monitor graduate assistant trainings. Contact your business coordinator with questions regarding assistantship forms and tuition.

Center for Writers

The [Center for Writers](#) provides free writing support to all NDSU students, faculty, and staff. The center offers one-on-one sessions, writing courses, workshops, grant-writing guidance, services for distance students, and a wealth of resources for writers and writing instructors.

The Disquisition Processor, who is part of the Center for Writers, is responsible for reviewing and publishing graduate student papers, theses, and dissertations, to ensure that the format and layout conform to [NDSU's guidelines](#) and that the final, published disquisitions reflect well on each student and NDSU's graduate programs.

Graduate Professional Skills Academy

The [Graduate Professional Skills \(GPS\) Academy](#) is a professional development and career skills program designed by the Graduate School to help prepare you for your career after graduation. Along with coordinating events, GPS Academy provides software to track your participation and achievements with a graphic organizer that helps you focus on the skills you need in your chosen field.

Expectations and Responsibilities

What to Expect

Attending Graduate School is very different from an undergraduate experience. Graduate School is self-directed. Students are responsible for learning the policies, procedures and deadlines necessary to earn the graduate degree. Students can expect academic rigor, including a higher level of reading and writing.

There are also wonderful opportunities that are part of the graduate student experience. Students often develop collegial relationships with other students. There are opportunities to conduct and present research, choose areas of research specific to interests, participate in department and college committees, and development opportunities.

You will also find the traditional educational, cultural, and athletic offerings of a university campus at NDSU.

Academic Calendar

For academic, registration and financial dates and deadlines, see the [academic calendar page](#).

Student Responsibility

- Learn and observe the [policies](#), procedures and deadlines of the Graduate School, [the institution](#) and your graduate program.
- Initiate forms and other documents and ensure they are received by posted deadlines and policy requirements. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact your academic support specialist.
- Maintain satisfactory academic standing and progress towards your degree. All graduate students must maintain a minimum cumulative 3.00 GPA.
- Read emails sent to your **campus email address**. Email is an official mode of communication at NDSU. The Graduate School uses your campus email address to send correspondence regarding your academic standing, degree status, or other information related to your graduate career.

Lack of awareness or understanding of a policy or deadline is not a valid reason for an exception to the policy or deadline.

Secrets of Success in Graduate School

While everyone is different, there are a few tips that should help anyone seeking their graduate degree.

Get to know other students. Students provide a support system that will give you moral support and advice regarding your department, NDSU, and the Graduate School. The [Graduate Student Council](#) (GSC) is a fantastic way to meet other students.

Plan. The planning you do now saves you time as you complete your degree.

- Discuss your professional goals with your adviser.
- Develop an individual degree plan (IDP, [myIDP.org](#)) and update your adviser on your progress.
- Work with your adviser to form a supervisory committee and submit your plan of study **by the end of your first year of study**.
- Schedule yearly meetings with your supervisory committee.

Use your resources. There are also other resources on campus to help: the Center for Writers, Counseling Center, etc.

Adviser

The role of the adviser will vary among programs and degree types. Even within the same program, different advisers may have different perspectives on the adviser role.

At the graduate level, many advisers will expect students to take initiative and be proactive. Discuss with your adviser his/her availability, preferred meeting frequency and preferred mode of communication. The major adviser-student relationship must be a mutually acceptable one.

Conflict resolution

The Graduate School encourages students to seek resolution of problems at the level most closely related to the origin of the specific disputes. This means:

- the student is to first discuss the problem(s) with the person(s) directly involved;
- if the student is not satisfied after discussing the problem with the person(s) directly involved or if discussion of the problem(s) seems inappropriate because of the nature of the student's complaint, the student should seek advice from the administrator of the program; and
- depending on the nature of the problem(s), the program administrator or student's supervisory committee chair may deal with the situation directly, advise the student to discuss the problem(s) with the appropriate academic dean and/or the Dean of the Graduate School, or advise the student of the appropriate grievance procedure to pursue.

The [NDSU ombudsperson](#) also provides consultation and conflict resolution to students, faculty, and academic affairs staff members.

Scholastic Standards

To be in academic good standing and to receive a graduate degree, a student must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0. While some courses may be used for graduate credit with a grade of C, courses with grades of D, F, U, and I may not be used for graduate credit.

Earning more than two grades of C, D, F or U may be grounds for dismissal upon recommendation by the program administrator.

Academic Warning and Academic Probation

Students admitted in conditional status and students in good standing whose cumulative GPA drops to less than 3.0 at any time of attendance is placed on academic warning. A student on

academic warning cannot register for the following semester until the grades for the current semester post.

A student on academic warning whose cumulative GPA remains below 3.0 for the subsequent semester of registration, is placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation may not continue their studies until a remediation plan is filed and approved by the dean of the Graduate School. Students on academic probation will be removed from their graduate assistantship.

A student on academic probation that does not submit an acceptable remediation plan before the last day to register for the semester or does not fulfill the requirements outlined on their approved remediation plan will be dismissed from the Graduate School. Dismissal appears on the student's official academic transcript.

Transfer credit

Students with previous graduate levels may wish to transfer credits to their NDSU program. Consult your adviser and/or graduate program director to determine if your program accepts transfer credits and if the credits you wish to transfer meet departmental and Graduate School requirements.

Transfer credits are processed when the plan of study is submitted. If your program does not require a plan of study, submit a [Change to Plan of Study](#) form to add the credits to your transcript and degree progress.

Any transcripts for transfer credit must be filed with the Graduate School prior to the plan of study or change to plan of study form. To see if credits are eligible for transfer, please click on the applicable link: [master's transfer policy](#) or [doctoral transfer policy](#).

Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) Grades

Some courses, such as master's paper, thesis, or dissertation research, are graded as S/U. S/U grades are not used in calculating semester or cumulative GPA. However, programs may use U grades to determine if the student is making adequate degree progress.

Audited Courses

The Graduate School follows the NDSU policy regarding [auditing courses](#). Audited courses cannot be used on a plan of study.

Dual Career Registration

Graduate students may take undergraduate courses as prerequisites for graduate courses, fulfill conditions of admission or as required by their academic program. Undergraduate courses do

not fulfill graduate degree requirements unless the program has a foreign language requirement. Undergraduate courses are billed at the undergraduate course rate and are not covered by a tuition unless the course is to fulfill a foreign language requirement.

Registration

Course registration dates and deadlines are on the [university registrar's calendar](#). Students register using the Campus Connection system. Instructions and other registration information is available on this website: <https://www.ndsu.edu/registrar/registration/registering/>. The deadline to register is the fourth week of the semester. Students who wish to register after the fourth week must follow the [registration appeals process](#).

Graduate School Holds

Registration holds are placed on a student's account for many reasons. Graduate School places registration holds for the following reasons.

Graduate School Hold (GSH)

Holds with this code are placed on a student's record for two reasons:

Degree completion verification – The Graduate School must receive final transcript with your posted bachelor's or master's degree before registering for courses. See your admission letter for details.

Plan of study – You must submit a plan of study and receive Graduate School approval before registering for courses.

Conditional Admission (CAN)

Students admitted in conditional status cannot register for subsequent semesters until the first semester grades are reviewed. If the cumulative GPA is 3.0 or above the student may register for the following semester. This process will continue until the student has completed the conditions of admission at which time the hold is removed.

See your admission letter for details regarding the conditions of your admission.

Graduate Academic Standing (GAS)

Students on academic warning or academic probation cannot register for subsequent semesters, as the Graduate School must review grades at the end of each semester until the student returns to good standing. Please refer to the letter received regarding your status.

Continuous Enrollment

Students are required to register for at least one graduate level credit each semester (fall and

spring) until all degree requirements are complete [including Graduate School review and approval of the thesis, paper, or dissertation]. Summer registration is required for students completing a preliminary or final examination that semester. Registration for the prior or next semester will cover examinations that occur during semester breaks.

Departments may have other policies regarding continuous enrollment, which may require a higher minimum credit enrollment and/or a summer registration requirement for all students. International graduate students must follow the guidelines set forth for visa compliance.

Credit/Course Load

Nine credits are considered a full-time graduate load. Graduate assistants working 20 hours per week are considered full-time if registered for five or more graduate credits. To receive financial aid, students must be enrolled at least half-time (5 credits). Loan deferment may also require full- or half-time status Eligibility varies with financial aid programs; students should contact their lender for requirements.

Department policies may require a higher minimum credit enrollment and/or a summer registration requirement for all students. International graduate students must follow the guidelines set forth for visa compliance.

Students should register for no more than 15 credit hours in any semester. Graduate program coordinators should submit overload via email to the appropriate Academic Support Specialists for consideration.

Incompletes

The Graduate School follows the [university policy and procedure](#) for incomplete grades.

Grade Appeals

The Graduate School follows the [university policy and procedure](#) for grade appeals.

Dropping Courses/Withdrawing from Graduate School

Drop deadlines for the standard semester and summer terms are posted on the [academic calendar](#). You may not drop to zero credits via Campus Connection. You must complete the [Withdraw to Zero Credits form](#) within the posted deadlines.

Students who do not wish to continue with their studies should complete the request to withdraw from graduate school form. The student is responsible for informing their adviser, graduate program coordinator and assistantship supervisor of their intention to withdraw from graduate studies.

Leave of Absence

A student may request a leave of absence to put their studies on hold. A leave may be taken for up to four semesters (fall and spring). A student may take multiple leaves during their graduate career; however, a leave does not affect the completion deadline of seven years for a certificate or master's student and 10 years for a doctoral student.

Students must request a leave of absence prior to the fourth week of the semester. Forms received after that date are not processed and the student must submit a Request for Reactivation and processing fee prior to be for being allowed to register.

To return from a leave of absence, complete the request for reactivation form. The processing fee is not required.

Family and Medical Accommodations policy/Modified Duties/Leave of Absence

Graduate students may request an extension to complete degree requirements and/or a leave of absence for family and medical reasons outline in the policy. In addition, a student may request modified duties for these same reasons. The policy and links to the required forms are in the [Graduate Bulletin](#).

Reactivation/Reapplication

Students who step away from graduate studies for less than four semesters (fall and spring) may request reactivation using the request for reactivation form and paying the processing fee. The student's adviser and graduate program coordinator must approve this request prior to Graduate School consideration.

Students who step away from graduate studies for more than four semesters (fall and spring) must reapply to the Graduate School.

Financial Information and Assistantships

Tuition

Once registered, the graduate student is responsible for all tuition and fees. Student receiving a tuition waiver must pay any differential tuition and student fees. Tuition and fee schedules for the current year are published on the One Stop website at <https://www.ndsu.edu/onestop/accounts/tuition/>.

Payment plans are available. For more information on fee payment options, browse the [payments methods](#) page.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate students awarded an assistantship are responsible for completing the [graduate assistant onboarding](#) process and for reading and adhering to the [graduate assistantship policy](#) in the graduate bulletin. If requirements outlined in this policy are not completed, delays in starting the assistantship and/or receiving the stipend may occur.

Graduate Service Assistantships (GSA)

A GSA provides non-academic support in departments such as office assistance, website, writing, planning. GSA's may also provide computer technical support or assistance for campus services such as Wallman Wellness Center, Student Health Center or Disability Services.

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA)

A GRA conducts research that contributes directly to their graduate education and may lead to a dissertation or thesis topic.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA)

GTAs share the faculty's responsibility for undergraduate teaching. Responsibilities may include instruction, grading, course development, and proctoring exams. GTAs cannot teach graduate-level courses.

Teaching assistants whose native language is not English must demonstrate [English proficiency](#).

Tuition Waivers

Graduate students with assistantships that include a graduate tuition waiver are responsible for any differential tuition, student fees, and tuition for other types of credits taken, such as undergraduate credits or cooperative education credits. To be eligible for a tuition waiver, the assistantship must be at least 160 hours per semester and must pay at least the federal minimum wage. Students who, for any reason, do not complete a minimum of 160 hours in a given semester will not be eligible for that semester's waiver and will be billed for the tuition. The tuition waiver may have limitations depending on the assistantship appointment.

To be eligible for a summer tuition waiver, a student must have Graduate School approval and have received a tuition waiver for the preceding or following academic term (spring or fall semester). A [graduate summer tuition waiver form](#) must be approved by the Graduate School in order for the waiver to be applied.

Students eligible for a graduate assistantship waiver may not also receive other NDSU tuition waivers. If a student is eligible for more than one waiver, the waiver that results in the highest tuition waiver amount will be applied.

Pathway to Degree

The [Pathway to Degree](#) page on the Graduate School website outlines the steps to complete your graduate degree, with links to important forms and policies. Questions regarding your pathway should be directed to your Academic Support Specialist.

Time Limitations

- Master's degree program course work that is more than seven calendar years old at the time of the final examination cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
- Doctoral degree coursework that is more than ten years old at the time of the final examination cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
- These time limits apply to transfer credit as well as NDSU credit.
- The student will have one year from the date of the final examination to complete the Graduate School format review process and all other degree requirements. Should the master's paper, thesis, or dissertation not receive final approval or any other degree requirements not be completed within this time limit, the student must submit an extension request.
- A student who has not registered for longer than a continuous two-year period must also reapply for admission and is subject to the degree requirements at the time of readmission.

Degree Awarding

NDSU awards certificates, masters and doctoral degrees at the end of each semester and the second summer session. Formal commencement exercises are in May and December.

Students may participate in the commencement ceremony at the end of the semester in which they successfully complete their final examination or the semester in which the degree requirements are completed. Student's completing their requirements in the summer semester may participate in the May ceremony. Students whose degree has already posted may not participate in commencement.

Glossary of Terms

Academic Calendar – A listing of important registration, financial aid, and account payment dates and deadlines throughout the academic school year

Accelerated Degree Program – A combined bachelor's and master's program for highly qualified students which allows designated graduate credits to be used toward both degrees.

Approval Page – The signed [Approval Page](#) signifies that the supervisory committee approves of the master's paper, thesis or dissertation.

Comprehensive/Preliminary Examination – A two part (written and oral) examination scheduled after the majority of doctoral coursework is completed. Successful completion of the examination signifies the student has advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

Continuous Enrollment – The requirement of students to register for at least one graduate credit each semester (fall and spring) until all degree requirements are complete, including Graduate School approval of the thesis, paper, or dissertation.

Credential – Academic or educational qualifications, such as degrees or diplomas, that are in progress or completed.

Disquisition – A term used to describe a master's paper, thesis or dissertation.

Final Examination – An oral examination scheduled after the coursework and disquisition are completed. This examination will be concerned primarily with the disquisition, but it may also cover material from coursework, especially those courses fundamental to the disquisition.

Final Submission Deadline – The deadline to gain final approval of disquisitions by the Graduate School is the commencement date for each semester. The review process must be completed and final revisions submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the semester in order for your degree to post in that term.

Format Review – The format review process is the final step before publication of the master's paper, thesis or dissertation. This review ensures the document formatting is consistent with NDSU's format guidelines

Initial Submission Deadline –The deadline for initial submissions of disquisitions to the Graduate School is approximately one month prior to the commencement date for each semester. Students must have completed their Final Examinations and completed any content revisions requested by their committees prior to making the initial submission.

Report of Final Examination – Completed after the final examination, the supervisory committee indicates approval or disapproval of the examination and outlines any changes requested to the master's paper, thesis or dissertation.

Supervisory Committee – The Supervisory Committee is comprised of the student's adviser (committee chair) and supporting committee members. The goal in selecting a supervisory committee is creating a team to help the student develop a Plan of Study

to align with the student's desired professional goals, provide support in the growth of the student as a professional, and oversee the student's final project or final examination.