
DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

Graduate programs are typically classified as either research or professional oriented programs. Research programs have a major research component. At the master's level, the research component may be included in a series of courses, a research product, and/or a thesis. At the doctoral level, the research product is a dissertation. Professional programs at the master's level may include an internship and/or a practicum in lieu of a research product.

Graduate studies tend to be more focused, provide greater depth of study within the chosen field, foster independent learning, and promote knowledge of the literature. All of the graduate programs at Sam Houston State University require an assessment of knowledge retention toward the end of the academic program. The assessment may be incorporated as a comprehensive exam, in written and/or oral format, and/or a comprehensive capstone course.

Regardless of the type of program, the academic expectations placed on graduate students far exceed those experienced at the undergraduate level. While pursuit of knowledge is the major goal of graduate studies, graduate students are expected to achieve and remain in **academic good standing**. At Sam Houston State University, a graduate student must maintain an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate coursework attempted. Review "Scholastic Expectations" within this section for further details.

Degree Requirements

Academic Procedures

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR STEPS REQUIRED BY GRADUATE STUDIES IN FULFILLING REQUIREMENTS FOR A GRADUATE DEGREE

Procedure	Time
1. Become familiar with general regulations and appropriate degree section of Graduate Catalog	Before registration
2. Meet with graduate advisor to plan course of study	Before initial registration
3. Meet candidacy requirements	Per program requirements
4. Conduct annual review with advisor	After each year in program
5. If thesis or dissertation is required:	
a. Establish advisory committee	Per program requirements
b. Submit thesis/dissertation proposal	
c. Defend thesis/dissertation proposal	
d. Defend final thesis/dissertation	
e. Submit thesis/dissertation to library for review	See Academic Calendar
6. Apply for degree	See Academic Calendar
7. Meet comprehensive requirements	During semester of anticipated graduation

NOTES: (1) Each student is responsible for contacting the appropriate graduate advisor for the specific program requirement deadlines. A student is required to complete graduate work within a six-year period, measured from the date of initial enrollment for graduate credit in a particular degree program.

- (2) **Students must be enrolled in at least one course (one credit hour or more) in both the semester of graduation and the semester in which the comprehensive requirements are met. Completing a course for which a grade of IP was given in a previous semester does not constitute enrollment.**

Degree Plan

A degree plan details the curriculum for the specific academic program and is developed for each graduate student. All courses on the approved degree plan must be completed with a satisfactory grade to meet the requirements for the degree. Changes in an approved degree plan may be made by petition to the graduate advisor and approved by the appropriate academic dean.

A student is required to complete graduate work within a six-year period, measured from the date of initial enrollment for graduate credit in a particular degree program. The period of time a student is on an approved leave of absence will be counted as time accumulated toward that six-year deadline for completion of the degree. Any extension of the six-year deadline must be approved in writing by the appropriate academic dean.

Comprehensive Examinations

All candidates for a graduate degree must pass integrative comprehensive examinations. The major department will establish whether the comprehensive examinations are written, oral, or a combination of the two. In lieu of comprehensive exams, some programs have been granted permission to use a comprehensive capstone course or portfolio submission.

The major department will organize a committee for the administration of the examinations. A grade of "high pass," "pass," or "fail" for each exam must be filed in the office of the appropriate academic dean. Should a student fail one or more examinations, a re-examination shall be permitted per departmental or college guidelines, as appropriate. A third examination may be permitted only with the approval of the appropriate academic dean and the department. Students should consult the major department for specific guidelines regarding comprehensive examinations. Students must be enrolled in the University the semester or summer in which the comprehensive exams are administered.

Enrollment in Thesis or Dissertation Courses

(Refer to Academic Policy Statement 930129)

A graduate student at Sam Houston State University writing a thesis or dissertation must enroll in the appropriate thesis or dissertation courses. Typically, a master's student is required to take at least six hours of thesis courses. Depending on the specific program, a doctoral student is required to take a minimum of either nine or twelve hours of dissertation courses. Once a student enrolls in a thesis or dissertation course, the student must continuously enroll in such a course every fall, spring, and summer semester until the signed thesis/dissertation route sheet is received by the Registrar's Office.

A student who is unable to work on the thesis or dissertation for a period of time may present to the appropriate academic dean a written request for a leave of absence of up to one year. The dean's approval of such a request must be in writing. A student granted a leave of absence may not be enrolled in any coursework during this period. A student on a leave of absence will lose access to University services and must submit an application for reinstatement to re-enter the program.

Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation

Thesis or Dissertation Committee. A thesis or dissertation committee will be formed prior to enrollment in the first thesis/dissertation course. The committee must be composed of a chair and at least two additional members, all of whom have appropriate graduate faculty status. Selection of the chair depends on student preference and faculty availability and expertise. After a faculty member agrees to serve as chair, the student will select the other committee members with guidance from the chair. The committee must then be approved by the chair of the major department and the appropriate academic dean. Any change in the composition of the thesis or dissertation committee will be approved in the same manner.

Prospectus. In consultation with the thesis or dissertation chair, the student will select a subject of investigation and determine the availability of the required sources, facilities, materials, and equipment for the research and the writing of the thesis or dissertation. The student will prepare a prospectus which will specify the topic, detail the purpose of the proposed investigation, describe the proposed method(s) of investigation, indicate the relationship of study to relevant research and findings of scholars in the student's area of concentration, and provide a commentary on source materials and/or facilities available for the successful completion of the research.

The prospectus shall be submitted to the thesis or dissertation committee following the timelines outlined by the departmental or college policies. Upon committee approval the signed prospectus is submitted to the appropriate academic dean for final approval. Any subsequent changes in topic or the proposed method of investigation must be approved in writing by the committee and submitted for approval to the appropriate academic dean.

Preparation. To facilitate the preparation of the thesis or dissertation, the student should refer to the *Directions on Form, Preparation, and Submission of The Final Copies of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations* at www.shsu.edu/graduate/current.

Procedure. Candidates should be in regular contact with committee members throughout the thesis/dissertation process. Candidates should allow committee members ample time to review draft versions of the thesis/dissertation. The candidate should submit the completed thesis or dissertation to the thesis or dissertation committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The following steps must be completed, most in the graduating semester. A list of semester specific dates may be accessed from www.shsu.edu/graduate/current.

1. The candidate shall submit at least one full draft chapter of the thesis/dissertation to the Library for format and style review at least ten weeks prior to graduation.
2. The chair of the committee or the graduate advisor establishes a time and location for administering a verbal defense of the thesis or dissertation. The defense must be held at least six weeks prior to graduation. Attendance at the defense is open to the entire university community.
3. The thesis/dissertation chair will submit a signed *Report of the Outcome of the Thesis/Dissertation Defense* to the appropriate academic dean.
4. Upon successful completion of the defense, the candidate should obtain signatures from the thesis/dissertation committee on the title page and abstract of the thesis/dissertation and signature of thesis/dissertation chair on the route sheet. No later than four and one-half weeks prior to the end of the anticipated semester of graduation, the candidate should submit the route sheet and complete, defended and signed thesis/dissertation to the appropriate academic dean's office.
5. Upon receipt of approval of the academic dean, the original and the required number of acceptable copies of the thesis or dissertation are taken to the Newton Gresham Library by the candidate no later than four weeks prior to the end of the

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anticipated semester of graduation. Reproduction of the thesis or dissertation and binding costs are the responsibility of the candidate. The original copy will remain in the library collection.

6. After receiving the Library's approval, the candidate should take the signed route sheet to the Office of Graduate Studies no later than three weeks prior to the end of the anticipated semester of graduation. The Office of Graduate Studies will forward the signed route sheet to the Office of the Registrar.

Graduation

Application for a Degree

Effective spring 2008, for Fall and Spring graduates, a formal application and payment of the degree/diploma fee must be made in the Registrar's Office on or before the 12th class day of the semester in which the degree is to be confirmed. Summer graduates will be required to file a formal application and pay the degree/diploma fee prior to the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. Specific dates can be found in the Academic Calendar. A student filing a degree application after the published deadline will be assessed a late fee. A student who is completing the last semester of coursework at an institution other than SHSU must provide the Registrar with an official transcript of this coursework no later than one day prior to the graduation date. An application for a degree and further details are available online at www.shsu.edu/saminfo/registrar-menu.html.

Academic Expectations and Guidelines

Grading System

Four grades are given in graduate courses at the University:

Grade	Denotation
A	Academic Excellence
B	Acceptable Performance
C	Passing, yet Insufficient Performance
F	Failure

The mark "IP" denotes "in progress" and is given in thesis and other courses which cannot be completed within one semester. The mark "CR" denotes "credit" and is given in one-hour workshops and may be given on transferred courses. The mark "WP" denotes "withdrew passing" and the mark "WF" denotes "withdrew failing." Effective spring 2008 marks of "WP" and "WF" will no longer be awarded and resignations will be identified with a mark of "W." The mark "X" denotes an incomplete course. If the student meets the prescribed requirements of the course before the end of the next academic semester after the "X" is given, the student will receive the grade earned; otherwise, the mark "X" will be automatically changed to an "F." The mark of "Q" will be given to students who drop courses from the thirteenth class day, for a semester, or from the fifth class day, for a summer session, until the last day for dropping courses without grade of "F" as stated in the Academic Calendar. Courses with the mark of "Q" will not be counted as courses attempted and will not be included in determining grade point averages.

A graduate student who elects to drop all courses, i.e., to resign from the University, must notify the Registrar's Office and process a Resignation Request. (See Resignations)

Academic Honesty

The Graduate Faculty of Sam Houston State University expects students to conduct academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit), the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments.

The University's policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in the manual entitled *Student Guidelines*, distributed by Division of Student Services.

Scholastic Expectations

A minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is required in all coursework taken for graduate credit. All grades earned in courses taken for graduate credit will be utilized in computing the grade point average. A grade earned at another institution may not be used to remove a grade deficiency earned in residence at Sam Houston State University. Semester hours of credit earned at another institution shall be recorded as received but not utilized in computing the student's Sam Houston State University overall grade point average. Only those transferred courses from accredited institutions in which a grade of A or B was earned and which are accepted toward an official degree program may be applied toward a degree (see Transferred Credit).

Academic Probation and Suspension

In order to achieve and remain in **academic good standing** at Sam Houston State University, a graduate student must maintain an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate coursework attempted.

A 3.0 overall grade point average is the absolute minimum required for graduation. A graduate student who falls below a 3.0 overall grade point average at the close of any semester or summer school during which one or more semester hours are attempted will be placed on probation. Summer school (two sessions) is considered to be a unit equivalent to a semester. If an enrolled student on probation fails to achieve a minimum 3.0 overall grade point average at the close of the next semester or summer school following the starting of the probation, the student will be suspended.

A committee of the department or college graduate faculty will review the graduate status for any student earning two grades of "C" in any combination of graduate courses. The committee will consider the advisability of the student's continued enrollment in the graduate program. A student who earns three grades of "C" or one grade of "F" will be terminated from graduate studies. **A student who earns a third grade of "C" or a grade of "F" during the semester or summer of the anticipated graduation will be terminated from graduate studies and will not be eligible to graduate.** The appropriate academic dean may place on probation, retain on probation or suspend any student deficient in grade points without regard to the regulations previously stated. Any appeal for a review of the termination of graduate status should be directed in writing to the appropriate academic dean.

Resignations

To resign (officially withdraw) from the University, a student must notify the Registrar's Office and process a Resignation Request. The Resignation Request must be in writing and becomes effective on the date received by the Registrar's Office. The effective date of the Resignation Request, as received by the Registrar's Office, is the date

used for determining any refund as authorized in the State Refund Policy (see Tuition and Fees Refund Policy). The student is responsible for clearing all debts owed to the University. A student who wishes to drop all courses must officially resign. **A student who fails to officially resign from the University will receive the grade of “F” in each enrolled course.**

A student who resigns after the first nine weeks of a regular semester or after the first two weeks of a summer session receive a mark of “WP” (withdrew passing) or “WF” (withdrew failing) for each course for which he/she is enrolled. A student who resigns from the University while enrolled in a course whose duration is less than a normal term will receive a mark of “WP” or “WF” if the resignation occurs after one-half of that course time has been completed. The mark of “WP” or “WF” is the responsibility of the student’s instructor(s). Effective spring 2008 marks of “WP” and “WF” will no longer be awarded and resignations will be identified with a mark of “W.”

Transcripts

Students are allowed five free transcripts per semester while enrolled at SHSU. Students who graduate will be extended the five free transcripts for one year following the posting of a degree. The fee for transcripts is included in the Records Fee.

Transcripts may be ordered online through SamWeb with MasterCard or Visa payment, or the Transcript Request Form may be mailed to the Registrar’s Office accompanied by the individual’s signature and a check made payable to Sam Houston State University. The Transcript Request Form can be obtained at <http://www.shsu.edu/saminfo/registrar-menu.html>.

Transcripts will not be released to anyone who has a financial indebtedness to the University.

Transfer of Credit

In accordance with Academic Policy Statement 801007, graduate courses completed at other accredited colleges and universities may be applied as transfer credit toward a graduate degree at Sam Houston State University at the discretion of each graduate program and the college in which it is housed. Transfer credit is not automatically conferred. Only courses with an earned grade of “B” or better may be used as transfer credit.

The maximum number of hours that may be transferred into a graduate degree program are as follows:

- 6 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 30 or fewer hours;
- 9 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 31 to 36 hours;
- 12 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 37 to 48 hours; or
- 15 hours of transfer credit toward a degree of 47 or more hours.

Students are encouraged to contact the appropriate graduate advisor for information concerning transfer credit allowed for a specific degree.

University Academic Policy Manual and Student Guidelines

Sam Houston State University’s *Academic Policy Manual* and *Student Guidelines* provide specific information pertaining to the educational mission of the University and student conduct. Copies of these publications may be viewed at the Reference Desk of the Newton Gresham Library and online at www.shsu.edu/students.