University-Wide Academic Rules for Graduate Degrees

Master’s Degrees

The master’s degree represents the successful completion of at least a full academic year (two terms) of graduate work including some training in research.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A minimum of eight course units is required for the master’s degree. Additional work may be prescribed in individual cases. Any student registered for the full amount of four course units may register as an auditor for one additional course with the permission of the graduate dean. No more than four course units in any one term may be counted toward the minimum requirement of eight course units. No course may be counted toward degree requirements if it has been used toward the requirements for more than one other degree.

MAJOR SUBJECT

A prospective candidate for a master’s degree must complete at least four course units in the field of the major, and the work as a whole shall be directed by the chairperson of the graduate group concerned.

In the case of a research requirement (thesis, seminar, or laboratory course), the candidate shall also:

(1) prepare a thesis in the field of the major subject; or

(2) complete a course of research character or engage in supervised research, as the graduate group shall direct, which, in either case, shall be of at least one term in duration and shall include the preparation of at least one comprehensive scholarly or scientific paper.

A thesis or research paper based on joint work with other researchers is allowed, provided that, in such cases, a unique and separate document is presented by each degree candidate. The candidate must include a concise account of his or her contribution to the whole work. Authorship of a master’s thesis or research paper by more than one degree candidate is not allowed.

If a thesis is required, two printed copies shall be deposited in the Graduate Division Office by the date specified in the degree calendar for that term. Specific information regarding the form in which the master’s thesis manuscripts are to be prepared must be obtained from the Graduate Division Office.

GENERAL EXAMINATION

A general examination by the graduate group in the major subject is required in addition to all other examinations. The purpose of this examination is to test the candidate’s knowledge of his or her major subject in its broader aspects and proficiency in the particular courses he or she has taken. This examination may be oral, written, or both, at the discretion of the graduate group. The mere satisfaction of minimum requirements does not entitle the student to be admitted to this examination.
With the approval of the Graduate Council of the Faculties, the graduate group may substitute other assessment procedures for the general examination as a means of assuring that master’s students have broad knowledge of the field.

TRANSFER OF CREDIT

At least eight course units of the total program required for the master’s degree must be completed in a graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania or through an approved program at another school. Where more than eight course units are required, graduate work done at other universities may be accepted for the balance of the course requirements, if approved by the graduate dean. A student may transfer courses completed at other graduate schools of the University with the approval of the appropriate graduate dean. No work done as an undergraduate, whether done at this institution or at any other, will be counted toward a higher degree. (Graduate courses completed by an undergraduate as part of submatriculation in a graduate group count as graduate courses and, therefore, may be counted toward graduate degree requirements.)

Credit towards satisfaction of the minimum course requirements for a post-baccalaureate degree can be given for a maximum of four course units of work completed while registered in the College of Liberal and Professional Studies.

TIME LIMITS

The minimum requirement of eight course units must be completed within six consecutive years with the understanding that one additional year will be allowed for the completion of a thesis if required.

REGISTRATION

Registration takes place in the fall and spring semesters. Research masters students who are candidates for an August degree remain full-time students through August 31st without summer registration.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A student who wishes a leave of absence must submit a written request to his or her graduate group chairperson for initial approval and then to the appropriate dean for final approval. The granting of a leave of absence does not automatically change the time limit. Time spent in military service does not count under the time limit.
Ph.D. Degrees

The doctor of philosophy degree is conferred in recognition of marked ability and high attainment in a specific branch of learning. The Ph.D. degree is granted by the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania upon the approval of the Graduate Council of the Faculties and upon satisfaction of all degree requirements, including acceptance of the dissertation by the student’s Dissertation Committee. Students may enroll in more than one degree program with prior permission of both schools/programs; only one Ph.D. is earned.

The University’s standards, set forth below, are to be viewed as minimum requirements. The school or the graduate group has the right to establish additional requirements and to refuse to examine any student who is not qualified according to its standards. If there are additional program or school requirements, that information must be communicated and available to all students.

CURRICULUM

Graduate groups determine the curricular requirements for their programs. The course of study can include a combination of specific required courses, electives, teaching, independent study or laboratory rotations, colloquia, and demonstration through examination of comprehensive knowledge in the major field.

A student who enters the Ph.D. program with a bachelors degree will be expected to spend two to three years taking 3-4 course units a semester before satisfying the graduate group’s academic requirements, passing the required examinations and being advanced to candidacy. Graduate groups may require more extensive preparation through additional work, especially those programs with substantial language requirements. Students in some programs, such as those in science fields, may begin dissertation-related research before advancing to candidacy. Students who enter with a masters degree or other transfer credit may satisfy the formal course requirements more quickly. Graduate groups have flexibility to establish the optimal timetable and requirements for their own students and to respond to the specific academic needs of individual students.

The customary maximum load for a Ph.D. student is four course units each semester; exceptions for a fifth course unit may be made in extraordinary cases upon approval of the graduate dean.

Graduate groups may establish examination requirements in addition to the University’s standards described below.

EVALUATIONS AND EXAMINATIONS
A Qualifications Evaluation of each student is conducted in the first two years. The evaluation is designed by the graduate group and may be based on an examination or on a review of a student’s overall academic progress. Satisfaction of this requirement is necessary in order to continue in the graduate program and is recorded in the student’s academic record. The student and the school’s graduate office must be notified of the outcome of the evaluation.

A Candidacy Examination on the major subject area is required. This examination is normally held after the candidate has completed all required courses and may be satisfied by the successful defense of a dissertation proposal. It may be oral, written, or both, at the discretion of the graduate group. Feedback will be provided to the student within one month. Satisfactory completion of the Candidacy Examination requirement is recorded in the student’s academic record. Upon successful completion of the Candidacy Examination, the student is advanced to candidacy. Normally, a student should advance to candidacy by the end of the third year. The maximum time limit for a student to be advanced to candidacy is five years, after which time the student will be dropped from the rolls.

DISSERTATION

The student and dissertation supervisor meet regularly (at least twice a year and, in many cases, much more frequently) to establish expectations and review the progress of the student’s research.

Upon advancement to candidacy, each student has a Dissertation Committee consisting of at least three faculty members (including at least two members of the graduate group), which may include the Supervisor/Advisor. The Dissertation Committee meets at least once annually with the student to review the student’s progress. The student prepares an Annual Dissertation Progress Report and the committee gives timely feedback (within one month) and confirms whether progress is satisfactory. A copy of the signed progress report is submitted to the Supervisor/Advisor and Graduate Group Chair and is documented by the school in the student’s PhD Worksheet.

Dissertations based on joint work with other researchers are allowed, provided that, in such cases, a unique and separate dissertation is presented by each degree candidate. The candidate must include a concise account of his or her contribution to the whole work. Authorship of a dissertation by more than one degree candidate is not allowed.

EXAMINATION

A public, oral presentation of the dissertation is required. The presentation may take the form of a workshop based on a complete draft of the dissertation, or it may be based on the final version of the dissertation, depending on the rules of the graduate group. In either case, the presentation must either include or be followed by an oral examination. This examination may be private if specified by the rules of the graduate group.
ACCEPTANCE

By the prescribed deadline, the graduate group shall report to the Graduate Division Office of the School of Arts and Sciences regarding acceptance of the dissertation and its suitability for immediate publication. The report shall include the date and location of the oral presentation or the date of the meeting of the dissertation committee, the names of the dissertation committee members, and whether they individually approve the dissertation. The student and the Advisor/Supervisor will also be given a copy of the report.

PUBLICATION AND SUBMISSION

Dissertations must follow the format prescribed in the Dissertation Manual. Candidates also should familiarize themselves with any special requirements imposed by the graduate groups under which they are working.

All Penn PhD dissertations are published by ProQuest. Additionally, students may publish the dissertation in open access via Scholarly Commons. Students who want to publish in open access format should discuss their plans in advance with their adviser, to ensure there are no concerns relating to copyright.

RESEARCH ABROAD

A student who will conduct dissertation research abroad for the semester registers for Dissertation Research Abroad status. Full tuition is charged to students in years 1-5, reduced tuition to students in years 6-10; a reduced general fee is charged for students on Dissertation Research Abroad regardless of their year.

TIME LIMITS

Beginning in academic year 2010-11, the University’s maximum time limit for completion is ten years after matriculation. Note: Some graduate groups and schools have established more stringent criteria. Graduate students who have been dropped after ten years may petition the graduate group to return as a student for a maximum of one year in order to achieve recertification and defend the dissertation. Faculty members have no obligation to continue working with a student who has been dropped, nor is there any presumption that a graduate group will respond favorably to a petition for re-admission. If a graduate group wishes to recommend re-admission, it must present to the graduate dean a list of faculty members willing to serve as a dissertation committee and a detailed, realistic plan of how the student will, within one year of reenrollment, achieve recertification, pass the dissertation examination, and submit the final copy of the dissertation. If re-enrollment is approved by the graduate dean, such a student must pay reduced rate tuition for two semesters, unless all requirements are completed within one semester.
Combined degree students (e.g., M.D.-Ph.D.s) typically enroll full-time in medical school during the first two years of study and do not begin full-time Ph.D. coursework until the third year; for these students, the ten-year time limit begins at the start of full-time Ph.D. study.

RECERTIFICATION

A student who is re-enrolled after expiration of the time limit must satisfy the recertification criteria designed by their graduate group and approved by the Graduate Council of the Faculties (or retake and pass the Candidacy Examination). The new deadline for completion of all requirements for the Ph.D., including recertification, shall be within one year.

TUITION

Beginning in fall 2008, Ph.D. students will be charged full tuition until they have completed five years of full-time study or the equivalent of approximately 30 course units. The time may be as brief as three years if a student enters with credits from a post-baccalaureate degree program or successfully completes the Ph.D. in fewer than five years.

If the student has not earned the Ph.D. degree by the end of five years, the student will be charged reduced tuition until the degree is awarded, or for a maximum of five additional years. Continuous enrollment is required through year ten (or until graduation), with an exception for approved leave. After a maximum of five years at reduced tuition, the student ceases to be enrolled. With permission and recertification from the graduate group, a student may re-enroll for a final year in order to defend and deposit the dissertation. Such a student must pay reduced rate tuition for a final two semesters, unless all requirements are completed within one semester.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Credit may be transferred toward the Ph.D. from a masters degree or other work completed in a post-baccalaureate degree program, upon recommendation by the graduate chair and approval of the graduate dean, reducing full tuition registration by up to two years. No work done as an undergraduate, whether at this institution or at any other, will be counted toward a Ph.D., A.M., or M.S., with the following exception: graduate courses completed by undergraduates as submatriculants in a graduate group may be counted toward graduate degree requirements.

CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION

Continuous registration as a graduate student is required unless a formal leave of absence is granted by the dean of the student’s school. A leave of absence will be granted for military duty, medical reasons, or family leave; this leave is typically for up to one year and “stops the clock” on time to completion. Personal leave for other reasons may be granted for up to one year with the approval of the Graduate Dean, but it does not automatically change the time limit.
Additional requirements for return may be imposed by the Graduate Dean. No language or other degree examinations may be taken while a student is on leave of absence. A student without an approved leave of absence who fails to register each semester will be considered to have withdrawn from candidacy for the degree; approval by the Graduate Dean and recertification are required for reinstatement.

Dissertation registration takes place in the fall and spring semesters. Dissertation students who are candidates for August degree remain full-time students through August 31st without summer registration.

EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH

If graduate credit is sought for research work pursued at laboratories not officially a part of the University of Pennsylvania (for example, where the investigator is not a member of the graduate group), the student must obtain prior permission from the graduate chair. University policies regarding intellectual property apply in the case of research conducted in extramural settings.

COPYRIGHT AND PATENT POLICIES

A dissertation submitted as part of the requirements for a degree is the property of the University. Any copyrights or patent rights arising therefrom shall be governed by the policies of the University of Pennsylvania, including the Patent and Tangible Research Property Policies and Procedures and the Policy Relating to Copyrights and Commitment of Effort for Faculty.

CHILDBIRTH AND ADOPTION

A student in a Ph.D. program at Penn is eligible for time off of eight weeks for the birth or adoption of a child. The student must notify the graduate group chair and Advisor/Supervisor in writing, at an early date, of his/her plans to initiate a “Time Off” period, so that appropriate arrangements can be made to cover any teaching/research responsibilities.

A. Normally the “Time Off” period commences within two weeks of the birth or adoption.

B. During the “Time Off” period, the student remains enrolled full-time. In order to facilitate a rapid return, s/he may participate in the program as fully as s/he deems appropriate. By remaining on full-time status, student visa status and loan repayment schedules, if any, will remain unchanged.

C. The student is entitled to academic accommodation including relief from academic requirements, such as postponement of exams and course requirements.

D. A student receiving stipend support is entitled to continuation of support during the “Time Off” period as follows:
1. Students receiving stipends from University/school funds are entitled to draw support for eight weeks during the academic year.

2. Students funded by government grants or other external funding sources are entitled to benefits as determined by the funding agency.

FAMILY LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

A student in the Ph.D. program at Penn may take an unpaid Family Leave of Absence for the birth or adoption of a child, child care, or care of an immediate family member (spouse, domestic partner, child, or parent) with a serious health condition.

1. Students may take a Family Leave of Absence for one or two semesters.

The student is expected to notify the graduate group chair and adviser in writing of his/her plans to take a Family Leave at an early date, so that appropriate arrangements can be made to cover any teaching/research responsibilities.

2. Family Leave “stops the clock” on the student’s academic requirements, including service requirements, for the duration of the leave.

3. During the period of Family Leave, the student may arrange to continue Student Health Insurance, but is responsible for the payment of his or her own premiums. Upon paying a fee, students on approved Family Leave will retain their PennCard, e-mail accounts, library privileges, and building access.

4. Funding commitments from the institution are deferred until the student returns from Family Leave. Students receiving funding from external sources, such as government grants, are subject to the conditions established by the funding source.

5. Service requirements (e.g., teaching, research) will be met by the student following return from Family Leave.

6. Requests for extension of Family Leave beyond one year, or for repeated Family Leaves, may be made. Approval of an extension, deferral of funding, and continued academic accommodation is at the discretion of the Graduate Dean.

*IMPORTANT: If you anticipate adding a dependent (e.g., newborn) to your Penn Student Insurance Policy while on Family Leave, you must remain in ACTIVE student status at the start of the fall semester. Students should arrange with their school/division to maintain full-time student status for at least 31 days from the start of fall classes, after which time the Family Leave status can be recorded in the Student Records System. After the birth/adoption, contact the SHS Insurance Coordinator to enroll the dependent. The premium for dependent coverage is payable directly to Aetna Student Health.
GRADUATE GRADES AND ACADEMIC STANDING

The grading system is as follows: A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, poor but passing; and F, failure. At the graduate level, the grade of C, while passing, does not constitute satisfactory performance. Letter grades may be modified by a plus (+) or minus (-) sign at the discretion of the school. The minimum standard for satisfactory work for the graduate faculties is a B average in each academic year, but the graduate group may set additional requirements that determine advancement; these requirements may require a student to withdraw despite a satisfactory grade average, if the quality of the student’s work is not at a level that predicts successful dissertation research.

The mark of S is used to indicate satisfactory “progress”. It may be used as a permanent grade for 999 courses only. It is a temporary grade for all other courses.

The mark of I is used to designate “incomplete.” A student who fails to complete a course and does not withdraw or change his/her status to auditor within the prescribed period shall receive at the instructor’s discretion either a grade of I (incomplete) or F (failure). It is expected, in general, that a student shall complete the work of a course during the term in which that course is taken. The instructor may permit an extension of time up to one year for the completion of the course. In such cases, any course which is still incomplete after one calendar year from its official ending must remain as “incomplete” on the student’s record and shall not be credited toward a degree.

AUDITORS

A student who desires to attend a course without performing the work of the course must first secure the consent of the instructor. He or she must register in order for the audited course to appear on the transcript; no credit will be received for the audited course. A teaching fellow registered for three course units may register as auditor for one additional course with permission of the graduate group chair.

A student may request that the school graduate office change his or her status in a course to auditor, provided that the request is endorsed by the chairperson of his or her graduate group and the instructor giving the course and is submitted to the graduate office no later than the end of the second week of the term.

CHANGE OF A GRADUATE GROUP

A student who wishes to change his or her graduate group must submit an application for admission to the new graduate group.

INSTITUTIONAL COURTESY/EXCHANGE PROGRAMS
The Exchange Scholar Program allows Penn Ph.D. students to apply to study for a semester or academic year at one of ten other participating institutions: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Stanford, University of California-Berkeley, University of Chicago, and Yale.

Through cooperative arrangements with Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, and Swarthmore College, University of Pennsylvania students may, upon presentation of the proper credentials and with the permission of the instructor concerned, enroll for courses in these institutions. The University of Pennsylvania will accept toward a masters or Ph.D. degree up to the equivalent of three course units for work completed under this arrangement.

Ph.D. and research masters students enrolled in Earth and Environmental Science may, upon approval of the graduate group chair, enroll for a maximum of six course units at Bryn Mawr College.

Through a cooperative arrangement between The Annenberg School for Communication and Johns Hopkins University, students selected as exchange scholars from the Annenberg School for Communication may count up to one academic year of study at John Hopkins (taken while registered at Penn), subject to the approval of the graduate group, toward the Ph.D. degree at the University of Pennsylvania.

Ph.D. and research masters students enrolled in Anthropology, or History of Art may, upon approval of their graduate group and the instructor, enroll for a maximum of two courses in the Department of Art Conservation at the University of Delaware. The University of Pennsylvania will accept credits completed under this agreement for a masters or Ph.D. degree.

Ph.D. students enrolled in Ancient History, Classical Studies, Religious Studies, Germanic Languages and History may, upon approval of their graduate group and the instructor at the host institution, enroll for a maximum of four courses for graduate credit at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Ph.D. students enrolled for at least one full academic year in the Graduate Groups in Ancient History, Classical Studies, Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World, History of Art, Religious Studies, German, Political Science or History may, subject to the approval of their graduate group and the instructor, enroll for a maximum of four courses at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Each year, up to two English Ph.D. students (one in film and one in poetics) may, upon approval of the graduate group and the instructor at the host institution, take one course each offered by Temple University’s Department of Film and Media Arts and in English.

Under the terms of the PhD Student Exchange Program with Rutgers University, PhD students in all fields may take up to four courses at Rutgers University upon approval of their graduate group chair.

Details regarding the institutional exchange agreements are available from the Office of the Vice Provost for Education.