

ENROLLMENT

Graduate Records

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Graduate Records provides student services including: matriculation document processing; academic standing audits; thesis and dissertation review and publication; administration of Joint Undergraduate Master's Programs (JUMP); graduate catalog publication; and final degree audits. Graduate Records works closely with individual academic advisors, program coordinators, the University Registrar, Graduate Council, and other university personnel to advocate for and support graduate students.

Minimum Credit

Master's Degree

The minimum semester credit requirement for master's degrees is thirty (30) credits. Individual programs may require more credits. Only those courses listed on a graduate Program of Study are applicable toward meeting graduate degree credit requirements. Six (6) to fifteen (15) thesis credits may be applied to meet the 30 credit minimum required for the degree. However, additional thesis hours may be taken to complete the thesis and will appear on the student's transcript.

Specialist in Education Degree

The minimum semester credit requirement for the Specialist in Education degree is thirty (30) credits beyond the master's degree or sixty (60) credits for programs that do not require a master's degree for admission. Individual programs may require more credits. Only those courses listed on a graduate Program of Study are applicable toward meeting the Specialist in Education degree credit requirement. Six (6) to fifteen (15) thesis credits may be applied to meet the 30 credit minimum required for the degree. However, additional thesis hours may be taken to complete the thesis and will appear on the student's transcript.

Doctoral Degree

The minimum semester credit requirement for the doctoral degree is sixty (60) credits post-baccalaureate or thirty (30) credits post-master's in a related field. Individual programs may require more credits. Only those courses listed on a graduate Program of Study are applicable toward meeting graduate degree credit requirements. Twelve (12) to thirty (30) dissertation credits may be applied to the 60 credit minimum required for the post-baccalaureate to doctoral degree. Six (6) to fifteen (15) dissertation credits may be applied to the 30 credit minimum required for the post-masters to doctoral degree. Additional dissertation hours may be taken to complete the dissertation and will appear on the student's transcript.

(Approved by Graduate Council 8/15/13)

Certificate Policy

Certificate Definition

A certificate program is a coherent course of study that is compatible with the stated mission and goals of WKU and appropriate to the field of higher education (SACSCOC). Certificates should lead to the acquisition of a defined set of skills or expertise that will enhance employability or meet a professional development need. A certificate may be earned as a stand-alone credential.

To create a certificate at WKU, the certificate must demonstrate demand (student or market) in a field and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Includes collaboration with area businesses or industries.
- Provides training in a specific marketable skill, continuing education, or licensure/certification/accreditation.
- Complements multiple programs.
- Responds to a state mandate.

Creation of new certificate programs requires internal approval, as well as approval from the Council for Postsecondary Education. In addition, SACSCOC approval may be required. However, proposals for new certificates only go through the pre-approval process at CPE, unless they are considered substantive change through SACSCOC. Consultation with the WKU Provost's Office is necessary to determine if a new certificate program reflects a substantive change and must undergo SACSCOC review. Internal approvals are the same as those for new degree programs.

Admission Criteria

- Graduate school admission criteria shall apply to all graduate certificate programs. Individual programs may enact additional requirements.
- Graduate School policy shall apply to all certificate programs.

Requirements

A graduate certificate program must meet the following criteria:

- Consist of a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18 graduate credit hours.

(Approved by Graduate Council 10/8/2020)

Academic Standing

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) for all courses taken at WKU and those graduate courses transferred to WKU to fulfill graduate program requirements. Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in the academic program and a cumulative (overall) GPA to earn a degree or certificate. If a student's overall GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation. Students placed on academic probation are not eligible for graduate assistantship appointments.

The student will have one additional full-time semester or the equivalent (9 semester hours) to remove the academic probation by raising their cumulative GPA to a 3.0 or higher. If the GPA remains below a 3.0 after completing 9 hours of coursework on probation, the student will be academically dismissed from Graduate School. Individual academic programs may also apply more restrictive criteria regarding probation and dismissal. Students may be dismissed by the program for failing to make satisfactory progress toward a degree or certificate. Students will be dismissed from the program for having failed twice the comprehensive examination for the graduate degree. Dismissal from an academic program will result in dismissal from the Graduate School.

An academically dismissed student who wishes to be readmitted to his/her program must submit an Appeal of Graduate Policy, and, in consultation with their advisor, an Academic Plan detailing how the required 3.0 GPA will be obtained. The Appeal of Graduate Policy

must be submitted to the Graduate School the semester following dismissal and provide evidence of the support of the graduate faculty in the academic program. Each case will be reviewed by the Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education for consideration of readmission. An academically dismissed student who wishes to be readmitted to Graduate School as a non-degree seeking student or apply to another program must complete a new admission application and an Academic Plan. Readmitted students will remain on probation and must successfully complete the requirements of his/her Academic Plan to attain a 3.0 cumulative GPA in the specified time frame. Readmitted students who do not attain the requisite 3.0 GPA will be dismissed with no possibility of readmission until a period of three years has elapsed.

Students may also be dismissed from programs for reasons other than failure to maintain a satisfactory grade point average. Expectations regarding student conduct are described in the Western Kentucky University Student Handbook and apply to students in all programs. Additional program-specific policies regarding student conduct and dismissal from a program for non-academic reasons may also apply. Students should contact their advisors for more information regarding expectations for appropriate student conduct.

(Approved by Graduate Council 5/9/13)

Undergraduate Enrollment

Joint Undergraduate-Master's Degree Programs (JUMP)

JUMP programs (http://catalog.wku.edu/graduate/programsoffered/#filter=filter_47) provide academically outstanding students the opportunity to complete both an undergraduate and graduate degree in approximately five years. Qualified students who have been admitted to a JUMP program may complete a maximum of 18 graduate hours as an undergraduate student and count a maximum of 12 hours on both the undergraduate and graduate transcript as prescribed by the program. Students must apply to Graduate School upon or before earning more than 18 graduate hours or upon earning their Bachelor's degree. Each JUMP program has individualized admission criteria.

Undergraduate Student Enrollment in Graduate Courses

Undergraduate students at Western Kentucky University may request to enroll in graduate courses by submitting an "Undergraduate Taking Graduate Courses" form to the Graduate School. Conditions for approval include:

- having earned at least 75 undergraduate credit hours;
- and, having a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.

Undergraduate students may accumulate a maximum of 12 graduate credits. In addition, undergraduate students are restricted to a maximum of 15 hours enrollment per term, including graduate and undergraduate credits. All graduate coursework will be on the graduate transcript. To move the coursework to the undergraduate transcript students should contact the Office of the Registrar. (Approved by Graduate Council 12/10/15)

Curriculum Requirements (formerly Program of Study)

WKU uses Degree Works (<https://degreeworks.wku.edu/Dashboard/>) to matriculate and audit students for degree and certificate completion. Graduate students follow the official program curriculum outlined in the Graduate Catalog published for the academic year corresponding to their most recent admission term for the specific program. Students may opt to follow a more recent catalog year. *Graduate students admitted prior*

to fall 2019 will continue to matriculation following their approved (paper) program of study.

Curriculum exceptions approved by the advisor, department chair or graduate program coordinator, and college dean will be considered by the Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education.

Academic Advising

Upon admission to a graduate program, each student is assigned a program advisor from the Graduate Faculty in the respective department. Students pursuing a thesis, specialist project, or dissertation will select a Graduate Faculty member to chair his or her research project at which time the student's primary advisor will be updated to reflect the committee chair. Although student advising at Western Kentucky University is specifically designed to assist students as they progress through degree programs, it is the responsibility of all students to know all policies and procedures pertaining to graduate study. Students may request an advisor change (http://www.wku.edu/graduate/students/advisor_change_request.php).

Admission to Candidacy

Admission to Candidacy is required for *Doctor of Education and Doctor of Psychology* students which includes passing a qualifying exam or equivalent assessment. Admission to Candidacy is administered by the respective programs and successful completion is reported to the Graduate School.

Duplication of Coursework

A maximum of 12 hours of graduate course work may be duplicated on one additional graduate degree or certificate at the same level. Duplicated coursework must be directly related to the graduate degree or certificate being earned. (Approved by Graduate Council 10/17/19)

Experiential Learning Credit

WKU does not provide graduate credit for experiential learning, credit by exam, or professional certificates unless programs (degree and non-degree) specifically seek approval through the Graduate Council and have ensured that such credit is consistent with the WKU mission, that the learning outcomes are at the graduate level, and that the credit is comparable to other WKU graduate courses.

(Approved by Graduate Council 2/14/13)

Repeating Courses

A graduate student is permitted to repeat any course in which a "C" or below was earned. An individual course may only be repeated one time. Courses that are repeatable for credit on different topics may be repeated one time per topic for equivalent credit. Only the second grade will be counted in computing the grade point average. The course and grade received for each attempt will continue to appear on the student's transcript.

(Approved by Graduate Council 3/20/14)

Research Requirement

All graduate programs must ensure student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experience. This requirement is defined by the individual academic programs and may include such experiences as completion of a research tool course, successful completion of a foreign language examination, publication of a thesis, professional practice experience, etc.

(Approved by Graduate Council 11/13/14)

Time Limitation for Degree Completion

All requirements for master's and specialist degrees and graduate certificates must be completed within **six years** of initial enrollment in the program. All requirements for doctoral degrees must be completed within **ten years** of initial enrollment in the doctoral program.

Courses applied toward a master's or specialist degree or graduate certificate program must be completed within six years of degree completion. Courses applied toward a doctorate degree must be completed within ten years of degree completion.

Transfer Credit

WKU accepts transfer credit(s) earned at regionally accredited institutions of higher education. Students transferring credit from an international institution must submit an official transcript evaluation of credit from an international credential evaluation service recognized by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) before equivalencies are determined. All transfer coursework must be documented on an official transcript with a grade of "B" or better. Transfer credits must be applied toward a graduate program awarded by WKU, are subject to approval by the appropriate academic department, and must comply with all other university policies.

Plus and minus grades are recorded as the letter grade only. In cooperative or joint programs with other universities, credits earned in the program at these institutions are not considered transfer credits. At least one-half of credits applied toward degree or certificate requirements must be earned at Western Kentucky University.

(Approved by Graduate Council 3/17/16; 5/9/19)

Registration

Dr. Jennifer Hammonds, University Registrar
www.wku.edu/registrar (<http://www.wku.edu/registrar/>)
 registrar@wku.edu
 Potter Hall 216
 (270) 745-3351

The Office of the Registrar is the permanent repository for the official academic record of each student and provides a variety of academic services including: registration and grading; official transcripts; biographical information changes; withdrawals; degree certification; enrollment verification; undergraduate catalog publication; application for graduation; and commencement planning. Online access to academic records is secured through the use of a WKUid and password and in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Electronic academic records are backed up nightly, and all permanent academic records created prior to 1990 are backed up with both microfilm and digital imaging.

Registration services are available through TopNet, WKU's online student information system. Through TopNet, all students use a personal identification number to register, drop/add courses, access class schedules, and view course grades. Registration policies and procedures are published in the Registration Guide (<https://www.wku.edu/registrar/>) each term.

Transcripts

Transcripts will be released at the written request of the student and in conformity with university policy and existing state and federal statutes pertaining to the release of student academic records. The official academic record is the property of the University. Consequently, the University reserves the right to withhold the release of a transcript of

that record if the student has an obligation to the University. Transcript Request (https://www.wku.edu/registrar/transcript_request.php) is online through the Office of the Registrar.

Division of the School Year

The academic year of Western Kentucky University is divided into two semesters consisting of sixteen weeks, a 13-week summer term, and a three-week winter term. The opening and closing dates are given in the Academic Calendar, which is published yearly. Specific information about the summer and winter terms is available at <http://www.wku.edu/delo> (<http://www.wku.edu/delo/>).

Unit of University Credit

The unit of credit is a semester hour.

Course Load

The course load for a full-time graduate student is 9-15 hours with 9 being the minimum and 15 the maximum. Graduate Assistants may deviate from the defined course load as described in the Financial Assistance (<http://catalog.wku.edu/graduate/financial/>) section of this catalog.

As per United States federal requirements pertaining to students with F1 or J1 visa status, international students are restricted to no more than the equivalent of one on-line/distance education class or 3 credits per semester may count towards the full-time course of study requirement, if an online or distance education course does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. If the student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be counted toward the full course of study requirement.

Course Numbering

700 and above	Doctoral courses
400G-499G, 500-699	Graduate courses
000-499	Undergraduate courses

Grading and the Quality Point System

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA in all courses taken as a graduate student (including all transfer courses and undergraduate level courses). Students who fail to meet the 3.0 GPA requirements for the graduate program GPA and overall cumulative GPA will not be awarded a degree or certificate. Grades lower than a "C" may not be used in meeting degree or non-degree requirements.

The letters A, B, C, D, F, FN, P and X are used by the University to indicate the student's academic proficiency. These letters have the following significance:

A	Excellent, valued at four quality points per semester hour.
B	Good, valued at three quality points per semester hour.
C	Average, valued at two quality points per semester hour.

D	Below average, unsatisfactory, valued at one quality point per semester hour. (A "D" gives credit toward a degree. The student's overall grade point average, however, must be a 2.0 or better to meet the requirements for graduation.)	NR	No report, grades for an entire class were not received by the Office of the Registrar in time for processing. The designation "NR" is not to be used as a grade for individual students.
F	Failure, valued at no semester hours earned and no quality points.	ER	Error in reporting, this designation is used by the Office of the Registrar when a grade is not reported for an individual student.
FN	Failure due to nonattendance, or ceasing to attend, up to and including the 60% point of a term, valued at no semester hours earned and no quality points. Nonattendance shall be defined as failure to perform meaningful academically-related activity including, but not limited to, the following: submitting an academic assignment, taking an exam, participating in an online discussion about academic matters.	NG	No grade, a grade is not appropriate to the course. The "NG" designation is restricted to specific courses approved for its use.
P	Pass, credit is awarded toward a degree, but no quality points are assigned. The "P" designation is restricted to specific courses approved for its use.	IP	In Progress, the IP designation is restricted to specific courses designed to span more than one term. Unless approved otherwise, an IP designation unresolved at the end of three years after its assignment will be converted to an "F"
X	Incomplete, A grade of "X" is given only when a relatively small amount of work is not completed because of illness or other reason satisfactory to the instructor. A grade of "X" will automatically become an "F" unless removed within the first twelve (12) weeks of the next full term (summer term excluded.) An incomplete must be removed within this twelve-week period regardless of whether the student is registered for additional work in the next term. A student should work with the instructor who assigned the incomplete on an independent basis in order to complete the necessary assignments. A grade of incomplete is not used under any circumstances as a substitute for "F" or "W."		

(IP Grading Policy Approved by Graduate Council 11/10/16)

Equivalent Courses

Equivalent courses have different subject area prefixes but the same curriculum, learning outcomes, course number, title, abbreviated title, credit hours, prerequisites and/or corequisites, grade type (e.g., A – F, Pass / Fail) and catalog course listings.

Prerequisite(s)

A prerequisite represents prior specific or general academic knowledge, background, or student classification required in order to enroll in a specific course.

Corequisite(s)

A corequisite is a requirement which must be fulfilled concurrently with another course, unless successfully completed as a prerequisite.

Recording and Changing Grades

Grades are recorded by the faculty at the end of each term. No grade may be changed except on a written statement from the instructor certifying that an error has been made, or in the case of an incomplete, that the work was completed within the time limit. All conditions must be removed before the student will be recommended for any certificate or degree.

Schedule Changes

After classes begin, registration for a full-time course load and / or changes in schedules may be made only within the first six class days of a semester or the first three days of a bi-term. Courses that do not meet at least twice during the first six class days may be added through, but not past, the day of the second class meeting. During a semester, a student may withdraw from a course with a grade of "W" or "F" under the following conditions. It is recommended that faculty members inform students of this "W" period deadline.

- A student is permitted to withdraw from any course with a grade of "W" through the 70% point of the semester;

The designations AU, W, NR, ER and NG are not included in the determination of grade point average and are used in the following cases:

AU	Auditor of a course, (See "Auditing of Courses" for additional information.)
W	Officially Withdrew

- After the 70% point of the semester, any student dropping a course receives an automatic "F". However, when there are extenuating circumstances, and at the discretion of the faculty member and the department chair, the student may be permitted to withdraw with a "W" instead of an "F".

During a bi-term a student may drop a course with a grade of "W" or "F" under the following conditions:

- A student is permitted to withdraw from any course with a grade of "W" through the 70% point of the bi-term;
- After the 70% point of the bi-term, any student dropping a course receives an automatic "F". However, when there are extenuating circumstances, and at the discretion of the faculty member and the department chair, the student may be permitted to withdraw with a W instead of an F.

Students should refer to the Registration Guide each term for specific dates that affect schedule changes. The institution reserves the privilege at all times of canceling any course for which the enrollment is not sufficient to justify its continuation and to make any other adjustments in the schedule that seem necessary.

Auditing of Courses

An auditor is a student who enrolls and participates in a course without expecting to receive academic credit. The same registration procedure is followed and the same fees are charged as for courses taken for credit. An audited course is not applicable to any degree or certificate program. Regular class attendance is expected of an auditor. Other course requirements, which may be obtained in writing from the instructor, will vary depending on the nature of the course. Students interested in auditing a course should secure permission from the instructor and discuss course requirements prior to enrolling. Failure to meet course requirements may result in the auditor being withdrawn from the course at the request of the instructor. A successful audit will be recorded on the transcript with the designation of AU. Any change from audit to credit must be done by the last day to add a class. Changes from credit to audit must be done by the last day to drop a class with a grade of "W". Refunds for withdrawals from audited courses will be prorated on the same basis as refunds for withdrawals from courses taken for credit.

Degree Conferral

Degrees are conferred by the University Registrar in May, August, and December. Students with outstanding obligations to the University will not receive a diploma or official transcript until the University Registrar has been notified by the appropriate office that the obligation has been met.

Withdrawal from the University

For various reasons it is occasionally necessary for a student to withdraw from the University. Prior to the 70% point of the semester, students may use TopNet to withdraw. After the 70% point of the semester of the semester, the student should report to the Office of the Registrar to initiate withdrawal procedures. Students leaving the institution without an official withdrawal will receive failing grades in all courses in which they are enrolled and endanger their future status in the institution. Students withdrawing after the 70% point of the semester, a bi-term, 5-week session, or comparable period during a summer session must consult with their instructors as to the withdrawal grade. The official date of the withdrawal is the date the withdrawal is processed on TopNet

or the written notice is received in the Office of the Registrar. Students wishing to return to WKU at a later date must submit an application for readmission prior to the deadline for submitting applications. Refer to the Registration Guide on the Office of the Registrar's website for deadlines.

In special circumstances, as described below, a complete withdrawal from the University after the 70% point of a term will be considered. Request forms are available on the Office of the Registrar website at www.wku.edu/registrar/withdrawal.php (<http://www.wku.edu/registrar/withdrawal.php>).

Administrative Withdrawal

A request for an administrative withdrawal is initiated by the University because of a disciplinary situation or when, in the professional judgment of a health care provider, psychologist and/or university administrator, there is reason to believe a student is a substantial threat to him/herself or interferes with the welfare of other members of the University, the education process, or the orderly operation of the University. The Vice President for Enrollment and Student Experience or the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, or their respective designees, will notify the student of the involuntary withdrawal, and the University Registrar will be directed to withdraw the student from all classes in which the student is currently enrolled and cancel registration that has occurred for any future terms. The Office of the Registrar will notify the student's instructors of the withdrawal, and "W" grades will be recorded for the term in progress. A student who is administratively withdrawn will have a registration hold placed by the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Experience or the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs to prevent the student from being readmitted or re-enrolled unless cleared by the appropriate administrator or the respective designee. A student may file a written appeal of an involuntary withdrawal through the office that administered the withdrawal. Tuition refund appeals for administrative withdrawals are handled in a separate procedure, and instructions may be obtained from the Bursar's Office.

Medical Withdrawal

A student may request and be considered for a medical withdrawal from all courses in a term when extraordinary circumstances, such as a serious physical or mental illness or injury, prevent the student from continuing his or her classes after the 70% point of a term, and incompletes or other arrangements with the instructors are not feasible or possible. A medical withdrawal must be substantiated with appropriate documentation from the attending health care provider. Once the rationale for a medical withdrawal has been validated by the Office of the Registrar, the student's instructors will be sent notification of the withdrawal, and "W" grades will be recorded for each course. A student who requests a medical withdrawal, or an individual requesting a withdrawal on behalf of the student who is physically or mentally unable to request the withdrawal, should contact the Office of the Registrar to obtain medical withdrawal procedures. Tuition refund appeals for medical withdrawals are handled in a separate procedure, and instructions may be obtained from the Bursar's Office.

Military Withdrawal

Students who are members of any branch of the United States Armed Services, including the National Guard, who are called to active duty while enrolled at WKU are entitled to the following options:

1. Students may work with each individual instructor to determine if an incomplete grade is appropriate, or
2. If an incomplete grade is not a viable option, the student will be permitted to withdraw either from individual courses or from the

entire schedule of classes. A full refund of tuition and fees will be issued for those courses from which the student has withdrawn.

Students who are called to active duty while enrolled should contact the Office of the Registrar to initiate the withdrawal process. An official copy of the military orders must be presented to invoke this special withdrawal and refund process.

Retroactive Withdrawal

A student who leaves the University for extenuating circumstances without an official withdrawal during the term of departure may apply for a retroactive withdrawal. The student must present supporting documentation that demonstrates serious and compelling reasons justifying the withdrawal and extenuating circumstances justifying its retroactive nature; poor academic performance that is not attributed to non-academic extenuating circumstances is not a consideration for retroactive withdrawal. A student may appeal for a retroactive withdrawal within two calendar years following the end of the term for which withdrawal is requested. A student need not be enrolled at WKU at the time the application for retroactive withdrawal is submitted.

An appellate board will review the request for a retroactive withdrawal. The board will consider the following factors, including, but not limited to:

1. Documentation of extenuating circumstances.
2. Written letter of support from an academic administrator, faculty member, advisor or other university professional who is familiar with the student's situation.

If a retroactive withdrawal is approved, the Office of the Registrar will notify the student's instructors and department chairs of the request for a retroactive withdrawal, and they will be given 14 calendar days to raise objections if the student's classroom performance was such that a withdrawal (W) would not be appropriate. If objections are raised by the instructor or department chair, the Office of the Registrar will be informed of the objection, and the student will not receive a "W" in the class. A tuition refund is not granted for a retroactive withdrawal.

Thesis, Specialist Project, or Dissertation

Students pursuing a thesis option in a master's or specialist degree program must complete at least 6 hours of credit in 599-Thesis Research Writing or 699-Specialist Project, respectively. Students pursuing a doctoral degree requiring a dissertation must earn a minimum of 9 hours of credit in 799-Dissertation Research. All thesis, specialist project, and dissertation hours will use a pass/fail grading system. Thesis & Dissertation Guidelines (<http://www.wku.edu/graduate/students/thesis/>) are published by the Graduate School.

All thesis, specialist project, and dissertation hours will be graded pass/fail. During the time that the thesis, specialist project, or dissertation is in progress but not yet completed, the director should submit a grade of IP (In Progress). Upon successful completion of all requirements the director should request that the grades of IP be changed to grades of P (Pass). If the thesis project is deemed to be of unacceptable quality by the thesis director, then the grades of IP should be changed to grades of F (Fail).

(Approved by Graduate Council 11/8/12)

Research Committee

Students pursuing graduate programs requiring a thesis, specialist project or dissertation are mentored by a research committee of three to four members including a chair. A member of WKU's graduate faculty must serve as the chair. An individual who is not a member of WKU's graduate faculty may serve on a committee. Students may assist in the formation of the committee, but final approval of the composition of the thesis, specialist project, or dissertation committee lies with the Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education.

Maintaining Matriculation

If the thesis, specialist, or dissertation project is not completed during the initial period of registration for this credit, the student must maintain matriculation by enrolling in a minimum of (1) credit hour of a 600 (thesis), 700 (project), or 800 (dissertation) course until the thesis or project is submitted and approved by the Graduate School. Further, students must be enrolled in a minimum of one (1) credit hour of maintaining matriculation during the term in which the defense is held.

Enrollment in matriculation courses does not result in a grade or credit toward any degree or non-degree program.

Defense

A defense covering the thesis, specialist project, or dissertation must be completed if required by the degree program. The defense usually consists of a public presentation and an oral examination of the candidate's research and academic preparation. The defense is arranged by the committee chair and the student, and is given before the final draft is completed. Each member of the committee should be given a minimum of two (2) weeks notification before the defense to read and review the research. Following the approval of defense by the student's committee, the thesis, specialist project, or dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School for final approval and publication. Submission Deadlines (<https://www.wku.edu/graduate/students/thesis/>) are posted annually.

Outcome

Students will pass the defense if no more than one member casts a dissenting vote. If a student does not pass this culminating assessment, the committee may grant a student permission to attempt a second defense which will be administered under conditions stipulated by the committee. A student who has failed the defense may be re-examined once more by the committee. Failure to pass the second defense may result in dismissal from the program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a failed defense are ineligible to reapply for the same graduate degree program at any time in the future.

Comprehensive Examination/Capstone

All graduate degree programs require satisfactory completion of either a written or oral examination or an approved capstone course. The comprehensive exam and thesis/specialist project/dissertation defense may be combined in those degree programs that require a defense. Examinations for professional licensure or certification cannot be used for, or in place of, the comprehensive examination/capstone. Students must meet the following guidelines before they are permitted to attempt the comprehensive examination:

- Complete at least one half of the course work hours in an approved program;
- Have no more than 9 hours remaining in the approved program;
- Complete additional requirements as specified in writing by faculty in the program department.

For thesis/specialist project/dissertation students, the oral examination committee will be the approved research committee. For non-thesis students, the major advisor, in consultation with the student, appoints the oral examination committee consisting of at least two graduate faculty members. If the student's program includes a concentration, or a significant amount of course work in an area outside the major program, one of the committee members must represent that area. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all committee members are available when scheduling an examination.

The comprehensive exam is graded pass/fail determined by a majority committee vote. The research committee chair is responsible for submitting the results of the comprehensive examination/capstone to the Graduate School. For non-thesis students, the primary advisor is responsible for submission.

Minimum Registration

A student must be registered for a minimum of one (1) credit during the term in which the comprehensive exam/capstone is completed.

Outcome

A student who has failed the comprehensive examination may be re-examined once more by the committee. Failure to pass the second comprehensive examination may result in dismissal from the program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a failed comprehensive examination are ineligible to reapply for the same graduate degree program at any time in the future.

Degree and Certificate Completion Checklist

All degree and certificate requirements must be completed by the student by the last day of the term. The Graduate School begins auditing degrees and certificates for completion the week following the final day of the term. The degree audit confirms that the student has:

1. completed all coursework (earning a "C" or higher/no incomplete grades) in their program within the time limit;
2. earned a minimum cumulative and program GPA of 3.0;
3. published a thesis, specialist project, or dissertation approved by the Graduate School (if required);
4. completed a comprehensive exam/capstone (degrees only); and,
5. applied for graduation.

Degree audits are completed within four to six weeks after the term concludes. Upon recommendation of the audit, the University Registrar confers the degree and/or certificate in May, August, or December. Students may check their transcript for completion on TopNet (https://acsapps.wku.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_WKULogin/?ret_code=5) (Student Services/Student Records/Unofficial Academic Transcript). Degrees and certificates will be mailed within 3-6 weeks after the conclusion of the term. The Graduate School does not confirm degree or certificate completion prior to award; however, enrollment verification (http://www.wku.edu/registrar/enrollment_verification.php) may be requested.