

# Graduate School Handbook

**Eighth Edition**

**March 2016**

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*This handbook supersedes all previous editions.*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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This *Graduate School Handbook* delineates philosophies, policies, and procedures of The Graduate School at The University of Alabama in Huntsville, and is intended as a guide for the faculty and administration of the University. The material in this handbook was compiled with reference to the previous (2006) edition of the handbook, with amendments reflecting decisions by the Graduate Council and the graduate faculty in the intervening period. This handbook has been approved by the Graduate Council, Department Chairs and College Deans, the Provost and The University of Alabama System Office.

Information pertinent to graduate admissions, academic policies and procedures, etc. may be found in the latest edition of the graduate catalog, available online at <http://www.uah.edu>.

# 2 PURPOSE

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The primary purpose of the Graduate School in a university is to define and support excellence in graduate education, and the research and scholarly activities associated with it.<sup>1</sup>

Master's education in the United States today is a substantial, dynamic, and important part of graduate education, which through its responsiveness to societal needs for advanced education plays a continuing and prominent role in the training of the American professional workforce. Master's programs serve many of the educational needs of the student and of society that are not satisfied by baccalaureate degree programs – needs that can be met only by more advanced and specialized study in a particular field.<sup>2</sup>

The Doctor of Philosophy program is designed to prepare a student to become a scholar that is, to discover, integrate, and apply knowledge, as well as communicate and disseminate it..... The program

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<sup>1</sup> *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education – A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC, 1990), p. 3

<sup>2</sup> *Master's Education: A Guide for Faculty and Administrators – A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC, 1994), p. 1

emphasizes the development of the student’s capacity to make significant original contributions to knowledge in a context of freedom of inquiry and expression.... All of this is accomplished in apprenticeship to and close association with faculty members who are experienced in research and teaching.<sup>3</sup>

The Graduate School is responsible for oversight of the quality of graduate education at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). The administrative functions of the School include the approval of new degree programs, admission of students and administration of their programs, and recommendation of students for degrees.

### 3 ORGANIZATION

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The Graduate School at The University of Alabama in Huntsville consists of the graduate faculty, students admitted for graduate study, and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies (hereafter, “Graduate Dean”). University-wide decision-making functions of the graduate faculty are carried out by the Graduate Council. Programmatic decision-making functions are carried out by the graduate faculty of the program concerned.

#### 3.1 THE GRADUATE FACULTY

##### 3.1.1 Graduate Faculty Appointments

The term graduate faculty does not imply a separate division or a school within the University. Rather it refers to a membership accorded to Colleges that offer graduate studies within the University. There are no honorary members of the graduate faculty. Graduate faculty members have responsibility to instruct at the graduate level, to direct thesis/dissertation/scholarly project work, and to monitor student programs of study. Members of the graduate faculty must teach all courses offered for graduate credit.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Doctor of Philosophy Degree – A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC, 1990), p. 1

## 3.2 MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATIONS

### 3.2.1 Full Member

Full members of the graduate faculty are full-time or emeritus UAH faculty members and other appointees (such as adjunct faculty or endowed chairs) possessing a terminal degree (or equivalent), who have demonstrated competence and maturity requisite to full participation in graduate programs. A full member participates in the department's<sup>4</sup> graduate programs without restriction and may serve as a student's thesis, dissertation, or scholarly project advisor.

### 3.2.2 Affiliate Member

Affiliate members of the graduate faculty are appointed to fulfill a limited role in a graduate program. An affiliate member may teach specified courses in a graduate program and may serve as a member of an examination, thesis or dissertation or scholarly project supervisory committee. Affiliate members may be adjunct faculty or full-time UAH faculty.

### 3.2.3 Membership Criteria

Graduate faculty members must be productive, creative scholars. Productive scholarship requires devotion to the discovery, development, and refinement of knowledge and techniques in one's field of expertise, usually resulting in peer-reviewed publications for evaluation and criticism. Each individual appointed to the graduate faculty must hold the highest earned degree, usually the earned doctorate, in the teaching discipline or a related discipline. In exceptional cases, individuals who do not possess the terminal degree may be appointed to the graduate faculty if they present documented evidence, as part of the application, of an appropriate level of scholarly or creative activity, or professional experience. Such individuals will usually be appointed to affiliate membership.

- Full members of the graduate faculty must demonstrate continuing interest in the graduate program, be actively engaged in research, and demonstrate scholarly achievement

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this *Handbook*, the word "department" implies an organized academic unit administering a graduate degree program.



through contributions to their academic discipline. Faculty members who act as advisors of doctoral student research must be experienced in directing independent study.

### 3.3 APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE

A candidate for the graduate faculty who is tenured or in a tenure track position is automatically appointed to the graduate faculty. An adjunct or part-time faculty member is nominated by his/her department chair/program director. The nomination is forwarded through the appropriate college dean to the Graduate Dean, who in turn reviews the credentials and makes the appointment. If the Graduate Dean has concerns they ask the Graduate Council for a review and guidance. If the department nominates a faculty for full membership and they are not tenured or tenure-track then the Graduate Council will review the qualifications and make a recommendation to the Graduate Dean.

### 3.4 TERM OF APPOINTMENT AND REVIEW

#### 3.4.1 Full membership

Indefinite term: Full membership in the graduate faculty may, in the case of full-time or emeritus members of the UAH faculty, be awarded without a specific expiration date, subject to reevaluation on a case-by-case basis initiated by the college dean.

#### 3.4.2 Affiliate Membership

Affiliate members may be appointed for periods from one academic term up to 6 calendar years. Each nominated faculty member will have a defined term of service typically 3 years. Appointments should terminate at the end of an academic semester or term. For faculty who participate in joint or tri-campus programs they will be awarded membership if they are already members at their home institution. In all cases the nominated faculty member shall provide a vita for review by the Graduate Dean.

### 3.5 THE GRADUATE COUNCIL

Each institution should have a group of faculty members active in graduate programs who serve as a graduate council, review graduate curriculum proposals, set university-wide academic standards for graduate programs, and develop policies and procedures for the effective administration of graduate degrees. All academic matters pertaining to graduate degree programs should be determined by this or a similar group.<sup>5</sup>

The Graduate Council is an elected body representing the graduate faculty. University-wide decision-making functions of the graduate faculty are carried out by the Graduate Council. The Council consists of the Dean of The Graduate School (non-voting *ex-officio* chair), the Registrar (non-voting), the Director of the Library and a number of members of the graduate faculty according to the following rubric.

Graduate Council members must be Full Members of the graduate faculty. The representation by college on the Council is determined as follows. Each college with Master's programs has two representatives. In addition, each college with doctoral programs has one additional representative. The term of an elected member is two years. Terms commence at the beginning of the Fall Semester. The appropriate college fills upcoming vacancies on the Council by the end of the Spring Semester preceding the new appointment.

Proxies are allowed. All present graduate council members can hold the proxies of all absent members of their college. Proxies must be full members of the graduate faculty and must be announced to the Dean at the start of the meeting when the Dean asks for all proxies. Each elected member present has one vote (and a maximum of one or two proxies depending on their college) and the Graduate Dean may vote only to break a tie.

The Council, as representative of the graduate faculty, examines new policies and procedural requirements, course creations and modifications, new graduate programs, graduate faculty

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<sup>5</sup> *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education – A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC, 1990), pp. 8-9

appointments, student petitions and other matters dealing with the Graduate School. Matters originating within departments or programs are brought to the attention of the Graduate Council through the Graduate Dean and Council of Deans, while matters originating at large are brought to the attention of the Graduate Council by the Graduate Dean. Matters dealing with academic policies and substantial changes in catalog are referred by the Graduate Council to the Council of Deans and Provost for approval before implementation. Meetings of the Graduate Council are called by, and the agenda set by, the Graduate Dean. Copies of the agenda are sent in advance to each member, to chairs of departments with graduate programs and to college deans; agenda items are discussed and voted upon during the upcoming meeting. There will be at least one meeting a year. One-half of the voting Graduate Council membership (including proxies) shall constitute a quorum. Business will be conducted according to the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

### 3.6 CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The Credentials Committee consists of all members of the graduate council. The Credentials Committee examines the credentials of the nominees for graduate faculty appointments according to the criteria specified in A.3 above and makes recommendations to the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean may make affiliate appointments to the graduate faculty.

### 3.7 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

The Curriculum Committee consists of all members of the Graduate Council. The Curriculum Committee is called upon by the Graduate Dean to examine courses presented for approval if they are:

- New courses that might affect or overlap those in another department;
- New courses related to new programs; or
- Courses that might substantially change a program.

The Curriculum Committee makes recommendations to the Graduate Dean. The Committee may recommend acceptance, rejection, or modification to courses presented for its consideration. In formulating its recommendations, the Committee shall consider the overall importance of the proposed course both to the specific graduate program involved and to other programs across the University, and the extent to which the proposed course overlaps existing course offerings in the same, or another, department or program.

The process for voting and discussion is electronic. All materials supporting the change or creation of a course or program is sent to each member of the Graduate Council. The Council then engages in electronic discussion as necessary. A date is set for a vote, the votes are counted and the results are announced by the Graduate Dean. If approved the appropriate paperwork is signed and sent to the Office of Academic Affairs for further review and signature.

### 3.8 THE GRADUATE DEAN

The Council of Graduate Schools provides the following policy statement regarding the office of Graduate Dean:

There is a need for one individual to attend to institution-wide graduate issues and to espouse high quality graduate education throughout the institution. There should be a separate unit within the university that decides on or has veto power over admissions decisions, ensures that the policies set in place by the graduate faculty are being carried out, and has final degree-granting authority for all graduate degrees.<sup>6</sup>

Since the graduate dean does not have administrative responsibility for any single department or school, he/she is in a unique position to represent the interests of the institution as a whole and to view departments from an institution-wide perspective....He or she articulates the idea of a university as

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<sup>6</sup> *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education – A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC, 1990), p. 8

something more than a collection of unrelated departments and schools: as an organic, interdependent whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>7</sup>

The Dean of The Graduate School reports to the Provost. Because of the nature of the Graduate School, the Graduate Dean is an academic leader and an administrator in reference to students enrolled in the School and in reference to graduate faculty members whose primary university appointment is in a college or research center. The Graduate Dean has the following duties and functions. He/she:

- 1) Is responsible for oversight of the quality of the academic programs at the master's and doctoral levels as established by the faculty, and for assuring the consistency of standards for these degrees among all departments;
- 2) Is the primary authority on issues relating to graduate admissions, graduate degree programs of study, and graduate degree completion requirements;
- 3) In cooperation with department chairs and college deans as appropriate, participates in the resolution of issues pertaining to individual graduate students (e.g., late withdrawal, grievances, etc.), in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *Student Handbook*;
- 4) Convenes meetings of the Graduate Council;
- 5) Represents the Graduate School at meetings of the Council of Deans and similar functions;
- 6) Represents the Graduate School in program proposals that are submitted for approval;
- 7) Is the University's official member of the Council of Graduate Schools, the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools, and the Alabama Council of Graduate Deans;
- 8) Supervises the graduate admissions office;
- 9) Administers tuition, and cost-matching support programs for graduate students;
- 10) Recruits students for all graduate programs and provides marketing support for all graduate programs;

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<sup>7</sup> *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education – A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools Washington, DC, 1990), p. 4

## 4 POLICY FORMATION

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The Graduate Council at The University of Alabama in Huntsville is responsible for the formation of policies relevant to the Graduate School, such as admission, degree requirements, curriculum, students and faculty. In some cases, the Council may recommend its findings to the graduate faculty for further action. Approval of policies by the Provost is required for implementation.

The Graduate Dean meets periodically with college deans and chairs of the departments and programs as a group to discuss the implementation of policies formed by the Graduate Council. These meetings are also vehicles for discussing other concerns relative to graduate studies, which should be brought to the attention of the Graduate Council for action.

## 5 GRADUATE SCHOOL PROCEDURES

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### 5.1 ADDING NEW COURSES OR MODIFICATION/DELETION OF EXISTING COURSES

New and timely topics in a graduate program are generally offered first on an experimental basis under the special-topics course number in a department. If sufficient demand is demonstrated and if the departmental graduate faculty desires, the topic may then be introduced as a new course with a number and be entered in the catalog. The chair recommends the approval of the new course through the curriculum committee and dean of the college to the Graduate Dean, who will seek advice from the Graduate Curriculum Committee (II.D above) before taking final action. The request for approval should include a course approval form with topical outline, course number, title, catalog description, justification and name(s) of the graduate faculty member(s) considered qualified to teach the course. Course numbers may not be reused for a period of seven years.

Graduate courses that have undergone substantial modification shall be renumbered. In such cases, courses are considered to be new and require approval as outlined above.

## 5.2 INITIATION OF NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

Initiating a new graduate degree program is a lengthy process and usually requires more than one year. A proposal to initiate a new program includes, among other things, justification, need, and demand. It is very important to point out how the program supports the role and scope of the University in general and the program's relationship to other programs at UAH and, in the case of cooperative, joint or shared programs, the other campuses involved. Preparation of a proposal requires thorough research and adequate documentation. The procedure for approval is as follows:

- 1) The faculty of a department contemplating a new graduate degree program will conduct a self-study in regard to the program. The faculty should ascertain that need, demand, faculty capabilities and viability of the program exist. It is the faculty's responsibility to show that the program should be implemented.
- 2) The faculty and chair of the department present preliminary data for the need to propose a graduate degree program to the dean(s) of the college(s) concerned. If the dean(s) approve(s) the proposed program, it is then presented to the Graduate Dean.
- 3) The Graduate Dean, the dean of the college, and the department or program chair present the case to the Provost.
- 4) The Provost requests the Graduate Dean to bring the proposed program to the attention of the Graduate Council for its consideration.
- 5) After the recommendations of the Graduate Council are transmitted through the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness to the Provost by the Graduate Dean, the Provost advises the Graduate Dean, the dean of the college, and the department chair whether to proceed with formal submission procedures.
- 6) At the instruction of the Provost, the department chair and faculty, with the assistance of the Graduate Dean and appropriate college dean(s), prepare a Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal (NISP) according to the guidelines of both the UA System (Board Policy 502 – Establishing New Programs) and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). The NISP is signed by the Graduate Dean and is forwarded through the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness to the Provost. After approval by the Provost the NISP is

forwarded to the President for approval. The President forwards the NISP to The University of Alabama System Office for review, approval by the Board of Trustees, and submission to ACHE.

- 7) After comments on the NISP from the Chief Academic Officers of state universities are received through ACHE and a full proposal is solicited, the department prepares a program proposal with the assistance of the Graduate Dean and appropriate college dean(s). The Graduate Dean and the chair of the department may arrange for consultants to visit the campus and/or to evaluate the proposal. Arrangements are made through the office of the School of Graduate Studies.
- 8) The Graduate Dean presents the proposal to the Graduate Council for review, comment and approval.
- 9) The Graduate Dean submits the final draft of the proposal through the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness to the Provost. After approval by the Provost, the proposal is forwarded to the President for approval. The President forwards the proposal to The University of Alabama System office for official review and comment.
- 10) The Graduate Dean, the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and the Provost carry out all subsequent external steps to secure final approval by the Board of Trustees, the Alabama Council of Graduate Deans, ACHE, and SACSCOC.
- 11) The Provost advises the Graduate Dean, the dean of the college, and the department chair of the official action on the proposal.

### 5.3 INITIATION OF A NEW OPTION WITHIN AN EXISTING PROGRAM

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education defines a “reasonable extension or alteration” of a program as “a modification of an existing unit or program of instruction that does not change its essential character, integrity, or objectives.” A new option within an existing degree program will be subject to internal reviews by the Graduate Council as necessary. Options will be treated as individual cases. Substantive (as defined by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education Academic Affairs Manual) changes will be presented to the Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for approval; non-



substantive changes will be referred to the Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education as information items.

#### 5.4 INITIATION OF NEW GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

The procedure for approval of a new graduate certificate program is as follows:

The faculty of a department contemplating a new graduate certificate program will conduct a self-study in regard to the program. The faculty should ascertain that need, demand, faculty capabilities and viability of the program exist. It is the faculty's responsibility to show that the program should be implemented.

- 1) The faculty and chair of the department present preliminary data for the need to propose a graduate program to the dean(s) of the college(s) concerned. If the dean(s) approve(s) the proposed program, it is then presented to the Graduate Dean.
- 2) The Graduate Dean, the dean of the college, and the department or program chair present the case to the Provost.
- 3) At the request of the Provost, the Graduate Dean presents the proposal to the Graduate Council for review, comment and approval.
- 4) The recommendations of the Graduate Council are transmitted through the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness to the Provost by the Graduate Dean.
- 5) After approval by the Provost the proposal is forwarded to the President for approval. The President informs The University of Alabama System office who, in turn, inform ACHE and SACSCOC. Graduate certificate programs of 18 semester hours or more require approval by the Board of Trustees.

#### 5.5 PROGRAM REVIEW

At UAH, as at most other universities, periodic program reviews are conducted to ensure the quality of programs being offered. The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) and The University of Alabama Board of Trustees accept this type of review as an important part of institutional planning and assessment.

The Provost has overall responsibility for the program review process. Within the Office of the Provost, the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness directs and coordinates the review process for all undergraduate and graduate programs in collaboration with appropriate college deans. When a program is interdisciplinary and crosses two or more colleges then the coordinating entity will be the Graduate Dean rather than the College Deans. For other reviews of graduate programs, the Graduate Dean also participates in planning and conducting the review. Details about the review process are presented in the Manual for Comprehensive Academic Program Reviews available in the Office of the Provost.

## 6 STUDENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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The UAH Graduate Catalog is the source for information pertaining to Graduate School policies regarding graduate degree/certificate programs offered, admissions requirements, degree requirements, course repeat and withdrawal policies, course currency requirements, etc. The requirements set forth in The Graduate School section of that document are considered as “foundation” requirements that are pertinent to all programs and can be waived only by the Graduate Dean. Additional and/or more stringent requirements may be imposed by individual colleges and/or departments/programs, as indicated in the pertinent section(s) of the Graduate Catalog.

### 6.1 SUPERVISORY COMMITTEES

The objective of a supervisory committee is to apply standards of academic excellence. Supervisory Committees are appointed by the department/program chair in consultation with the advisor and student, and approved by the Graduate Dean. Master’s thesis supervisory committees and DNP project committees shall have at least three members and doctoral dissertation committees have at least five members. Committee members shall all be graduate faculty, with at least half being Full members of the graduate faculty and at least half being from the major department/program. Specific tasks of the Supervisory Committee include:

- 1) Guiding the student in developing a program of study;
- 2) Administering examinations to enable the Committee to certify the student's retention of knowledge and competence in the subject matter shown on the program of study;
- 3) Approving thesis and dissertation proposals;
- 4) Providing guidance and advice to the student regarding completion of thesis/dissertation requirements;
- 5) Evaluating the satisfactory completion of thesis/dissertation requirements;
- 6) Certifying the satisfactory completion of thesis/dissertation requirements.

The success in accomplishing these tasks is determined, in part, by the cooperation of the student with the supervisory committee. At least once per academic year, all doctoral supervisory committees are required to prepare a brief report, signed by the entire committee, summarizing the progress of the student and the expected actions to be taken during the next year. These reports are to be submitted to the appropriate department/program chair and become part of the student's file. Individual colleges and/or departments may place more frequent or stringent requirements on doctoral dissertation and/or master's thesis committees within that unit.

If a faculty member perceives a conflict of interest between a graduate student and any member of that student's supervisory committee, the faculty member shall report this perceived conflict of interest through the Supervisory Committee Chair to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. If the Committee Chair is a component of the perceived conflict of interest, then the faculty member shall report the perceived conflict directly to the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean will then, in consultation with the Supervisory Committee Chair (if appropriate), the Provost and applicable College Dean(s), provide for the monitoring and managing of this conflict of interest by whatever means appropriate, to include adding another committee member with specific responsibilities in this area.

## 6.2 SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR

The chair of the Supervisory Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance with Graduate School policies and procedures and may or may not also be the advisor. The chair shall be:

- 1) A full-time member of the University faculty; and
- 2) A full member of the graduate faculty.

Note: Adjunct faculty and affiliate members may not chair a supervisory committee.

## 6.3 ADVISORS OF THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

The advisor of a thesis or dissertation has primary responsibility for the academic quality of the thesis/dissertation work. The advisor shall be a full member of the graduate faculty.

Note: Affiliate members of the Graduate faculty, whether full-time, part-time, or adjunct UAH faculty, may not be advisors.

## 6.4 THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

All theses and dissertations must conform to the requirements set forth in the Thesis and Dissertation Manual and must eventually be accessible to the general public. A copy of each approved thesis and dissertation is uploaded to ProQuest for storage and viewing. Each thesis and dissertation must contain a page with the following paragraph and signed by the student:

“In presenting this thesis (dissertation) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master’s (doctoral) degree from The University of Alabama in Huntsville, I agree that the Library of this University shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying for scholarly purposes may be granted by my advisor or, in his/her absence, by the Chair of the Department (Director of the Program) or the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to The University of Alabama in Huntsville in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in this thesis (dissertation).”

## 6.5 QUALIFYING EXAMINATION (DOCTORAL STUDENTS)

The Qualifying Examination for doctoral students is given under the auspices of The Graduate School and must be administered by the supervisory committee within one year of the date the student completes the formal coursework on the Program of Study. All classes must be valid at the time of administration. After five years, if a student has not completed their dissertation the qualifying exam must be re-administered. It can only be administered twice for any student. It is conducted in two distinct stages, which may be separated by a length of time deemed appropriate by the supervisory committee.

The first stage is a demonstration through written and oral examination that the student is proficient in the subject matter in the Program of Study. The final stage is the dissertation proposal review in which the student prepares a written report and makes a subsequent oral presentation describing the proposed dissertation research. Both the dissertation topic and expected approach(es) must be clearly delineated to the committee's satisfaction in order for a pass to be granted. The oral dissertation research presentation must be scheduled through The Graduate School at least one week in advance. Once this review is complete, the results of the qualifying examination are reported to The Graduate School on the prescribed form. A pass requires a favorable (no more than one dissenting) vote of the supervisory committee. The oral dissertation proposal presentation may be given no more than twice.

## 6.6 CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION (DOCTORAL STUDENTS)

All students who have completed the minimum coursework requirements for the doctoral degree they are pursuing must register for a minimum three semester hours of graduate credit (to include dissertation credit) each Fall and Spring semester until all degree requirements are complete. Students need to be registered for three hours of 799 in the semester in which they defend their dissertation research. Exceptions to three hour continuous registration requirement will only be granted in the semester following a successful defense, if the student is completing modifications. The exception will be granted only upon approval of a written petition from the student, through the Chair of the Supervisory Committee, to the Graduate Dean.

## 6.7 RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT (DOCTORAL STUDENTS)

A period of academic residence is required for all students in doctoral programs and may be established through either (i) being enrolled as a full-time student (at least nine graduate semester hours) either for one continuous academic year, or for Spring and Fall semesters in the same calendar year; or (ii) being enrolled in at least six hours of graduate course work in at least three of four consecutive semesters. Colleges and/or departments may have more stringent requirements and students should refer to the appropriate section of the Catalog for details.

## 7 FINAL EXAMINATIONS

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### 7.1 NON-THESIS OPTION MASTER'S DEGREES

A final comprehensive examination, or satisfactory performance (B or better) in a capstone course, is required of all candidates for a master's degree (non-thesis option). Capstone courses must be designated as such by the Department/Program during the course approval process and approved by the College Dean, the Graduate Council, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost. The final examination for a master's degree (non-thesis option) candidate will consist of an examination on the coursework in the Program of Study and may be written, oral, or both. A student may take the final examination no more than twice.

### 7.2 THESIS OPTION MASTER'S DEGREES

Candidates for a master's degree (thesis option) must pass a final examination. This examination may include a written portion involving examination on coursework, but must include an oral defense of the thesis before an examining committee. The examining committee for thesis defenses shall be the Supervisory Committee. A pass requires a favorable (no more than one dissenting) vote of the examining committee.

The supervisory committee and student should agree on a mutually acceptable date for the final examination. A written notice of the time and place of examination is sent to the graduate dean at least one week before the examination date. After approval by the graduate dean, the department sends a copy of the written notice to the candidate and each member of the committee. Once set, the examination becomes an official Graduate School matter; the date cannot be changed without prior agreement amongst the supervisory committee members and the student and without approval of the graduate dean. Thesis defenses are composed of two phases; the first is an oral presentation of the thesis material and is considered to be open to members of the University community, while the second is an examination of the student by the Supervisory Committee in closed session. Once the notice is received The Graduate School will announce the notice of the examination on electronic media.

The committee appoints an observer for all thesis defenses. A preference shall be given to the appointment of observers outside the pertinent college or department. The observer attends the defense as a regular member of the committee, participating in committee deliberations, and reports to the Graduate Dean on the quality of the examination content and protocol. The only person excluded from being the observer is the chair of the Supervisory Committee. Feedback of any significant comments by the observer is relayed through the Graduate Dean to the department chair.

### **7.3 THESIS OPTION MASTER'S DEGREES**

Candidates for a master's degree (thesis option) must pass a final examination. This examination may include a written portion involving examination on coursework, but must include an oral defense of the thesis before an examining committee. The examining committee for thesis defenses shall be the Supervisory Committee. A pass requires a favorable (no more than one dissenting) vote of the examining committee.

The supervisory committee and student should agree on a mutually acceptable date for the final examination. A written notice of the time and place of examination is sent to the graduate dean at least one week before the examination date. After approval by the graduate dean, the

department sends a copy of the written notice to the candidate and each member of the committee. Once set, the examination becomes an official Graduate School matter; the date cannot be changed without prior agreement amongst the supervisory committee members and the student and without approval of the graduate dean. Thesis defenses are composed of two phases; the first is an oral presentation of the thesis material and is considered to be open to members of the University community, while the second is an examination of the student by the Supervisory Committee in closed session. Once the notice is received The Graduate School will announce the notice of the examination on electronic media.

The committee appoints an observer for all thesis defenses. A preference shall be given to the appointment of observers outside the pertinent college or department. The observer attends the defense as a regular member of the committee, participating in committee deliberations, and reports to the Graduate Dean on the quality of the examination content and protocol. The only person excluded from being the observer is the chair of the Supervisory Committee. Feedback of any significant comments by the observer is relayed through the Graduate Dean to the department chair.

The final examination must be given at least six weeks before the end of the semester in which degree requirements are expected to be completed, and the results reported within two working days to the graduate dean. A student may take the final examination no more than twice.

#### 7.4 DOCTORAL DEGREES

The final examination for a doctoral candidate is the dissertation defense and is administered by the supervisory committee. A pass requires a favorable (no more than one dissenting) vote of the supervisory committee.

The supervisory committee and student should agree on a mutually acceptable date for the final examination. A written notice of the time and place of examination is sent to the graduate dean at least one week before the examination date. After approval by the Graduate Dean, the department sends a copy of the written notice to the candidate and each member of the



committee. Once set, the examination becomes an official Graduate School matter; the date cannot be changed without prior agreement amongst the supervisory committee members and the student and without approval of the graduate dean. Dissertation defenses are composed of two phases; the first is an oral presentation of the dissertation material and is considered to be open to members of the University community, while the second is an examination of the student by the Supervisory Committee in closed session. Once the notice is received The Graduate School will announce the notice of the examination on electronic media.

The committee appoints an observer for all thesis defenses. A preference shall be given to the appointment of observers outside the pertinent college or department. The observer attends the defense as a regular member of the committee, participating in committee deliberations, and reports to the Graduate Dean on the quality of the examination content and protocol. The only person excluded from being the observer is the chair of the Supervisory Committee. Feedback of any significant comments by the observer is relayed through the Graduate Dean to the department chair. The final examination must be given at least six weeks before the end of the semester in which degree requirements are expected to be. A student may take the final examination no more than twice.

## 7.5 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Success in graduate study is strongly dependent upon a well-developed ability to communicate, both orally and in writing, in English. A faculty member has the right to refuse written material submitted by a graduate student if that material, in the opinion of the faculty member, does not meet minimum standards in English proficiency.

All applicants whose native language is other than English must demonstrate the linguistic proficiency necessary to function in degree programs at UAH.

### 7.5.1 Unconditional admission to degree programs.

In order to be considered for admission to degree programs with no additional English language training required, applicants must meet the following minimums on the TOEFL or IELTS.

TOEFL (iBT): all sub-scores  $\geq 18$  OR

IELTS: all sub-scores  $\geq 6.0$

\*Language proficiency minimums may be higher for some graduate degree programs. To confirm language proficiency requirements for specific degree programs, please contact the department directly.

#### **7.5.2 Bridge admission to degree programs with some English required.**

Applicants who do not meet these minimum requirements may still be considered for admission to degree programs at the university with some English language training required (Bridge Admission). Applicants with the following minimums on the TOEFL or IELTS may be admitted and will sit for the UAH English Language Placement Test (ELPT) upon arrival at the university. Results of the ELPT will determine additional English language coursework needed.

TOEFL (iBT): Overall  $\geq 65$ , with  $\leq 2$  sub-scores below 18 OR

IELTS: Overall  $\geq 5.5$ , with  $\leq 2$  sub-scores below 5.5

#### **7.5.3 Admission to the ILC Program.**

Applicants who do not currently meet the requirements for admission to a degree program at the university are encouraged to apply for admission to the UAH Intensive Language and Culture (ILC) Program. Successful completion of the UAH ILC meets the language proficiency standard for admission to degree programs at the university.

To be considered for admission to the UAH Intensive Language and Culture Program, applicants must have the following minimums on the TOEFL or IELTS.\*

TOEFL (iBT): Overall of at least 50 with no sub-score below 12 OR

IELTS: Overall of at least 4.0 with no sub-score below 3.5

\*NOTE: If an applicant does not have a TOEFL or an IELTS score, he/she may request a pre-assessment and be considered for admission to the ILC. He/she will then be formally assessed upon arrival at UAH and will be placed in appropriate classes in the ILC program.

#### 7.5.4 Nonnative English-speaking Graduate Teaching Assistants

To be considered for positions as teaching assistants or graduate assistants, students must have the following minimums on the TOEFL or IELTS.

TOEFL (iBT): no sub-score below 22 OR

IELTS: no sub-score below 6.5

Requirement	Nature of Admission
Unconditional admission to degree programs	iBT*: All sub-scores > 18 OR IELTS: All sub-scores > 6.0;
Bridge admission to degree programs with some English training required	iBT: Overall $\geq$ 65, with $\leq$ 2 sub-scores below 18 OR IELTS: Overall $\geq$ 5.5, with $\leq$ 2 sub-scores below 5.5
Admission to the ILC Program	iBT: Overall of at least 50 with no sub-score below 12 OR IELTS: Overall of at least 4.0 with no sub-score below 3.5

\* *iBT = internet-based TOEFL; IELTS = International English Language Testing System*

#### 7.6 CHANGE OF MAJOR

A graduate student who has been admitted to one program and decides to transfer to another initiates the transfer at the Office of Graduate Admissions by filing the appropriate form. The student may be admitted to the new department/program at the recommendation of the

faculty of the new department. The student must meet the current admission and other specified requirements of the new department/program.

## **7.7 ENROLLMENT IN CONCURRENT GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS**

Students may request admission to a second graduate degree program while concurrently pursuing a graduate degree in their “home” department or program. In such cases the student must inform the chairs of both departments/programs that he/she is pursuing the two degree programs concurrently.

## **7.8 STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION**

Students with cumulative grade point averages less than 3.0 at the end of each semester will have registration holds automatically placed on them for the next semester. These holds will be cleared by the Dean of The Graduate School only after approval of a plan approved by his/her advisor. The student will submit the plan to the School of Graduate Studies. This plan should clearly state the actions to be taken (including, if applicable, course repeats) to remedy the grade point average to 3.0 within a specified period of time. Failure to remedy the grade point average within the time period specified in the plan may lead to dismissal from the School of Graduate Studies, following the published policy in the Graduate Catalog.

## **7.9 ACADEMIC APPEALS**

The procedures for Academic Appeals are set forth in both the Graduate Catalog and the Student Handbook.

## **7.10 REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION AT COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY**

No graduate student will be allowed to participate in commencement exercises unless all requirements for the degree being pursued have been met at least 72 hours prior to commencement.

## 7.11 COMPLETION TIMES AND VALIDATIONS

### 7.11.1 Master's Students

All requirements toward the master's degree, including transfer credit, must have been earned during the 18 semester (fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the master's degree is to be awarded. Credit for individual graduate courses at UAH completed more than 18 semesters but less than 30 semesters before the completion of all requirements for the degree must be validated by the department that offered the course through the administering of a written or oral examination. Once a course is validated, it is considered valid through the tenth year only. Credit for courses more than ten years old cannot be validated. Up to six hours of transfer courses that are more than 18 but less than 30 semesters old may be validated by a committee of at least three members of the graduate faculty appointed by the department or program chair, with the results reported to the graduate dean.

### 7.11.2 Ph.D. Students

Ph.D. students have five years after their final qualification exam (See section E) to complete their degree. There is no validation of courses required for Ph.D. students.

## 7.12 GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The following scholastic requirements are those of the School of Graduate Studies. Individual colleges and/or departments may list additional requirements.

- 1) Overall grade average must be B (3.0) or better on all graduate credit hours at UAH. In addition, the grade average must be B (3.0) or better on courses taken in the current graduate degree program;
- 2) No grade lower than a C may be counted toward a graduate degree;
- 3) At least half of the hours required for a graduate degree must be completed in courses numbered 600 or above;

- 4) A majority of the credit hours (including dissertation credits) toward a doctoral degree must have been earned at UAH (or, in the case of joint/shared programs, at the participating institutions).

## 7.13 TRANSFER CREDITS AND COMPLETED HOURS AT UAH

### 7.13.1 Master's Degree

With permission of the major department, students may transfer up to twelve (12) semester hours of acceptable graduate credit earned in an approved institution and may count it toward a master's degree. No transferred credit may be more than ten years old at the time of a student's graduation from UAH. Such credit may be transferred with the approval of the major department if completed with a grade of B or better.

In some circumstances a student may need to take a graduate course at another institution while enrolled in a UAH degree program. The transfer of such credit back to UAH must be approved by the department and by the graduate dean prior to the student enrolling at the other institution. (This does not apply to joint or shared programs with other schools).

### 7.13.2 Ph.D. Degree

All credit toward the Ph.D. which has not been earned at UAH must be acceptable graduate credit from an approved institution. Such credit may be transferred with the approval of the major department if completed with a grade of B or better.

A majority of the credit hours (including dissertation credits) toward a doctoral degree must have been earned at UAH (or, in the case of joint/shared programs, at the participating institutions).

### 7.13.3 Second Master's Degree

A student is permitted to apply no more than six semester hours of credit earned for one graduate degree toward an additional master's degree. Such permission is granted at the discretion of the major department and approved by the graduate dean.

## 7.14 VISITING GRADUATE STUDENTS

A cooperative arrangement exists between Alabama A&M University and UAH, under which a graduate student at one institution may request permission to attend a course at the other. Conditions governing the granting of permission include the following:

- 1) The student must be in good academic standing at the home institution;
- 2) The course desired is unavailable to the student at the home institution;
- 3) A visiting student is limited to one graduate course per term at the host institution, except where the second is a laboratory required to accompany the first course;
- 4) A visiting student must have the prerequisites for the course;
- 5) The number of courses taken under this plan cannot exceed those allowed in the home institution's policy on transferred credit;
- 6) The student's request requires the approval of the advisor, department chair, and Graduate Dean of the home institution;
- 7) Permission of the host institution is dependent upon availability of space for the visitor after its own students are accommodated;
- 8) Items 2 and 3 above do not apply to programs having an established cooperative degree.

Interested students should contact the Office of Student Records for information.

## 8 TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS

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A limited number of tuition scholarships may be awarded to students without graduate assistantship appointments who have unconditional admission status and are in good academic standing. Such scholarships may be awarded for up to 12 hours of graduate credit hours per semester (6 hours in the summer semester). Students receiving tuition scholarships are bound by the same rules as graduate assistants with respect to course withdrawal, contingency of the award on satisfactory performance toward the graduate degree, general eligibility, and special department requirements (see Section VII below). The departmental faculty select the proposed awardees from qualified applicants. An appointment letter, similar to a graduate assistantship letter but without assigned duties, is prepared by the department

chair and sent through the college dean to the graduate dean for approval at least one month prior to the start of the semester in which the scholarship is proposed. After approval, a copy is furnished to the student. The Graduate Dean will make final decisions on awards. In cases of extreme over-subscription of requests, the Graduate Dean will bring the matter to Graduate Council's attention for its recommendations.

## 9 GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

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Graduate assistantships have been established to provide financial assistance to graduate students as they pursue a degree. Assistantship appointments are made through the various graduate departments and programs under the auspices of the School of Graduate Studies.

### 9.1 ELIGIBILITY

A student who is qualified for admission to The Graduate School is eligible to apply for a graduate assistantship.

### 9.2 TYPES OF ASSISTANTSHIP

A student may be appointed as either a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), or a combination thereof. Assistantships usually require one-half time (20 hours per week) service to the University, but may be appointed on a basis greater than, or less than, one-half time in exceptional, non-routine, cases. A student holding a 20- hour or more per week assistantship may not hold other employment during any term in which this assistantship is in effect.

There are two kinds of assistantships available:

## 10 GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

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GTAs share and support the faculty's responsibility for teaching. The purpose of teaching assistantships is twofold: to assist in the department's teaching program and to aid in the student's individual professional development. In accordance with SACSCOC accreditation



requirements, individuals must have 18 hours of graduate coursework in the teaching discipline (or a related area) before they can be the instructor of record in any class. English proficiency, as recommended by the director of the ILC program and approved by the Graduate Council, is a prerequisite for classroom instruction. As noted above for GTAs/GAs, for the TOEFL no sub-score will be below 22. For the IELTS no sub-score below 6.5 and must have a minimum 6.5 overall.

The teaching load for GTAs is set by individual departments and programs. The total weekly hour commitment may not exceed 29 hours per week.

### 10.1 GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

A GRA does research under the supervision of a faculty member. A research project to which the GRA is appointed should be aimed at fulfilling partial requirements of a thesis or dissertation topic; however, students should be aware that it cannot be guaranteed that a particular project will provide material suitable for a thesis or dissertation.

As a condition of an assistantship appointment, a 20-hour per week graduate assistant must be registered for at least nine semester hours of graduate, credit courses during any semester (Fall or Spring), and for at least six hours during the Summer term. Minimum course loads for appointments of lesser work-hours per week are prorated accordingly. A student with a graduate assistantship may be permitted to enroll in appropriate, relevant, undergraduate courses only with the approval of the advisor, the department/program chair, and the Graduate Dean.

All assistantship appointments are subject to the continuing availability of funds. Appointments are made only when resources to support them are assured, but students are cautioned that a variety of circumstances could cause GTA and GRA positions to be terminated prior to the end of the appointment period. All assistantships are awarded contingent upon satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree. Assistantship support may continue through one additional semester after the semester in which degree requirements are completed.

## 10.2 CLASSIFICATION AND STIPENDS

Graduate assistantship support is classified according to three educational levels: Level I (pre-master's), Level II (post-master's and/or passed the Ph.D. preliminary/comprehensive examination), and Level III (passed the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination). Stipend ranges for each assistant are set by each department or program, subject to the ranges set by the Graduate School and reviewed by the Graduate Council each spring for the following academic year.

## 10.3 NUMBER OF TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS PER DEPARTMENT

The number of GTAs and GRAs in each department or program is set through the annual budgeting process.

## 10.4 APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE

The steps taken in making assistantship awards are as follows:

1. For GTAs and internally-supported GRAs, the department faculty screens applicants and selects awardees.
2. For GRAs supported by external contracts and grants, the awardees are recommended by the Principal Investigator.
3. An appointment letter (see format below) is written to each awardee, approved by the department/program chair and the appropriate college dean, and forwarded to the Office of The Graduate School for final approval.
4. The student awardee responds in writing to the department chair of acceptance of the assistantship. The chair notifies the Graduate Dean, the college dean, and the Principal Investigator (in the case of a GRA) of the acceptance.
5. A Personnel Action Form (PAF) is initiated at the department level and approved by the chair and college dean.

When an appointment is terminated, the chair informs the college dean and the Graduate Dean. All necessary procedures, forms, documents, etc. required by the Office of Human Resources, Research Administration, etc. are the responsibility of the department.

## 10.5 TUITION CREDIT

Tuition and fees up to 12 hours per semester are paid by the Office of the Graduate Dean in behalf of all GTAs and internally-supported GRAs. Tuition for additional hours is the responsibility of the student. Tuition and fees for externally-supported GRAs are charged to the contract or grant(s) concerned (or the cost-share account, if applicable), bi-weekly at rates determined by the Office of Planning and Budgets, and proportional to the labor distribution for the assistant.

## 10.6 FORM LETTER OF OFFER FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS AND AGREEMENT

The graduate assistantship letter and agreement consists of four pages, to include: Cover letter, Agreement, and Council of Graduate Schools resolution. Please visit the Graduate School website for a copy of the assistantship agreement:

<http://www.uah.edu/graduate/resources/forms>