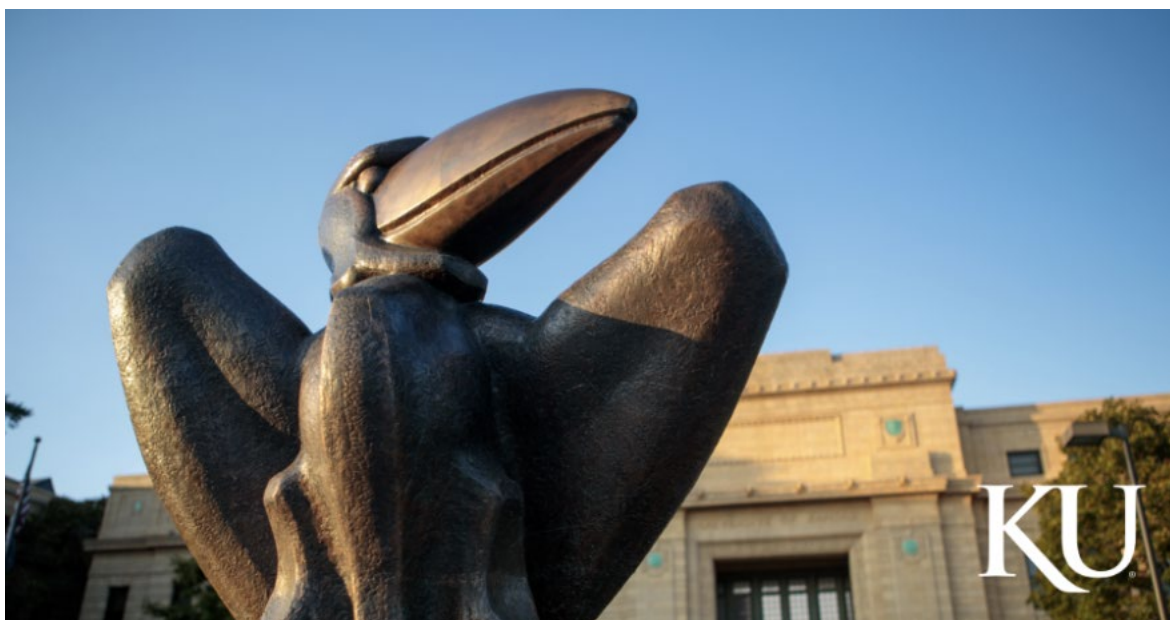


Educational Leadership and Policy Studies PhD Student Handbook



University of Kansas

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Website: [PhD in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies](#)

Note: Policies, procedures, and requirements change over time. This version of the handbook was updated and approved for Fall 2026.

Contents

Program Description and Objectives	5
Admission.....	5
Minimum Requirements	5
Application Materials	5
Deadlines.....	6
Department Directory.....	6
Program Faculty	6
Program Staff/School Support.....	7
General Information	7
Residency Requirement	7
Residency Option 1:	7
Residency Option 2:	7
Residency Option 3:	8
Communicating with Students and Professors.....	8
AI Use	8
Use of Generative AI in Coursework.....	8
ELPS Department Expectations for the Use of Generative AI in Dissertation Research	8
Course Expectations and Engagement	9
Grievance Procedures	10
Petitions	10
Advising.....	10
Program Coordinator	10
Advisor Assignment and Role	11
Changing Advisors	11
Advisor–Advisee Expectations.....	11
Regular and Timely Feedback from Advisors.....	11
Financial Assistance	12
Federal Financial Aid	12
SOEHS Scholarships	12
Conference Travel and Research Support	12
Emergency Financial Assistance	12
Enrollment.....	13

Course Enrollment Procedures.....	13
Leaves of Absence	13
Grading.....	14
Incomplete Grades	15
Good Academic Standing	15
Academic Integrity & Misconduct	15
PhD Academic Program Information	16
PhD Course Requirements	16
Program Milestones	16
Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship.....	16
Comprehensive Exam	17
Structure & Purpose	17
Comprehensive Exam Committee	17
Elevation to Candidacy	17
Post-Comprehensive Enrollment.....	17
Post-Comprehensive Time Constraints	18
Dissertation	18
Process	19
Dissertation Proposal Committee.....	19
Dissertation Committee	19
Writing and Preferred Style.....	19
Grading.....	19
Dissertation Proposal	20
Dissertation	21
Dissertation Defense	21
Applying for Graduation	22
References.....	22
APPENDIX I: GUIDE TO THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL MEETING	23
APPENDIX II: UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	25
GENERAL POLICIES	25
Admission	25
English Proficiency Requirements	25
Enrollment.....	26

Graduate Credit (Including Transfer Credit)	28
Credit/No Credit	29
Probation & Dismissal	30
Grading.....	31
Time Limits	31
Leave of Absence.....	32
DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	34
Enrollment Requirement.....	34
Continuous Enrollment for Post-Comprehensive Students.....	34
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS.....	35
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (Master's & Ph.D.)	35
GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	35
Policies Regarding Freedom of Expression on Campus	36

Program Description and Objectives

The Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Kansas is a research degree that prepares individuals for roles as researchers, policy analysts, educational leaders, and faculty members for policy, K-12, and higher education settings. This degree distinguishes itself by its focus on preparing graduates to be researchers who are making original scholarly contributions to the knowledge base in the field. Students typically take some courses in graduate programs in related fields such as curriculum and teaching, sociology, public administration, and economics.

Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Develop an understanding of education as a system (to include K-12 and Higher Education).
2. Demonstrate a knowledge of the historical and social contexts of systems of education.
3. Interrogate structural conditions that serve to maintain and reproduce systemic inequities in education, and design responses to ameliorate them.
4. Develop individualized expertise in theory and content.
5. Conduct original research in an ethical manner.
6. Develop and intellectual or scholastic identity and develop norms and practices related to this identity.

Admission

Minimum Requirements

Applicants must have a master's degree or equivalent with at least a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. International applicants are strongly encouraged to complete the application process well in advance of the application deadlines, in order to ensure adequate time for processing of visa related paperwork. Meeting minimum admission standards does not guarantee admission to the program. Applicants are strongly advised to contact one (or more) of the faculty members in the department prior to applying for the doctoral program and are strongly advised to contact the program coordinator (Stephen Jackson, stjackson@ku.edu) or the Department Administrative Associate (Denise Brubaker, brubaker@ku.edu) prior to applying for the doctoral program.

Application Materials

Admission to the PhD in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies will require successful submission of the following application materials:

- Online Application- Completed through the KU Office of Graduate Admissions.
- Resume/CV- At minimum, this should include:
 - Postsecondary Education.
 - Relevant Professional and/or scholarly experience.
 - Research experience and other pertinent experience.
 - Honors, other recognitions received.
 - Conference presentations, publications, reports.
- Statement of Purpose

- Writing Sample.
- Three letters of Recommendations.
- Official Transcripts of All Institutions Attended
 - One official copy of academic transcripts from each college or university attended
- Phone or Video Conference Interview- After initial screening, ELPs faculty may invite you for an interview to address remaining questions about your objectives and fit for the program. The interview may also involve an interactive evaluation of your scholarly skills and potential.
- Application Fee of \$65 for domestic students and \$100 for international students

For international applicants, the following additional requirements apply:

- [Proof of English proficiency](#)
- English translation of transcripts
- In most cases, KU can evaluate international transcripts internally. In cases where Graduate Admissions cannot, the applicant will be asked to produce an external evaluation through a service such as WES.

Deadlines

The program has both a priority application deadline and final application deadline. The priority deadline for Fall admission is February 3, 2027 and the final deadline is March 3, 2027. For inquiries about admissions, please contact department administrative associate, [Denise Brubaker](#) (brubaker@ku.edu).

Department Directory

Program Faculty

- **Lena Batt**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
 - JRP 413, lena.batt@ku.edu
- **Jennifer Bessolo**, Ed.D., Professor of the Practice
 - JRP 414, jbessolo@ku.edu
- **Barbara Bichelmeyer**, Ph.D., Professor
- **Olivia Copeland**, Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor
 - JRP 409, ocopeland@ku.edu
- **Dallas Doane**, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Practice & MSE Director
 - JRP 407, dallas.doane@ku.edu
- **Zak Foste**, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Department Chair
 - JRP 418, zfoste@ku.edu
- **Rick Ginsberg**, Ph.D., Professor
 - JRP 423, ginsberg@ku.edu
- **Stephen Jackson**, Ph.D., Associate Professor
 - JRP 411, stjjackson@ku.edu
- **Lei Jiang**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
 - JRP 408, jiang@ku.edu

- **Bryan Mann**, Ph.D., Associate Professor
 - JRP 404, bryanmann@ku.edu
- **Amanda Mollet**, Ph.D., Associate Professor
 - JRP 410, amollet@ku.edu
- **Eugene Parker III**, Ph.D., Professor
 - JRP 419, eparker@ku.edu
- **Lisa Wolf-Wendel**, Roy A. Roberts University Distinguished Professor & Sr. Associate Dean, EdD Program Coordinator
 - JRP 214H, lwolf@ku.edu

Program Staff/School Support

- **Denise Brubaker**, Administrative Associate, EdD programs
 - JRP 421, brubaker@ku.edu
 - Registration; Degree Progress Reports; Enrollment troubleshooting
- **Tracy Rockers**, Graduate Student Services Manager, SOEHS
 - JRP 214D, tracy.rockers@ku.edu
 - Graduation/Commencement; School level admissions information

General Information

Residency Requirement

Students must complete the SOEHS Ph.D. residency requirements during which time they are engaged in full-time academic study. The formal residency can be met in the following ways:

Residency Option 1:

Enrollment in two consecutive semesters following one of the three patterns outlined below:

- Spring enrollment of 9 credit hours and fall enrollment of 9 credit hours.
- Spring enrollment of 9 credit hours and summer enrollment of 6 credit hours.
- Summer enrollment of 6 credit hours and fall enrollment of 9 credit hours.

Residency Option 2:

Students who hold a 50% Graduate Assistant, Graduate Teaching Assistant, or a Graduate Research Assistant (GA/GTA/GRA) during residency need to enroll in two consecutive semesters following one of the three patterns outlined below*:

- Spring enrollment of 6 credit hours and fall enrollment of 6 credit hours.
- Spring enrollment of 6 credit hours and summer enrollment of 3 credit hours.
- Summer enrollment of 3 credit hours and fall enrollment of 6 credit hours.

NOTE: If a student cannot meet the above residency enrollment requirements, they should meet with their advisor to develop a plan that meets the spirit of the residency requirement. Such a plan must be approved in advance through departmental and School petition processes. These exceptions will not be automatically approved. See Residency Option 3.

Residency Option 3:

Scholarly Engagement Pathway:

Doctoral students who are unable to meet the traditional residency requirements through full-time enrollment or a graduate assistantship may fulfill the residency requirement by enrolling in a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester and engaging in substantive scholarly activities that demonstrate immersion in the academic and research community. [View the Ph.D. Residency form effective Spring 2026.](#)

Communicating with Students and Professors

Faculty teaching courses and academic advisors will communicate with you primarily through email and during class times. Individual faculty members may also offer additional ways to connect (e.g., phone or virtual office hours), and their communication preferences will typically be outlined in the course syllabus. You are responsible for reviewing these expectations and using the appropriate channels identified by your instructors.

Program-level communication will be sent to your KU email account (or the email account you have registered with KU). You should check this account regularly or forward messages to an account you monitor consistently. (Tip: consider adding “@ku.edu” to your safe sender list to ensure messages are not filtered.) The program is not responsible for missed communications due to failure to check email. If you need assistance setting up email forwarding or access, please contact KU IT support at 785-864-8080.

AI Use

Students are encouraged to speak with faculty in the ELPS Department about their intended use of generative Artificial Intelligence to fully consider the many ethical and practical considerations of the technology. Faculty will evaluate student use of these technologies in a variety of ways, including, most importantly, an expert evaluation of student work as it proceeds through the writing process. Faculty may also use AI-trackers as an additional source of information about the progress of student work towards a dissertation.

Use of Generative AI in Coursework

Expectations for the use of generative AI may vary across courses and instructors. Individual faculty members will communicate their specific policies and expectations in their course syllabi, including whether and how generative AI tools may be used. Students are responsible for understanding and following the guidelines established in each course. When in doubt, you should seek clarification directly from the instructor before using generative AI tools for course assignments.

ELPS Department Expectations for the Use of Generative AI in Dissertation Research

The primary value of completing a dissertation in the ELPS department is to gain a high-level knowledge of the research process of asking researchable questions, utilizing the most appropriate methodologies

to gather data about those questions, and analyzing that data to contribute to how we understand problems of practice in the field of education. With that in mind, the process of research is just as important as the result of that research.

The use of generative Artificial Intelligence is profoundly shifting the way many scholars approach research. In the ELPS Department we affirm the value of a human-centered approach to education, and the use of generative Artificial Intelligence should never undermine the fundamental learning goals of the dissertation process. However, ELPS faculty recognize that there are use-cases where the use of this technology may be appropriate. With the following guidelines, students are permitted to use these technologies as an aid to their research process, but as a supplement, not a substitute, for the critical analysis at the heart of dissertation research.

- If students choose to utilize generative AI in their research, they are expected to do so ethically, accurately, and in compliance with university policies.
- Students are responsible for all content that they submit as part of their dissertation, including any content generated by generative AI.
- Students needing learning accommodations may utilize generative AI in consultation with their advisor.
- Students are required to disclose their intended use of generative Artificial Intelligence in their dissertation proposal. They should also consider the implications of proposing the use of Artificial Intelligence in their proposal.
- Students are required to disclose and cite where appropriate the use of generative Artificial Intelligence in their dissertation.

Additional Resource for Guidance: SOEHS “Expectations for Students” listed in the “Guidance for use of Generative AI in Teaching/Research,” created in December 2024.

Course Expectations and Engagement

Success in this program depends on your active engagement and consistent preparation. As a doctoral student, you are expected to take responsibility for your learning and contribute meaningfully to the learning community.

Students are expected to:

- Carefully read and follow each course syllabus, including assignment requirements, grading criteria, and course policies.
- Submit all assignments on time and communicate proactively with faculty if challenges arise.
- Attend all class sessions, arrive on time, and remain engaged for the duration of the class.
- Come to class prepared, having completed assigned readings and coursework.
- Actively engage in learning activities, including discussions, peer feedback, and other course requirements.
- Contribute thoughtfully to faculty and peers.

Learning in this program is cumulative and collaborative. The quality of your experience is directly related to the level of effort, preparation, and engagement you bring to your coursework and interactions with others.

Grievance Procedures

The Educational Leadership & Policies Studies Department follows the [School of Education and Human Sciences Grievance Procedure](#).

Note: This procedure does not apply to graduate students in matters related to their employment as teaching assistants. A separate grievance procedure outlined in the [Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Kansas and the Board of Regents and the Kansas Association of Public Employees](#) is available for that purpose.

Petitions

The program recognizes that, in limited circumstances, students may wish to request exceptions to program requirements or policies. Students may submit petitions to request consideration of such exceptions.

Students seeking to submit a petition should first consult with the Program Coordinator or their advisor to discuss the request and determine the appropriate petition process. This ensures that the student receives guidance on required documentation, applicable policies, and any additional steps needed for petitions that extend beyond the ELPS department. Some petitions relate to program-level requirements and may be reviewed and decided internally within the department. Other petitions involve School or University policies and therefore require additional review or approval by offices outside the department. When applicable, the program will advise students on the appropriate process and required approvals.

For petitions requiring School or University review, students will be directed to the appropriate office or provided with the most current form and submission instructions. To ensure accuracy and compliance with current policies, School and University forms are not reproduced in this handbook; however, graduate students may find petitions and other helpful resources on the School of Education and Human Sciences [website](#).

Advising

Program Coordinator

The Ph.D. program coordinator meets with prospective students, oversees admissions, curriculum planning and scheduling, enrollment, communication with students, and engages in other general program oversight. The program coordinator is students' primary point of contact until receiving an individual advisor.

Advisor Assignment and Role

Advisors are normally assigned during the first semester a student enrolls in the Ph.D. program. Prospective students are encouraged to communicate with potential advisors in advance of enrollment in the program. Initial advisor assignments are made by the program faculty based on student background and interests along with consideration of each faculty member's current number of active advisees. Advisors will assist students in course selection, scholarly activities, the completion of their dissertation proposal and defense. Students will be notified of their advisor during the fall semester of their first year.

Changing Advisors

Changes to the student's advisor assignment may be made by consulting with the current advisor, the new advisor, and the program advisor. Reasons for requests for new advisors may include (but are not limited to) the student's pursuit of interests that would be more adequately supervised by a different member of the faculty. Advisor changes may be made at any time during the program and must be approved by the new advisor and the program coordinator.

Advisor–Advisee Expectations

Once assigned an advisor, students are expected to establish a working relationship that supports consistent progress. We recommend that advisors and advisees meet at least once per semester, though more frequent communication is encouraged. Early in the advising relationship, students should discuss expectations regarding communication, feedback, timelines, and meeting frequency. In the coursework stage of the Ph.D. program, students will decide on appropriate coursework in consultation with their advisor, and develop a degree plan by the end of their first year. The advisor will provide ongoing support following coursework through comprehensive exams and through the stages of the dissertation process.

Regular and Timely Feedback from Advisors

Faculty are committed to providing thoughtful and timely feedback to support student progress. In general, students can expect feedback on dissertation drafts within approximately two weeks of submission. However, turnaround time may vary depending on several factors. Students who maintain consistent communication with their advisor and submit work regularly are more likely to receive timely feedback. In contrast, submissions that occur after long periods without communication—particularly at the end of a semester when faculty are managing grading and other responsibilities—may require additional time for review. Similarly, work submitted during semester breaks or summer months may experience longer turnaround times, as faculty may not be on contract or may have adjusted availability. Students are encouraged to plan accordingly and to communicate proactively with their advisor about timelines and expectations. Consistent, professional communication is essential. Advising is a collaborative process, and timely progress depends on shared responsibility between student and advisor. Advisors can best support your work when they are kept informed of your progress and given reasonable time to review materials.

Additional Considerations: Faculty are typically not on contract during the summer months. Students should consult with their advisor regarding expectations for progress and communication during this time. Communication plans may also need to be adjusted if a faculty member is on sabbatical or personal leave.

Financial Assistance

Students are encouraged to explore available financial assistance options to support their enrollment in the Ph.D. program.

Federal Financial Aid

Students should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine eligibility for federal graduate student loans and other forms of financial aid. Completing the FAFSA is the first step in accessing federal financial support.

SOEHS Scholarships

Ph.D. students are eligible to apply for scholarships through the School of Education and Human Sciences (SOEHS). The scholarship application portal typically opens each year in **December** and closes in **early February**. Students are responsible for monitoring deadlines and submitting materials on time.

Scholarships are competitive and awarded based on a combination of merit and financial need. Students are strongly encouraged to complete all application components—particularly required essays—carefully and thoughtfully.

SOEHS scholarships are awarded for the **fall and spring semesters**. To remain eligible, students must be enrolled in a **minimum of 6 credit hours per term** during the award period. Students who have completed **18 or more dissertation credit hours** are not eligible for SOEHS scholarships. Students may find more information on the SOEHS website [here](#).

Conference Travel and Research Support

Ph.D. students may apply for financial support to present at academic or professional conferences **once per academic year**. Funding amounts vary depending on the student's role in the conference (e.g., presenter, panelist, or attendee). In addition, SOEHS provides limited funding to support research-related expenses. These funds are competitive and intended to assist with costs directly associated with student research. Students may find more information about SOEHS travel and research support on the SOEHS website [here](#).

Emergency Financial Assistance

Students experiencing unexpected financial hardship may apply for support through the [KU Emergency Aid Network](#), which provides short-term assistance in times of need.

Enrollment

This Ph.D. program consists of a core of four courses, research methods course requirement of 5 courses (including at least one qualitative and one quantitative), as well elective options. Students may select one of two concentrations in Higher Education Administration and Educational Leadership and Foundations. Students typically enroll in 6 credit hours in both the Fall and Spring semesters, and may pursue additional course enrollment during the summer months. Many Ph.D. core courses and electives are offered every-other year, and students are encouraged to consult with their advisor to develop a degree plan. Reducing enrollment (e.g., taking only one course in a given semester) will likely extend the time required to complete the program.

After completing comprehensive exams and transitioning to the dissertation phase, enrollment expectations shift. Students working on their dissertation are not required to enroll in summer coursework unless they are actively working toward or completing a formal milestone (e.g., proposal defense, final defense, or required submission).

Course Enrollment Procedures

The University course enrollment process is completed entirely online. The schedule of courses for upcoming semesters is available on the Schedule of Classes website at <https://classes.ku.edu/>. All active students are notified by the University as the enrollment period approaches. Subsequent changes in enrollment are handled online through add/drop procedures, or with the use of paper forms after the first few weeks of the semester.

Students should be mindful of enrollment deadlines listed on the [Academic Calendar](#). Failure to enroll in at least one course before 12:00am on the first instructional day of the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters for full-term courses is considered enrolling late and students will be charged a [late enrollment fee](#). As such, it is important for students to be aware of issues such as enrollment holds that might inhibit or postpone enrollment.

If a student needs to make a change in enrollment that impacts their enrollment status (such as a Leave of Absence), they should speak to their advisor as well as review the [Considerations and Impacts of a Drop or Withdrawal](#). Enrollment may impact financial aid eligibility and enrollment in locations or courses outside the School of Education and Human Sciences may have a different tuition and fee cost.

Leaves of Absence

If a student does not wish to or is not able to enroll in courses for a given semester or year, the student must request a [leave of absence](#) using the [Leave of Absence Request form](#) found on the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website. A leave of absence may be granted when circumstances temporarily prevent a student from continuing graduate study (e.g., cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military service), due to family responsibilities, or when a student wishes to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals. A student leave of absence is typically

approved for up to one year, but extensions may be granted for extenuating circumstances. All requests for a leave of absence should be discussed and submitted to the program advisor. While the student is the one to request a leave of absence, a faculty member may be the one to reach out and suggest a leave of absence when the faculty member believes the student is not in a position to make satisfactory academic progress. The choice to take a leave of absence is ultimately made by the student. The program, however, can opt to dismiss a student for failure to make progress if the student remains enrolled. It is the student's responsibility to make "satisfactory academic progress" when enrolled.

A leave of absence pauses the time limits set for the program to be completed. This means students are also unable to make progress and access the library, writing center, computer applications, and other KU-provided resources in addition to their advisor. It is understood that students on a leave of absence will not be making progress on their academic degree.

Grading

The program uses the traditional SOEHS grading scheme: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, etc. We expect students to earn Bs and As in order to remain in good academic standing. Although grades of C+ and C will count for graduate credit, a course grade of C- will not. Any student who earns a C- in a course must repeat the course.

Table 1 Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	GPA
A	93–100%	4.0
A–	90–92%	3.7
B+	87–89%	3.3
B	83–86%	3.0
B–	80–82%	2.7
C+	77–79%	2.3
C	73–76%	2.0
C–	70–72%	1.7
D+	67–69%	1.3
D	63–66%	1.0
D–	60–62%	0.7
F	0–59%	0.0

Review the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' grading policies [here](#).

Incomplete Grades

Students may request the grade of an 'I' (Incomplete) if the student is unable to complete some portion of the assigned coursework because of a significant unanticipated illness, accident, work-related responsibility, family hardship, or verified learning disability. An Incomplete grade is not intended to give the student additional time to complete course assignments or extra credit unless there is indication that the specified circumstances prevented the student from completing course assignments on time. An Incomplete is given at the discretion of the faculty member, who will determine the time frame allowed to hand in the missing work. **Note:** Incompletes by default convert to Fs after one academic year.

Per SOEHS policy, all 'I' and 'WG' grades must be resolved prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

Good Academic Standing

Per the [Graduate Catalog](#), evaluation of graduate student academic standing includes, but is not limited to, consideration of performance in and progress through a graduate program according to program expectations.

Graduate students must maintain an expected level of performance throughout their program. Criteria for evaluating satisfactory performance include, but are not limited to:

1. For degree seeking students, a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher and, for non-degree-seeking students, a cumulative graduate GPA of 2.0 or higher. Students must have a 3.0 minimum GPA to graduate with a KU graduate degree or certificate.
2. For students enrolled in dissertation hours the expectation is that students will make satisfactory academic progress. Earning a grade of NP in one semester or earning a grade of LP in consecutive semesters indicates a lack of satisfactory academic progress and will result in probation and may result in dismissal.
3. Academic and scholarly integrity;
4. Compliance with academic policies at the university, school, and departmental level; and
5. For degree-seeking students, satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree or certificate, as determined by the program. Progress may be determined by factors including:
 - a. Satisfactory completion of coursework, milestones, exams, or other program components on a specified timeframe; and
 - b. Official time to degree and total time in program.

Failure to maintain an expected level of performance will result in a student not being in good academic standing. Lack of good academic standing will result in the graduate program placing the student on probation or dismissal from the program. For more information, please see the policies on [academic probation and dismissal](#).

Academic Integrity & Misconduct

The Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies expects students and faculty members to demonstrate academic integrity in conducting their coursework and research. Academic misconduct

will not be tolerated in our program. An instructor may, with due notice to the student, treat as unsatisfactory any student work that is a product of academic misconduct. Cases of academic misconduct may result in any or all of the following penalties: reduction of grade, admonition, warning, censure, transcript citation, suspension, or expulsion. The following information about Academic Misconduct is discussed in Article II, Section 6 of the rules and regulations of the University Senate. “Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarizing of another’s work; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research.” Please know that inappropriate use of AI to generate course material that violates the course policy for AI use falls under the category of academic misconduct and academic integrity issues.

PhD Academic Program Information

PhD Course Requirements

- Ph.D. Core Courses: 12 credit hours.
- Research Methods Courses: 15 credit hours.
- ELPS Elective Courses: 12-15 credit hours.
- Non-ELPS Elective Courses: 9 credit hours.

Program Milestones

There are several key milestones that structure a student’s journey from start to dissertation defense, including:

1. Complete coursework.
2. Comprehensive exams: Written and Oral Components.
3. Dissertation Proposal.
4. Dissertation Defense.

Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship

The University requires that every doctoral student receive training in responsible scholarship pertinent to the field of research and obtain research skills pertinent to the doctoral level of research in their field(s). These requirements must be completed by the end of the semester that the student takes the oral comprehensive exam. No methods courses should be taken in the semester you are completing

comprehensive exams; a petition is required if you are. For students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Ph.D., this requirement is satisfied by completion of **EDUC 800**.

Comprehensive Exam

All doctoral students must complete a comprehensive exam at the end of their formal coursework. The comprehensive exam will assess your knowledge of key course concepts and ability to apply them to a problem of practice and cover topics from multiple courses. Written and oral comprehensive exams are typically administered in the final semester of coursework or the subsequent semester, depending on course load.

Structure & Purpose

The comprehensive exam includes two elements: a written portion followed by an oral comprehensive exam. The written exam will include three questions that focus on theory, research, and a review of the scholarly literature. Students must pass the written portion to progress to the oral portion, during which a committee will ask questions regarding the written responses. It is strongly recommended that students keep and maintain notes and materials from their coursework to help them prepare for these exams. See [Graduate Catalog](#).

Together, the purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate that the student has acquired key skills and competencies promoted by doctoral coursework and is ready to move to the dissertation research stage.

Comprehensive Exam Committee

For information on the comprehensive exam committee makeup, see KU's policy on [Doctoral Degree Comprehensive Oral Exams](#).

Elevation to Candidacy

Following satisfactory completion of the oral exam, the student is elevated to "doctoral candidate" status.

See [Graduate Catalog](#) for complete rules and regulations about the comprehensive exams.

Post-Comprehensive Enrollment

Doctoral candidates are required, after passing the comprehensive oral examination, to be continuously enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester (fall/spring) until such time as the student has completed 18 post-comprehensive credit hours or completed the degree (graduated), whichever comes first. Review the Post-Comprehensive Enrollment requirements on the [Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website](#).

Following comprehensive exams, students will next submit a dissertation proposal and hold a proposal meeting with a committee composed of their advisor and multiple other faculty members. Students should adhere to university policy for required enrollment.

Dissertation hours taken during the semester that the student successfully passes the oral comprehensive exam will count towards the 18 hour requirement (if a student enrolls in dissertation hours prior to completing the oral comprehensive exam and fails to successfully pass the exam in that semester, those hours will not count toward the post-comprehensive exam hours requirement).

Summer enrollment is not required; however, if a student opts to enroll for summer they must enroll in a minimum of 3 credit hours (if they have not yet completed 18 post comp hours), due to the requirement for full-time enrollment post comps. If the student wants to conduct a dissertation proposal meeting or defend a dissertation in the summer they must be enrolled in dissertation hours.

If after 18 hours of post-comprehensive enrollment the degree is not completed, the candidate must continue to enroll in 1 hour of dissertation each semester (fall/spring) until all degree requirements have been met.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of one dissertation credit hour in the semester in which the dissertation proposal meeting occurs, or the dissertation is defended and submitted.

Post-Comprehensive Time Constraints

The University sets time limits on enrollment for graduate students; students are expected to complete all Ph.D. requirements within 8 years from initial enrollment. Students who require additional time to complete the degree must submit a petition for program time extension using the School of Education and Human Sciences [Petition for Time Extension form](#). The proposal for the dissertation must be approved by the student's committee before a petition for program time extension can be granted.

The University of Kansas (KU) policy for [doctoral candidacy](#) states that the oral comprehensive exam must be passed within five years of the dissertation defense. If the exam is older than five years, the student's candidacy will be re-evaluated by the graduate division of their school. The re-evaluation may require the student to retake the exam or demonstrate knowledge in alternative ways as defined by the program faculty.

Dissertation

The purpose of the dissertation in the ELPS Ph.D. program is to study a significant education problem in a theoretically and methodologically sophisticated way. The student is expected to generate original knowledge in a specialized field and contribute to resolving important problems of questions within the field of educational leadership and policy.

Process

The dissertation process includes three steps 1) the proposal formulation, presentation, and defense; 2) data collection, analysis, and writing of findings and discussion/conclusion chapters; and 3) defense of dissertation.

Unlike most course assignments, the dissertation proposal and final document are iterative products involving multiple rounds of feedback and revision.

Dissertation Proposal Committee

Following successful completion of the comprehensive exam, the student works with a dissertation proposal committee of two faculty members in addition to the dissertation committee chair, who is ordinarily the student's advisor. However, on occasion, the dissertation committee chair may change following the policy described earlier.

The core dissertation committee normally constitutes the majority of the student's dissertation committee.

Dissertation Committee

The final dissertation must be reviewed and evaluated by a committee of 4 faculty members. The committee must include at least 2 faculty members from ELPS (including the student's advisor, who serves as chair) and 1 faculty member from a department other than ELPS, who serves as the Graduate Studies Representative. The chair must be a tenure track faculty member. No more than 1 committee member may hold an Ad Hoc or Special graduate appointment. [Note: Regular graduate faculty are tenured or tenure-track faculty at KU. Special graduate faculty are not tenure-track but teach at KU. Ad Hoc graduate faculty are non-KU persons with a doctorate appointed for a specific committee.]

Writing and Preferred Style

The dissertation and proposal should be written in a manner consistent with the guidelines set forth in the most recent edition of the APA Publication Manual, or other recognized citation formatting style as agreed with an advisor.

The KU Libraries provides [instructions and templates](#) for writing and formatting dissertations and proposals.

Grading

Dissertation credit hours are assigned a grade of SP, LP, or NP.

- Satisfactory Progress (SP): Progress is consistent with the goals for the semester as agreed upon with the advisor; supports timely completion of the degree.
- Limited Progress (LP): Progress is less than what was agreed upon with the advisor; may cause delays in timely degree completion.

- **No Progress (NP):** The student has provided no evidence of progress on the dissertation work, or the work completed was insufficient to move the dissertation project forward. NP's are not counted toward the post comprehensive enrollment requirement and result in wasted credits. If you are unable to make progress in any semester, take a Leave of Absence.

Dissertation Proposal

Purpose: Dissertation proposal

The purpose of the dissertation proposal is to ensure that the student has an understanding of the literature and methods relevant to the intended study, and that the student has used this understanding to develop a high-quality plan for the dissertation (questions are meaningful, manageable, and data can be collected to answer them).

The dissertation proposal should include: (a) a statement of the research problem/issue to be addressed, (b) the research questions being asked, (c) a strategic literature review used to support and frame the study and its methodology, and (d) the methods and procedures (statistical, qualitative, or historical) that will be used to gather data in the proposed study. It is expected that the literature review will be sufficiently complete (detailed and critical) to support the research questions and the methods by which data are collected.

Faculty members vary on expectations for the length and depth of the proposal. Check with your advisor. The traditional dissertation proposal consists of the first three chapters of the dissertation: an introduction, a literature review (what is already known about the problem), and methods (what you will do in your study). Other faculty members prefer a shorter version of the proposal with the understanding that methods and literature review must be fleshed out in the final dissertation. The proposal must be prepared in APA style or other agreed upon formatting style.

Dissertation proposal meeting

The student and the dissertation proposal committee will meet to discuss and approve the proposal. The dissertation proposal must be provided to the 3 person committee members a minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation proposal meeting. Dissertation proposal meetings should be scheduled for a approximately 60 minutes.

Students should prepare a brief (10-15 minutes) presentation giving an overview of the proposed project, with a focus on the proposed study methods, research questions, and anticipated analyses.

The proposal meeting is not an exam. It is an opportunity for the student and the committee to review the proposal and to discuss how to make the study as strong as possible before the student engages in the research.

Once a dissertation proposal has been accepted by the committee, the advisor will submit the title page of the proposal that includes signatures of the committee members, along with an electronic copy of the proposal, to the School of Education and Human Sciences Associate Dean for Graduate Studies support staff.

Typically, the student applies for IRB approval for their study (depending on the study) after the proposal is approved by the 3 person dissertation proposal committee.

Dissertation

The final dissertation normally consists of the three chapters submitted as the proposal (augmented and revised as necessary) plus a findings chapter(s), and a final discussion, conclusions, recommendations chapter.

The writing style and format for organization of the dissertation is described in [guidelines specific to KU](#) are available from the Office of Graduate Studies & Postdoctoral Affairs. Of special importance: The dissertation title page and acceptance page require very specific formatting. Please attend to the guidelines for those pages, available from the Office of Graduate Studies, and bring two copies of each of these pages to the defense for signatures.

Dissertation Defense

The final step in the journey to the Ph.D. is the dissertation defense. The student should provide each member of the committee with a final printed copy of the dissertation by the agreed-upon date and normally two weeks in advance of the defense; a committee member may choose to receive an electronic copy in addition to or in place of a hard copy.

At least two weeks prior to the defense, the advisor and ELPS office support staff must file a Progress-to-Degree (PtD) form that includes the following: the dissertation title, day and time of defense, and committee members. The PtD form notifies the School of Education and Human Sciences to send out the appropriate notice of the defense, and allows a final check on the student's eligibility to defend and the composition of the dissertation committee.

The student and committee members may attend the defense either physically or virtually (e.g., by videoconference); all must be present for the entire defense.

Dissertation defenses are open to the public, and students are encouraged to attend their colleagues' defenses to gain experience or knowledge of the process.

Dissertation defenses should be scheduled for a minimum of 90 minutes.

Students should prepare a brief (10-15 minutes) presentation giving an overview of the dissertation project, with a focus on study results and implications. Following the presentation, the candidate is then

questioned by members of the committee in a way that requires a genuine defense of both the dissertation and its research procedures. All members of the committee will have read and thoroughly familiarized themselves with the dissertation before the examination, and copies of the document will be available for reference during the examination.

When ample opportunity has been given for questions, the candidate and any observers will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates and comes to a decision regarding the adequacy of the candidate's performance. When a decision is reached, the candidate is invited back into the room and informed of the committee's decision. If the student doesn't pass the oral portion of the final dissertation defense, they must work with their advisor to remediate the problem and then reschedule the exam. Per university policy, students upon the consent of the advisor may attempt to pass the final exam up to 3 times or less.

Once a dissertation has been accepted by the committee, the advisor will submit the dissertation title page that includes signatures of the committee members to the ELPS department administrative assistant, who will complete the necessary paperwork regarding defense completion and notify the School of Education Associate Dean for Graduate Studies support staff. The chair will also sign and submit the acceptance/certification page.

Any changes recommended by the committee during the defense must be incorporated into the dissertation before it can be formally submitted. It is the student's responsibility to submit the final version of the dissertation (incorporating any required changes) to Graduate Studies & Postdoctoral Affairs prior to that semester's submission deadline. Information about submitting the final dissertation is available on the Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website at: <https://graduate.ku.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation>

Applying for Graduation

Following successful defense of the dissertation, the student is responsible for submitting the final, approved document as instructed and also to complete all required surveys. Students must also apply for the appropriate graduation: May, Summer, or December.

References

Belzer, A. and Ryan, S. (2013). Defining the problem of practice dissertation: Where's the practice, what's the problem. *Planning and Changing* (44, ¾), 195-207.

CPED.

https://cped.memberclicks.net/assets/CPED_Documents/Marketing_Promotion/CPED_Framework_Poster_Final.pdf

APPENDIX I: GUIDE TO THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL MEETING

Congratulations! You have worked hard with your advisor to develop a well-conceived and polished dissertation proposal. Your advisor says you're now ready to move to a proposal defense. Here's a guide for next steps:

Scheduling your proposal meeting

- ☐ Identify faculty members willing to serve on your dissertation committee. Do this in consultation with your advisor, who will be one of these three people.
- ☐ Email these faculty to schedule a 60-minute meeting time for your proposal defense. A Doodle poll can be useful for this purpose.
- ☐ Attach a completed copy of your dissertation proposal to the scheduling email.

Tips:

**Generally speaking, ensure there are at least 2 weeks between when you provide your proposal to your committee and when you schedule your proposal meeting.*

Preparation

- ☐ Plan to present a brief overview of your proposed study—no more than 15 minutes.
- ☐ You may create a Power Point slide deck to accompany your presentation—no more than 10 slides.
- ☐ Provide a copy of your proposal cover page for signatures if your committee approves the study you propose.

Tips:

**Your committee will have read your proposal in advance, so provide an overview with particular emphasis on your research questions (Chapter 1), study design, and methods (Chapter 3).*

**Approach the meeting as a chance to interact with your committee. Your committee members will ask you questions, make suggestions, recommend resources, request changes, and brainstorm possibilities with you as appropriate. You can also bring some questions to the conversation—are there particular dilemmas or parts of your planned study you would like help thinking through?*

**A successful proposal meeting usually ends in one of two ways. Committee members approve the study you proposed with minor suggestions, so they sign your cover sheet with an understanding you'll incorporate their suggestions into your continued work. Or, committee members are agreeable to the proposed study but have particular suggestions they'd like to see reflected in a revised proposal before they approve you to proceed. You will typically work with your advisor to ensure these revisions.*

After-meeting next steps

- ☐ Submit a clean electronic copy of your proposal to Denise Brubaker (brubaker@ku.edu) Tracy Rockers (t221k439@ku.edu).
- ☐ Apply for human subjects approval if needed—at KU and any other relevant institutions.+

+In some cases, you will be required to obtain approval from the school or institution in which you plan to collect data. You should check with this organization first to be sure they will grant such approval and ask them what sort of IRB they need. In many cases, documentation of KU approval will suffice.

Tips:

**Approval from your committee means you have a study plan that is feasible and conceived clearly enough that you know what needs to be done next. While you will conduct your study in a fairly independent fashion, you should also stay in contact with your advisor through the process. It's wise to provide your advisor with updates on your work and seek guidance if needed. We're here to help!*

APPENDIX II: UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs, hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that *most commonly* affect graduate students are included.

Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

GENERAL POLICIES

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. Your department or program may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

Admission

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor's degree (as evidenced by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained).

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

English Proficiency Requirements

The University requires all applicants, international or domestic, to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are multiple ways to prove English proficiency:

- Declaration of native or native-like speaker status on the online application for graduate study.
- Official scores from an English proficiency standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS-Academic, or PTE), sent by the testing agency to the University of Kansas. Official scores must be less than two years old. Scores must be reported to KU directly by the testing service. Self-reported scores or unofficial scores are not accepted. TOEFL scores should be sent by ETS to KU institution code 6871. IELTS should be sent to KU Graduate Admissions via the e-delivery service. PTE score sheets containing the Score Report Code and Registration ID should be emailed to graduateadm@ku.edu for verification.

- Graduation with a baccalaureate degree (or higher) earned in residence from an accredited English-medium college or university or an accredited college or university in the United States. Degrees earned online may not be used to verify English proficiency. Note: this option is not sufficient for employment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.
- AEC Curriculum: Students who haven't taken one of the listed tests may complete coursework through the KU Applied English Center (AEC) to demonstrate English proficiency.
- US Military Employment: If you are employed as an officer in the U.S. military with documentation of selection or promotion to the rank of Major or higher (or the equivalent U.S. Navy or Coast Guard rank), then you will be considered fully proficient and will not be required to complete AEC testing.

Additional English Competency Requirements for GTAs:

English proficiency requirements for GTAs are governed by the Kansas Board of Regents and must be met separately from the English proficiency requirement for admission to a KU graduate program. Detailed information on English proficiency requirements for GTAs may be found on Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' Spoken English Competency page.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)

Enrollment

For graduate students, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While individual units may have additional enrollment requirements, for students who are required to enroll full-time (e.g. students holding a GTA/GRA/GA appointment, international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, students receiving federal financial aid, etc.) the University defines full-time enrollment it as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s). *See Doctoral post-comprehensive enrollment.
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a Competency-Based Education (CBE) program

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s).
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a CBE program

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU's definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

Students not enrolled by 11:59pm the day before the first day of classes will be assessed a late enrollment fee. The University Registrar then deactivates the KU ID of any not enrolled by the last Friday in October (for Fall) or last Friday in March (for Spring). Students who wish to enroll after that must submit a Permit to Re-Enroll to be reactivated.

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Withdrawal form may be submitted on their behalf. Please note that voluntarily withdrawing from your program does not automatically withdraw you from coursework. You must also withdraw from all classes in Enroll & Pay via the "Withdraw from the University" option.

Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from all courses, as well any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current Academic Calendar.**

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript.

Your graduate program coordinator (or similar title) is available to guide you through any enrollment scenarios or questions that come up. In order to avoid problems on your record, please consult with them prior to dropping or changing enrollment.

Related Policies:

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)

- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements](#)

Graduate Credit (Including Transfer Credit)

The University's Graduate Credit policy defines KU's conditions for the following:

- Definition of graduate credit for the purposes of a course "counting" towards a graduate degree or graduate certificate at KU;
- Transfer of graduate credit to KU from an outside institution;
- Reduction in the required number of graduate hours for Master's students;
- Counting credit hours taken as non-degree seeking student towards a later graduate degree at KU;
- Counting credit hours taken as a certificate seeking student toward another graduate degree.

Transfer Credit

The transfer credit option allows master's students to add graduate-level coursework completed at another institution to their KU transcript to count toward their KU degree. Upper-level coursework taken as an undergraduate, even courses numbered at the graduate level, is not eligible for transfer in any case. Additional restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses and the number of credit hours that can be counted toward a KU master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department or program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

No transfer of credits is allowed for the Ph.D. In circumstances where students enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution or other relevant graduate coursework, it may be possible for students to request a reduction in the number of hours required for the Ph.D. Students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Reduced Credit Hour Degree

KU policy defines 30 hours as the minimum for master's degrees. Departments may petition for a reduced hour degree master's degree for individual students in cases where they may provide evidence that the student entered the program especially well-prepared to complete a graduate-level degree and the student is able to maintain a superior grade point average. Reduced credit hour degrees must be based on coursework or experiences that can be objectively measured, such as coursework or qualifying internship or study abroad programs. Professional or life experience does not qualify. A reduction in hours is distinct from a transfer of credit and is reserved for students whose prior coursework doesn't qualify for transfer credit (e.g. was already used to fulfill requirements towards a completed degree) and there are no modifications on the transcript.

Restrictions apply to the number of credit hours that can be reduced for a master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below.

In all cases, a reduction in hours must first be approved at the department or program level, so to begin the process for approval, students should consult with their DGS. Students must also provide documentation of the coursework or experience being used to justify the reduced hours (e.g. transcripts, program descriptions).

Because there is no minimum number of required hours for the Ph.D., reduction of required hours based on prior degrees or experience is determined solely at the program level. Doctoral students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Related Policies:

- [Graduate Credit](#)
- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements \(on Reduced Hour Master's Degree\)](#)

Credit/No Credit

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their cumulative graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

Students make the CR/NC election via the Registrar's CR/NC online request form. Elections and changes to elections can only be made during the specific CR/NC period. For regular semester courses, this period begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. Exact dates may be found on the current KU Academic Calendar. Please keep in mind, short courses may have alternate dates.

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling; however, in cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information.

Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.3.8](#)

Probation & Dismissal

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student that is not making satisfactory progress toward completing their degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student of why they are not making satisfactory progress, what they must do to return to good standing, and the deadline for doing so.

Students are most commonly placed on probation due to their graduate cumulative GPA dropping below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Individual Schools/the College may set more stringent GPA requirements.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constituting a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to;

- Lack of progress on the thesis, dissertation, or capstone project
 - Unacceptable academic performance on program milestones outside of coursework (e.g. exams)
 - Unsatisfactory grades or GPA within foundational required courses (despite the overall cumulative GPA)
 - An unsatisfactory result in their department's annual progress evaluation
- Nearing or going beyond their maximum time to degree. See the Time Limits section below for more information.

Students should carefully review the Good Academic Standing policy for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook or the degree requirements section and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise their cumulative GPA or otherwise meet the communicated terms of the academic probation, the department will reconsider their continuation in the program, and in most cases will recommend the student for dismissal. Once dismissed, a student is no longer able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete their degree. Students dismissed from any graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate program at the University of Kansas.

A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss their status with their advisor.

Related Policies:

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

Grading

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' (GPA) Grading policy governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in Article II of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of GPA.

Students should also consult their advisor and the departmental grading section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

Related Policies:

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)

Time Limits

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study, the doctorate degree in five (5) years of study, and both the master's and doctorate together in six-seven (6-7) years of study.

Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, students are encouraged to use a Mentoring Agreement Template and/or adapt to their own needs to support effective mentoring and a positive mentoring relationship.

Note that individual schools/the College/degree programs may require Mentoring Agreements for students who are nearing their maximum time to degree.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)
- [Doctoral Degree Comprehensive Oral Exams \(on exam expiration and recertification\)](#)
- [Doctoral Program Profiles with Time to Degree Information](#)
- [KU CLAS Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- [Univ. Michigan Rackham Graduate School Mentoring Plan Templates](#)

- [KU Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs IDP template](#)

Leave of Absence

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the University and the department and while “stopping the clock” on their time to degree. When a student is on Leave of Absence status it is understood that they have temporarily suspended their graduate work and therefore will not make use of University resources, including faculty time.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done through a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department’s internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student’s need for a leave of absence.

In order for a Leave of Absence to be approved, the student must be withdrawn from all active and/or future enrollment. Withdrawal for the purposes of Leave of Absence is still subject to all Registrar deadlines, required forms, and applicable tuition and fees.

Students on Leave of Absence are automatically reactivated after their leave is over and are eligible to enroll for their intended semester back during the normal enrollment periods. See the KU Academic Calendar for exact dates that enrollment begins.

If at any time plans change and a student wishes to return and enroll before leave was supposed to end, they may contact their department to be reactivated early.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Leaves of Absence \(policy\)](#)
- [Leave of Absence \(GPA website, form linked at bottom of page\)](#)

Required University Milestones

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the following milestones are required for all students and specific regulations apply:

- Master's Final Culminating Exam (written or oral)/Thesis Defense for Master's degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Exam
- Doctoral Final Exam/Dissertation Defense

*A final culminating effort is not required for departments with an approved coursework-only master's degree option in the Academic Catalog (note that programs with a capstone are considered coursework only).

Before a student is allowed to complete any of these three exams, pre-approval from the school/College is required in advance of the exam date. This pre-approval request will be submitted on the student's behalf by their department after the exam date has been scheduled. The school/College reviews the student record and verifies all University requirements have been fulfilled. The full list of these requirements may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their departments well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

There are additional policies requirements for oral exams. The following are University policies pertaining to oral exams:

Oral Exam Committee Composition

All voting committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. Additionally, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty in the candidate's department or program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply, especially for doctoral exam committees. Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the University policies pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam committee. Your graduate program coordinator can assist with confirming the qualifying status of any faculty member at KU, or outside of KU.

Oral Exam Attendance

Oral Exams may be conducted in-person, remotely, or a hybrid of both. There are no University level requirements for physical presence; however, there are strict regulations on participation.

In all cases, all committee members must be present, either physically or via phone/video conference, for an exam to commence. **If a committee member does not arrive or appear, the exam may not begin and if a committee member leaves or loses connection such that they cannot fully participate, the exam may not proceed. Oral examinations that do not meet these attendance requirements are not valid.**

Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the student's individual Ph.D. program's degree requirements, the following are University requirements for graduation with a Ph.D. at KU.

Enrollment Requirement

Prior to the semester in which the comprehensive exam is held, all doctoral students must complete a minimum program engagement equivalent to two full-time semesters. This may be accomplished through either of the following:

- Two semesters (fall and/or spring) of full-time enrollment in KU coursework, as defined by University policy
- At least 18 hours of enrollment in KU coursework spread out over several part-time semesters

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)

Continuous Enrollment for Post-Comprehensive Students

During the semester in which the doctoral oral comprehensive exam is completed and each fall and spring semester follows, doctoral students must adhere to very specific enrollment requirements. These requirements may be different than enrollment requirements prior to the oral comp exam.

Failure to properly comply with the enrollment requirements may cause delays to graduation or additional enrollment requirements to make up what was missed, increasing tuition expenses near the end of your degree program.

To avoid delays or additional costs, you are also strongly advised to meet with your graduate program coordinator the semester before your oral comprehensive exam. Your graduate coordinator will work with you to develop an enrollment plan that meets all policy requirements, while also preventing unnecessary or avoidable fees.

Post-comprehensive enrollment requirements also apply to students with GTA/GRA/GA appointments, but these students must be certified to drop their enrollment levels. Departments are responsible for tracking student enrollment and will submit the certification form on the student's behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the beginning of the semester in which the enrollment will drop below 6 hours. Students who are certified to reduce hours continue to meet the University's definition of full-time enrollment, as well as the enrollment requirements of their employment contract.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Doctoral Candidacy](#)

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

The University offers a variety of Approved Graduate Certificate Programs to encourage current graduate students to pursue interdisciplinary study, gain a credential for expertise in an outside area of study, or provide an option for a coherent course of advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. Note that students must be fully admitted to a graduate certificate by the end of the last course that will count to fulfill the certificate. Students wishing to complete the certificate should apply as early as possible. Students whose interests or career goals may be served by a Graduate Certificate should familiarize themselves with the University's policies relating to Certificate programs (found below) early in their graduate career, in addition to individual certificate program requirements.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Graduate Certificate Programs: Eligibility and Admission Criteria](#)
- [Policies & Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs](#)

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (Master's & Ph.D.)

In addition to all program requirements, students planning to graduate must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs Graduation Checklists ([Master's](#) | [Doctoral](#))

These graduation checklists provide a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be consulted by every graduating master's or doctoral student as soon as graduation is expected. Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for formatting and electronic submission of the thesis or dissertation. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

We strongly encourage students to submit an Application for Graduation as early as possible; ideally prior to the 20th day of classes of the semester they intend to graduate.

GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs (GPA) offers funding opportunities in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to GPA. Some of the available funding includes:

[Summer Research Scholarships](#): intended primarily for post-comp doctoral students.

[Graduate Student Travel Fund](#): intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (max \$750) only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Doctoral Student Research Fund](#): Designed to support KU doctoral students who need assistance to carry out research that advances progress toward the degree. Applications for this fund are accepted only for a limited time as funding is available. Students are eligible to receive one award from this fund during their doctoral career. Students should check the link above for additional information and restrictions.

[Policies Regarding Freedom of Expression on Campus](#)

Kansas State Law (HB2333) requires postsecondary educational institutions in Kansas to publish in their handbooks and orientation programs the institution's policies, regulations, or expectations of students regarding free expression on campus.

Per KU General Counsel, this includes the following two policies:

- [KU Public Assembly Policy](#)
- [Kansas Board of Regents Statement on Free Expression](#)

Note that the two policies listed above apply to ALL members of the campus community; they are not specific to graduate students.