

Rules and Regulations Q & A

Admissions

Q: How can I know if my admission has any special provisions that I must complete?

A: All provisions are described in your Letter of Admission. These may include particular grades that must be obtained or other provisions that the faculty find to be important for your successful completion of the program. Be sure to keep a copy of that and refer to it when you consult your departmental advisor.

Q: My Letter of Admission does not list any provisions. What does that mean?

A: It means the faculty of your department find that there are no deficiencies in your record that might hurt your ability to complete the program. You still have to complete all normal requirements of the degree, including the writing requirement, the Responsible Conduct of Research training and all regular departmental requirements.

Q: I was admitted to one graduate program, but I want to transfer to another. How do I do this?

A: Admission to The Graduate School is always to a specific department, and transferring requires both a full application to the new program and a written release from your current department.

Q: I have stopped out for a semester (or more). How do I go about getting readmitted?

A: You must submit an application as a Former Student Returning; you need not pay another application fee. The department or program will review your file and decide whether you will be readmitted. Readmission is not automatic and frequently carries very specific provisions that must be met to maintain status.

Q: I will have to stop out to care for a sick child/parent/spouse, for childbirth, for military service or for another similar circumstance. How do I handle this?

A: You are allowed to do so, with permission of the Dean, provided that you request it in advance. The procedures and implications are set forth in detail in Article II, Section 3 of the *Rules and Regulations*. Please consult this document, your advisor and your Director of Graduate Studies before requesting such a leave. Keep in mind that taking such a leave will prevent you from using university facilities while you are gone and there is no guarantee that you will have the same financial support upon your return.

Q: I was dismissed for accumulating too many grades below a B-. How do I go about getting readmitted?

A: You must submit an application as a Former Student Returning; you need not pay another application fee. The department or program will review your file and decide whether you will be readmitted. Readmission is not automatic and frequently carries very specific provisions that must be met to maintain status.

Q: I was dismissed for failing my comprehensive examination or final defense of thesis/dissertation twice. How do I go about getting readmitted?

A: If you were dismissed for twice failing a comprehensive or final defense, you are not eligible to be readmitted to the Graduate School.

Registration and Enrollment

Q: What is a full-time load for a graduate student?

A: Nine credit hours are considered to be a full time schedule for students prior to being admitted to candidacy. After admission to candidacy, enrollment for at least one credit hour of dissertation research or dissertation writing may constitute a full time schedule.

Q: What is the maximum load for a graduate student?

A: Normally, the maximum load for a semester is 12 credit hours. In exceptional circumstances, and subject to the approval of the Graduate Faculty of the department and the Dean, a student may enroll in up to 15 credit hours. You may not enroll in any more than 15 credit hours during a semester.

Q: How does the Graduate School handle incomplete grades?

A: All incomplete grades, except those for thesis, dissertation, or research courses, must carry an alternate grade designation. The alternate grade will be final, if the work is not completed by the end of the next semester in which you are enrolled and the course is offered.

Q: How many credits of incomplete may I have on my transcript?

A: Students with more than 12 credits of incomplete on their transcripts are considered not to be making satisfactory academic progress and will have an academic hold placed on their account. They will not be able to register until the deficiency is remedied.

Q: May I enroll in undergraduate courses while a graduate student?

A: You may be required to take such courses to fulfill entrance deficiencies. If undergraduate courses are to be taken as a part of your program, a maximum of 6 such credits may count towards your degree.

Q: Can I transfer credits into a graduate program?

A: This is not encouraged. However, upon recommendation of the Graduate Faculty of the department, the Graduate School may approve the transfer of up to 6 credits into a master's program and 24 credits into a PhD program. If you have a master's degree, up to 24 credits from that program can count towards the PhD, subject to approval of the Graduate Faculty, but you would not be allowed to transfer any additional credits beyond that into your program.

General Degree Requirements

Q: How long do I have to complete a master's degree?

A: We expect you to complete a master's degree within 5 years from the date you first registered. After that, you must apply for readmission. Under such circumstances, you should expect additional requirements be placed on you for completion of the program.

Q: How long are courses I take in a master's program valid?

A: Courses you took less than 5 years before you complete all degree requirements may count towards the program. Those taken more than 5 but less than 7 years before you complete all degree requirements may be restored by written examination. Those more than 7 years old when you complete all degree requirements may not be counted towards the degree requirements.

Q: How long do I have to complete a PhD?

A: We expect you to complete a PhD degree within 7 years from the date you first registered. After that, you must apply for readmission. Under such circumstances, you should expect additional requirements be placed on you for completion of the program.

Q: How long are courses I take in a PhD program valid?

A: Courses you took less than 7 years before you complete all degree requirements may count towards the program. Those taken more than 7 but less than 10 years before you complete all degree requirements may be restored by written examination. Those more than 10 years old when you complete all degree requirements may not be counted towards the degree requirements.

Q: I have to stop out to work for a while. Can there be any exceptions to the time-to-degree and course viability limits?

A: The only exception is in cases where Leave for Exceptional Family Circumstances has been requested and approved in advance. Please consult your Director of Graduate Studies and the Associate Dean for Education and Research before requesting such leave. Stopping out because of a need to work or for other financial reasons is not a valid reason for granting such leave.

Q: Is there a residency requirement?

A: You must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credit hours in at least one semester to be recommended for a degree.

Q: How many credits are required for my degree program?

A: This will vary with the department and the program. The minimums that the Graduate School allows are 30 for a master's and 72 for a PhD. Consult your Director of Graduate Studies to find out the requirements for your own program.

Q: What are the course requirements for my degree?

A: The Graduate School has no specific course requirements for master's and PhD degrees. You will have to consult your departmental advisor and Director of Graduate Studies to find out the answer to this question.

Q: How can I meet the English Proficiency requirement?

A: This can be done in 3 ways. First, if you received a score of 5 or better on the GRE writing component, you are exempted from the requirement. Otherwise, you must take and pass an English Proficiency Examination administered by the Graduate School. This should be done at the beginning of your first semester in residence. If you fail this examination, you must enroll in and pass a course designed and offered for such students.

Q: How do I meet the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) requirement?

A: An RCR workshop is offered each fall and spring semester. Advance registration is required.

Q: My research involves human subjects. Are there any special requirements for this work?

A: There is a legal requirement that you obtain *prior* approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) *before* undertaking any such research. Contact the IRB office on campus (<http://ovprc.howard.edu/offices/huirb.html>, ospreta@howard.edu, 202-806-4759) for detailed instructions.

Q: My research only involves interviewing people or asking them to complete a questionnaire. Does such research need prior IRB approval? Why?

A: Yes. It's the law.

Q: My research doesn't require the use of humans, but it does use animals. Are there any requirements for this?

A: If you are going to use vertebrate animals (fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds or non-human mammals), you must have the approval of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before starting the research. Research on other animals is exempt from this requirement. If you have any questions about this, please consult the IACUC (<http://ovprc.howard.edu/offices/huiacuc.html>, ospreta@howard.edu, 202-806-4759).

Q: My research uses radioactive material, hazardous chemicals or recombinant DNA molecules. Are there any special requirements for this?

A: Research with such materials requires approval of the Radiation Safety or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC, <http://ovprc.howard.edu/offices/huibc.html>, ospreta@howard.edu, 202-806-4759). Consult those offices before beginning any such research.

Q: My advisor already has approval from the IRB/IBC/IACUC/Radiation Safety. Do I need separate approval?

A: You need a separate IRB approval. You do not need a separate approval from the other committees.

Q: When must these other requirements be met?

A: All must be met before you can be advanced to Candidacy.

Guidance Committee:

Q: What is the Guidance Committee?

A: Your Guidance Committee is a group of faculty who will guide and assist you through your graduate program. It will include your thesis/dissertation advisor. For a master's degree, the Guidance Committee will contain at least two others; for a PhD degree, it will contain at least three others.

Q: Who may serve on my Guidance Committee?

A: For PhD students, all members must be current Graduate Faculty members, and at least 3 of them, including your advisor, must be from your program. For master's students, two must be Graduate Faculty members from your program, and the other need not be.

Q: When should my Guidance Committee be established?

A: It should be established at least by the beginning of the second year of your program. Earlier is better.

Candidacy

Q: What is Candidacy?

A: Candidacy is a status in which your program specifies that you have completed most of the work for your degree other than your research and thesis/dissertation writing.

Q: When should I apply for Candidacy?

A: If you are in a master's program, you should apply by the beginning of your second year. If you are in a PhD program, you should apply by the time you have completed 48 hours towards your degree. If you are in a PhD program, you **MUST** be admitted to Candidacy at least by the semester before you defend your dissertation. Deadline dates for applying to the Graduate School for Candidacy are published at the beginning of each semester.

Q: What are the requirements for Candidacy?

A: You must pass the required **core** courses (not necessarily ALL of the courses in your Program of Study), the foreign language requirement (if any) and the qualifying/comprehensive examination, meet the English Proficiency and RCR requirements, secured IRB/IBC/*etc.* approvals, received approval of a thesis subject or optional requirement (master's) or dissertation proposal (PhD), receive the endorsement of the Graduate Faculty in your department and receive approval by the Graduate School.

Q: Once I am in Candidacy, how long is it valid?

A: Candidacy for a master's degree is valid for no more than two years. For the PhD, it is valid for no more than five years.

Q: I am in Candidacy. What do I do, now?

A: Congratulations! You're almost there. You may now register for thesis/dissertation courses.

Q: I am in Candidacy, and I have already enrolled in enough credits to get the degree. Am I done?

A: Probably not. The PhD requires an accepted dissertation, and master's programs require a thesis or alternative capstone experience.

Final Defense of Thesis/Dissertation

Q: I'm finally ready to defend my master's thesis. How do I go about it?

A: First, check all deadlines with the Graduate School and make sure all members of your Guidance Committee have read the document and given a preliminary approval. Then ask the program to schedule the defense and notify the Graduate School of it.

Q: Who may attend a thesis defense?

A: Anyone. It is open to the public.

Q: Who determines whether I passed?

A: The members of your Guidance Committee will deliberate privately after the defense and must agree that you have successfully defended the thesis.

Q: I passed! What happens now?

A: Well done! Your program must submit forms GS-EA-5 and GS-EA-6, available from the Graduate School website. You must submit your thesis, if applicable, electronically (we will help you at that time). You must check to make sure you have paid all fees and have no holds on your account. Then, come to Commencement and receive your degree and our congratulations.

Q: Uh-oh. I failed. What happens, now?

A: You must wait at least two months after the first attempt to try again. You should consult your Guidance Committee members very closely to remedy all deficiencies before scheduling a second attempt, because if you fail a second time, you will be dropped from the Graduate School and ineligible to be readmitted or admitted to any other program in it.

Q: It seems like forever that I've been in Graduate School, but I'm *finally* ready to defend my PhD dissertation. How do I go about it?

A: First, check all deadlines with the Graduate School and make sure all members of your Guidance Committee have read the document and given a preliminary approval. Ask the members to find and have approved an External Examiner for your defense. Then ask the program to submit forms GS-EA-1, GS-EA-2, GS-EA-3 and GS-EA-4 to the Office of Educational and Research Affairs in the Graduate School and recommend a time and place for the defense. Only the Office of Educational and Research Affairs has the authority to schedule PhD dissertation defenses.

Q: Who/what is an External Examiner?

A: This is a scholar not affiliated with Howard University and who has not had a role in your research

Q: Who may attend a dissertation defense?

A: Anyone. It is open to the public.

Q: Who determines whether I passed?

A: The members of your Guidance Committee and the External Examiner will deliberate privately after the defense and must unanimously agree that you have successfully defended the dissertation.

Q: I passed! What happens now?

A: Well done! Your program must submit forms GS-EA-5 and GS-EA-6, available from the Graduate School website. You must submit your dissertation electronically (we will help you at that time). You must check to make sure you have paid all fees and have no holds on your account. Then, come walk across the stage at Commencement, shake the hand of the dean and president, and receive your degree and our congratulations!

Q: Uh-oh. I failed. What happens, now?

A: You must wait at least two months after the first attempt to try again. You should consult your Guidance Committee members very closely to remedy all deficiencies before scheduling a second attempt, because if you fail a second time, you will be dropped from the Graduate School and ineligible to be readmitted or admitted to any other program in it.