

College of Education “LIFELINE”

A Briefing on Issues Most Often Raised by Graduate Students

First Term Enrollment

- **Validating Admission:** Students make their admission official (or “validate”) by registering for at least one course during the semester in which they are formally admitted to the University.
- **Deferment of Admission:** Students who are unable to enroll in classes during the semester in which admission has been granted may contact the Graduate Director and request a Deferment of Admission. This request must be made in writing within 12 months of the initial requested entry date and must be received prior to the program’s application deadline for the new acceptance term. If a request for Deferment of Admission is not activated within 12 months, students will need to reapply for admission.
- **First Day Class Attendance:** All students are required to attend class the first day a class meets, for both online and in person courses. Graduate students who are unable to attend the first class meeting should contact the professor so that they are not dropped from the class roll. Students are responsible for dropping undesired courses by the end of their 5th day of classes to avoid fee liability and academic penalty.
- **Dropping Classes during Add/Drop Week:** After a student has completed their registration on the date assigned, they may add or drop a course(s) during add/drop week (through the fifth day of classes) through their OASIS account. Courses dropped during the first five days of classes will be removed from your USF transcript. Graduate students are **not** dropped automatically for non-attendance on the first day. If you do not formally withdraw in OASIS, you could be charged for the class. Students may continue to withdraw between the second and tenth weeks of the semester, but after Add/Drop Week you **will** be liable for tuition and fees for any withdrawn courses.

Transferring Course Work

- **Transfer of Coursework from Another Institution:** Students may transfer up to 50% of a graduate program’s total minimum hours to their USF degrees **if:** 1) the transferred coursework has not been used to fulfill requirements for a completed degree, 2) the coursework is at the graduate level (5000-7000) and the student earned a B (3.00) or higher and 3) **the transfer of coursework is deemed appropriate by the students’ departments and the College of Education.** Transfer coursework must not be older than ten years at the time of graduation or course currency is required. Official transcripts from the institution where the transfer coursework was completed must accompany the request. Grades from transfer credit are not calculated into the student’s USF grade point average.
- **Internal coursework from USF** (taken as non-degree seeking or for a different degree program) also falls under the transfer course policy and would be included in the 50% limit described above if transferred in combination with coursework from another institution. Internal transfer coursework must meet the same requirements required for external credit transfer listed above.

Program Advisors and Planned Program of Study Forms

- **Assignment of an Advisor:** All students must have a Faculty Advisor who will assist the student in determining an academic course of action, and in creating and completing the planned program. Students should contact their respective departments for guidance in identifying an advisor.
- **Major Professor:** Upon admission to a specialist or doctoral program, the student is required to meet with the department’s Graduate Program Coordinator or a program advisor during the first semester of study to select a major professor and form a supervisory committee. The Major Professor will then serve as the student’s primary academic advisor throughout their program.

- **Planned Program of Study:** The Planned Program of Study form lists the coursework that students will take in order to complete their degree. Any changes to this document must be formally reviewed and approved by the academic program and the College. The document is not official until the signatures of the student, the advisor, the department chair and the College of Education Graduate Support Office have been obtained.
- **Rule of Thumb for Planned Program of Study Submission:** Masters and Specialist students should submit their planned programs of study with the appropriate signatures by the end of their first semester of study. Doctoral students may take a semester or two longer to allow time to adequately formulate the doctoral committee, but should submit the planned program before they have completed 18 hours of coursework.

Change of Graduate Major

- **Change of Graduate Major:** Students may file a Change of Graduate Major Application only after they have validated their admission by completing all courses in their first semester of study and while maintaining good academic standing (GPA of at least 3.00). Students can only change to a new major at the same or lower degree level (ex: a Ph.D. to an Ed.S., or an M.A. to an M.Ed.). Students will have to meet the **new** graduate catalog requirements in place at the time they begin their new major.

Time Limits

- **Masters and Education Specialist Students:** Degrees must be completed within **five (5) years** from the student's date of admission.
- **Doctoral Students:** Degrees must be completed within **seven (7) years** from the student's date of admission to the doctoral program.
- **Time Limit Extension:** Students may request **ONE** time limit extension based on documented exceptional circumstances that prevent completion of the degree within the allowable time to degree.

Grade Policies and Academic Standing

- **Full-Time Student Definition:** To be considered full-time, graduate students must be registered for a minimum of **nine (9)** credit hours in both the fall and spring semesters and a minimum of **six (6)** in the summer semester.
- **Academic Standing:** Students must maintain an overall Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 to remain in good academic standing in their programs. Students must maintain a 3.00 GPA in their major coursework and a 3.00 GPA overall in order to graduate. No grades of C- or below will be accepted. Students who do not maintain the required academic standing will be placed on automatic academic probation. Please see the Academic Policies section of the Graduate Catalog for more details: <https://catalog.usf.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=3183#probation>
- **Grade Forgiveness: There is no grade forgiveness at the graduate level.** Students who register for classes and do not drop them during the drop/add deadline will **not** have these courses deleted from their transcripts. Students who repeat the same course will have the grades from both courses computed into their GPA.
- **Incomplete Grades ("I"):** Students may only be eligible for an "I" when the majority of the student's work for a course has been completed before the end of the semester, the work that has been completed must be qualitatively satisfactory, and the student has requested consideration for an I grade as soon as possible but no later than the last day of finals week. The course instructor and student must complete and sign the I Grade Contract Form that describes the work to be completed, the date it is due, and the grade the student would earn factoring in a zero for all incomplete assignments. An I grade not cleared within the next academic semester (including summer semester) will revert to the original grade noted on the contract. Students seeking to remove incomplete grades **should not re-register** for the course. **Instructors must complete the change of grade process in e-Grades to update the final grade once the missing work has been submitted.**

- **Missing Grades (“M”):** The University policy is to issue an M grade automatically when the instructor does not submit a grade for a course. Missing grades which are not cleared within the next academic semester, including summer semester, will be converted to “M/F” grades or “M/U” grades. M/F and M/U grades are computed into the students’ Grade Point Averages.
- **Incomplete and missing grades must be resolved** in order to be cleared for program benchmarks such as internships, qualifying or comprehensive exams, admission to doctoral candidacy, and graduation.

Graduate Petitions (for late add, drop, and hour changes), Withdrawals, and Course Deletions

- **Graduate Petitions:** Students who have been formally admitted to graduate programs should file a Graduate Studies Petition to add, drop, or change credit hours after the first week of the semester. See the Office of Graduate Studies website for Graduate Petition forms. The petition will not be processed if an administrative hold exists on the student’s account.
- **Fee Reimbursements:** A Fee Adjustment Form is used if a student would like to have tuition and fees reimbursed after withdrawing from courses during the semester. A Late Registration Fee Waiver Request is used if a student registers late for courses due to extenuating circumstances and wishes to appeal a late fee assessment. Criteria for consideration are listed on each form (see also criteria for Course Withdrawal below). The request must be submitted within six months of the semester in question.
- **Course Withdrawal:** Graduate students must use a graduate petition to withdraw from a class after the semester’s add/drop deadline. Students who wish to withdraw from their program completely should use the Graduate Voluntary Withdrawal Form. Following are some criteria for course withdrawal via graduate petition:
 - a) Student illness of such severity or duration to preclude completion of the course(s) as confirmed in writing by a physician (M.D.).
 - b) Death of the student or death in the immediate family (parent, grandparent, spouse, child or sibling) as confirmed by documentation (death certificate, obituary) indicating the student’s relationship to the deceased.
 - c) Involuntary call to active military duty as confirmed by military orders.
 - d) A situation in which the University is in error as confirmed by an appropriate University official.
 - e) Other documented exceptional circumstances beyond the control of the student which precluded completion of the course(s) accompanied by an explanatory letter and supporting documentation.
- **Retroactive Drops and Withdrawals:** Requests for retroactive actions **will not** be considered for approval. This includes petitions to “drop” a course after the last day of classes in the current semester. Except in cases of administrative error, the student’s academic record is **locked** once their final semester has ended.
- **Course Deletion:** Graduate students may have courses deleted from their transcripts only if they were enrolled in the class through documented University error. Fees are automatically reimbursed upon approval of a course deletion; however, approval is granted only when a university error can be clearly documented.

Reinstatement and Readmission

- **General Policies:** A graduate student who is not registered and enrolled for a minimum of **six (6)** credits in a 12-month period is automatically placed in non-degree seeking/inactive status. Students who have gone inactive are not guaranteed readmission to their programs. Students who are readmitted to their degree programs are bound by the policies and procedures that are in place at the time of the readmission.

- **Reinstatement:** Students who have not exceeded their time limit for degree completion may apply for reinstatement using a Graduate Major Reinstatement form. You must submit an updated planned program of study along with the reinstatement request.
- **Readmission:** Students who have exceeded their time limit for degree completion and/or course currency limits (10 years after initial admission) must reapply for admission. You must submit a new graduate application for admission (along with any supporting materials) and doctoral students will have to reapply for candidacy. Students who are readmitted must meet the degree requirements of the **current** graduate catalog in effect.

Internships/Practicums

- **Internship:** Students whose programs require an internship or practicum course should check with their program advisor regarding its requirements and deadlines. Some programs require an application for an internship/practicum to be filed one to two semesters in advance.

State Test Scores

- **Test Scores:** Some programs require students to complete and pass state tests including but not limited to the General Knowledge Test (GKT), the Subject Area Exam, and the Professional Education Exam. Check with your advisor at least two semesters before applying to graduate to see if any of these are required for your program.

Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program Specific Information

- **Internship:** All MAT Programs have a required teaching internship that students must complete in order to graduate. Students must apply for Internship at least two semesters in advance. For more information, see the Clinical Education/Internships page on the College of Education website: <https://www.usf.edu/education/clinical-education/information.aspx>
- **Teacher Certification Exam Scores:** All MAT students must take and pass both the state Subject Area Exam (in their selected area of study) and the Professional Education Exam as two of their requirements for graduation. Please contact the MAT program advisor for details.

Education Specialist Thesis and Project Requirements

- **Choice of Thesis or Project:** Specialist students will choose the appropriate option in consultation with their appointed committee members and in consideration of professional and academic goals.
- **Registration Requirements:** Students are required to enroll for a minimum of two (2) graduate credit hours in the EDG 6971 thesis course or EDG 6975 project course in each semester they work on the Ed.S. thesis or project. Students should also register for two (2) thesis/project hours in the semester they submit the final thesis or project and apply to graduate.
- **Thesis:** Students completing a thesis need to form a committee of at least **three (3)** members, including their Major Professor, and have the committee approved by the College of Education. The final approved thesis and all required forms and surveys must be uploaded and submitted to the USF Office of Graduate Studies by the semester deadline. Students who miss the final deadline will not be approved to graduate in that semester and will need to defer to the next one. For more information on thesis submission requirements and current deadlines, check the USF Electronic Thesis and Dissertation website at <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/electronic-thesis-dissertation/>.
- **Project:** Once completed and approved by the committee, a hard copy of the project and a completed Record of Ed.S. or Master's Project Completion form (see link below) should be submitted to the COEDU Graduate Support Office three weeks before the end of the semester. <http://www.usf.edu/education/graduate/graduate-support-office/grad-stud-resources/thesis-project-specialists.aspx>

Comprehensive Exam

- **Comprehensive Exam:** All Master's and Education Specialist students must take and pass a comprehensive exam in their final year of study. Students must be enrolled in at least two (2) hours of graduate credit during the semester they take the exam. Check with your program advisor/major professor to find out the application deadlines and additional information regarding this exam.

Qualifying Exam/Doctoral Candidacy

- **Qualifying Exam:** Doctoral Students need to complete a qualifying exam when they have no more than nine (9) credit hours of coursework (not counting dissertation hours) left to complete. Students must be enrolled for a minimum of two (2) credit hours in the semester they take the exam. The College of Education offers both college-wide and program-specific exams; check with your Major Professor to determine which qualifying exam option is appropriate for your program and to obtain additional information regarding the exam.
- **Candidacy:** Once a doctoral student has completed their coursework and passed their qualifying exam, they must apply for Candidacy before they may begin taking dissertation hours. The application for candidacy must be completed either in the semester that the qualifying exam is taken and passed or in the following semester when the qualifying exam results are verified. Students must be enrolled in a minimum of two (2) credit hours in both the semester when they took the qualifying exam AND the semester when they apply for candidacy.

Dissertation/ETD Submission

- **Dissertation Hours:** Once a doctoral student is admitted to candidacy, they must take a minimum of two (2) graduate credit hours in every subsequent semester until they have reached the minimum number of required dissertation hours for their program. This includes the semester the student defends the dissertation AND the semester they submit the dissertation to the Office of Graduate Studies. Please consult with your program advisor or check the Graduate Catalog for the required minimum dissertation credit hours for your program.
- **Doctoral Dissertation Committee:** Doctoral students completing a dissertation will need to appoint a doctoral committee and have their committee formally approved by the College of Education. Doctoral committees require a minimum of **four (4)** members. The committee should include the student's Major Professor, at least two other members from the student's area of study, and at least one member external to the major/department.
- **Dissertation Defenses:** All Doctoral Students must complete a Proposal Defense and then a Final Defense of their Dissertation. The student **may not** defend the dissertation in the same semester or within 90 calendar days of the date on which they successfully defended the proposal.
- **Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Submission:** The final approved dissertation and all required forms and surveys must be uploaded and submitted electronically to the Office of Graduate Studies by the semester deadline. Students who miss the final deadline will not be approved to graduate in that semester and will need to defer to the next one. For more information on the ETD process and current deadlines, please visit the following webpage: <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/electronic-thesis-dissertation/>

Graduation and Commencement Ceremony Information

- **Enrollment in Final Semester:** Students must be enrolled in a minimum of **two (2)** credit hours of graduate-level coursework in the semester that they apply for graduation, regardless of if they have already finished all coursework and/or required dissertations, theses, or projects.
- **Graduation Application:** Students must formally apply to graduate through their Oasis account. The graduation application must be completed by the end of the fourth week of the semester to be considered on-time. Exact application deadline dates for each semester can be found at <https://www.usf.edu/registrar/services/apply-for-graduation/index.aspx>. NOTE: Please make sure your personal information (name, address, etc.) is up to date with the Registrar. If you have changed your name (or other personal information) while enrolled, you will need to submit a change of name form to the Registrar's Office.

- **Late Graduation Applications:** All applications turned in after the deadline must also have the Late Graduation Application Form attached, with an additional copy of the form sent to the College of Education Graduate Support Office. Students who turn in their application late are not guaranteed to have their name printed in the commencement brochure, and their final transcripts and/or diplomas may be delayed.
- **Graduation Application Withdrawal Form:** If a student has submitted a graduation application and later determines that they will not be graduating in that semester, they will need to submit a withdrawal form as soon as possible to the COEDU Graduate Support Office.
- **Commencement:** If you plan to participate in the graduation ceremony, there is a separate application to complete. The application can be accessed at <https://www.usf.edu/commencement/index.aspx>. Your name as shown in the Commencement Brochure is provided by the University Registrar's Office. For name changes, please contact the Registrar's Office directly.
- **Final Transcripts and Diplomas:** Once all degree requirements have been certified as complete for the semester it will take approximately 6-8 weeks for your diploma to be mailed to you and for your degree to post to your transcripts.

Information in this document has been adapted from the resources listed below. Please visit the following webpages for additional information:

College of Education Website: <https://www.usf.edu/education/index.aspx>

COEDU Graduate Support Office Homepage: <https://www.usf.edu/education/graduate/graduate-support-office/>

USF 2023-2024 Graduate Catalog: <https://catalog.usf.edu/index.php?catoid=20>

Office of Graduate Studies Student Information: <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/current-students/index.aspx>

Office of the Registrar: <http://www.usf.edu/registrar/>

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