

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COUNCIL BYLAWS

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| I. MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL AND DEFINITIONS..... | 1 |
| A. Mission | 1 |
| B. Functions | 1 |
| C. Definitions | 1 |
| II. THE GRADUATE COUNCIL | 2 |
| A. Membership | 2 |
| B. Procedures | 3 |
| 1. <i>Meetings</i> | 3 |
| 2. <i>Guidelines for Proposals of New Programs</i> | 3 |
| 3. <i>Amendments to the Bylaws</i> | 3 |
| 4. <i>Repository of Graduate Council Records</i> | 3 |
| III. APPROVAL OF NEW AND REVISED GRADUATE PROGRAMS..... | 3 |
| A. Process for Consideration | 3 |
| 1. <i>New Programs</i> | 3 |
| 2. <i>Revisions to Existing Graduate Programs</i> | 4 |
| B. Levels of Approval | 4 |
| 1. <i>Program, Departmental, and School Approvals</i> | 4 |
| 2. <i>College Approval of Final Program Proposal</i> | 5 |
| 3. <i>University Approval Process for New Programs</i> | 5 |
| IV. GENERAL REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS..... | 6 |
| A. Guidelines for Degree Designations for Graduate Programs | 6 |
| 1. <i>Degree Designation for Master’s Programs</i> | 6 |
| 2. <i>Selection of Name</i> | 6 |
| 3. <i>Degree Designation for PhD Programs</i> | 6 |
| 4. <i>Degree Designation for Non-PhD Programs</i> | 7 |
| B. Regulations Applying to All Graduate Degree Programs | 7 |
| 1. <i>Admissions Requirements</i> | 7 |
| 2. <i>Transfer and other Advanced Standing Credit</i> | 7 |
| 3. <i>Articulation Agreements</i> | 8 |
| 4. <i>Provisional or Special Students</i> | 9 |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 5. | <i>Uniform Credit System</i> | 9 |
| 6. | <i>Undergraduate Credit for Graduate Courses</i> | 9 |
| 7. | <i>Time Limit for Course Credit</i> | 9 |
| 8. | <i>Academic Progression</i> | 9 |
| 9. | <i>Language Requirements</i> | 10 |
| 10. | <i>Required Training</i> | 10 |
| C. | General Regulations and Requirements for Graduate Certificate Programs | 10 |
| 1. | <i>Certificates that appear on the transcript</i> | 10 |
| 2. | <i>Transcript Notation</i> | 11 |
| D. | General Regulations and Requirements for Master’s Degree Programs..... | 11 |
| 1. | <i>Admissions Requirements</i> | 11 |
| 2. | <i>Course Requirements</i> | 11 |
| 3. | <i>Comprehensive Examination</i> | 11 |
| 4. | <i>Thesis</i> | 11 |
| E. | General Regulations and Requirements for PlusOne Degree Combinations | 12 |
| 1. | <i>Credit Sharing</i> | 12 |
| 2. | <i>Use of Master’s-Level Credits Earned While in Undergraduate Status</i> | 12 |
| F. | General Regulations and Requirements for Professional Doctorate Degree Programs | 12 |
| 1. | <i>Admissions Requirements</i> | 12 |
| 2. | <i>Academic Classification and Degree Candidacy</i> | 13 |
| 3. | <i>Academic Residency Requirement</i> | 13 |
| 4. | <i>Responsible Conduct of Research</i> | 13 |
| 5. | <i>Course Requirements</i> | 13 |
| 6. | <i>Qualifying Examination(s)</i> | 14 |
| 7. | <i>Dissertation Committee</i> | 14 |
| 8. | <i>Comprehensive Examination</i> | 14 |
| 9. | <i>Thesis or Dissertation in Practice</i> | 14 |
| 10. | <i>Time Limitation for Achieving Candidacy and Degree Completion</i> | 14 |
| 11. | <i>Pursuit of an Academic Credential Outside Student’s Major</i> | 14 |
| G. | General Regulations and Requirements for the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study. | 15 |
| 1. | <i>Admissions Requirements</i> | 15 |

| | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 2. | <i>Course Requirements</i> | 15 |
| H. | General Regulations and Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)..... | 15 |
| 1. | <i>Admissions Requirements</i> | 15 |
| 2. | <i>Academic Classification and Degree Candidacy</i> | 15 |
| 3. | <i>Academic Residency Requirement</i> | 16 |
| 4. | <i>Responsible Conduct of Research</i> | 16 |
| 5. | <i>Course Requirements</i> | 16 |
| 6. | <i>Qualifying Examination(s)</i> | 16 |
| 7. | <i>Annual Review of Student Progress</i> | 16 |
| 8. | <i>PhD Dissertation Committee</i> | 17 |
| 9. | <i>Comprehensive Examination(s) and/or Proposal Defenses</i> | 17 |
| 10. | <i>Dissertation</i> | 17 |
| 11. | <i>Oral Defense of the Dissertation</i> | 17 |
| 12. | <i>Submission of the Dissertation</i> | 18 |
| 13. | <i>Time Limitation for Achieving Candidacy and Degree Completion</i> | 18 |
| 14. | <i>Pursuit of an Academic Credential Outside Student's Major</i> | 18 |
| I. | General Regulations and Requirements for Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees | 18 |
| 1. | <i>University-approved Interdisciplinary Programs</i> | 19 |
| 2. | <i>Individually Designed Interdisciplinary Programs</i> | 19 |
| V. | PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAM SUSPENSION, REINSTATEMENT AND ELIMINATION | 20 |
| A. | Definition of Suspension | 20 |
| B. | Proposal for Suspension or Elimination of a Program | 20 |
| C. | Procedures for Suspension and Reinstatement of a Program | 20 |
| D. | Procedures for Elimination of a Program | 21 |

I. MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL AND DEFINITIONS

A. Mission

The mission of the Graduate Council is to ensure the quality of Northeastern's graduate degree programs.

The Graduate Council, in its bylaws, establishes guidelines for the standards of new programs and expectations of existing ones.

B. Functions

The University Graduate Council is a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate that makes recommendations regarding the adoption of general academic policies and regulations with respect to the creation and governance of graduate programs. Specifically, the Council:

1. reviews and recommends for adoption general academic policies and regulations for the creation and governance of graduate programs at Northeastern University;
2. reviews proposals for graduate curriculum changes and makes recommendations regarding the proposals' adoption to the Faculty Senate. Such proposals can include, but are not limited to, any of the following items:
 - a. create, change, or delete courses, curricula, degree programs
 - b. eliminate overlapping courses
 - c. create, change, or delete interdisciplinary programs, and certificates
3. serves as a forum to address concerns that may arise involving courses or programs offered or proposed.

C. Definitions

In this document:

“College” refers to the College of Arts, Media and Design; the Bouvé College of Health Sciences; the D’Amore-McKim School of Business; the Khoury College of Computer Sciences; the College of Engineering; the College of Professional Studies; the College of Science; the College of Social Sciences and Humanities; and the School of Law.

“Graduate Office” refers to the designated graduate administration office in the College (as defined above).

“Graduate program” refers to all post-baccalaureate degree, non-degree and certificate programs and packages of courses offered for graduate credit. Graduate programs shall not include programs or courses that are offered by the School of Law in support of the J.D. or LL.M. degree.

“PlusOne program” refers to any program in which students accelerate the attainment of the post-baccalaureate degree by applying graduate credits taken as an undergraduate toward both the undergraduate and graduate degrees.

“Advanced standing credit” refers to credit awarded at the time of admission for prior learning that meets some portion of the content required by the program into which the student is admitted, but which is not transfer credit.

“Transfer credit” refers to graduate level credit award at the time of admission based on course equivalency under guidelines in these bylaws.

II. THE GRADUATE COUNCIL

A. Membership

The Graduate Council will consist of two representatives from each College: a faculty representative and the Associate Dean responsible for graduate studies. Representatives from the Registrar’s Office and the Library shall serve as non-voting members.

1. The faculty representative will be a full-time, benefits-eligible faculty member at the University. They will be elected by the faculty of the respective College under the auspices of the Faculty Senate. To be eligible to serve in this capacity, the faculty member will be actively engaged in graduate teaching and research.
2. The term of service for the faculty representative is three years. To ensure continuity, three members of the Council are replaced each academic year. Members are eligible to be re-elected for one additional, consecutive term of service.
3. The Provost or their designee will be an ex-officio member and will chair the Graduate Council. The Chair will be a non-voting member of the Graduate Council, except in those instances when their vote is required to break a tie. Other ex-officio, non-voting members (e.g., representatives of Registrar’s Office, Library, PhD Network) may be included at the discretion of the chair. For a meeting occurrence when the Chair cannot be present, they may appoint an acting chair to preside over that meeting. This shall be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.
4. The Chair will appoint a Secretary of the Graduate Council who will record the minutes and correspond with Council members under the Chair’s direction. The “Secretary” is not a member of the Council and need not be a faculty member.

Maintaining the membership roster and ensuring that vacancies in the Graduate Council are filled in a timely manner is the responsibility of the Senate Agenda Committee (SAC). During the spring semester of each year the SAC must inform each college of any expiring appointments and ensure that a replacement is chosen in a timely manner.

B. Procedures

1. Meetings

At a minimum, the Graduate Council will meet once per month during the academic year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. Prior to the start of the academic year, the Chair of the Graduate Council will distribute to all Colleges a list of dates when the Council will meet so that matters coming to the Council can be planned accordingly.

Additional meetings of the Council may also be called at the request of any three members of the Graduate Council. This request is to be addressed to the Chair.

Academic certificate and degree proposals shall be circulated to the Deans, the Associate Deans for Graduate Studies and the members of the Graduate Council at least ten (10) business days prior to the Council meeting at which the proposal will be discussed.

The agenda for each meeting of the Council shall be distributed to Council members and Associate Deans responsible for graduate affairs at least 3 days prior to the meeting.

A quorum will consist of two-thirds (12) of the voting members. Meetings will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

2. Guidelines for Proposals of New Programs

The Graduate Council will establish guidelines for program proposals.

3. Amendments to the Bylaws

Amendments to the Graduate Council Bylaws will be circulated at least ten (10) business days before the meeting of the Graduate Council for comment. Amendments to the bylaws are subsequently sent to the Faculty Senate for review and approval.

4. Repository of Graduate Council Records

The Graduate Council will maintain a repository of agendas, proposals, and resulting minutes, including a record of votes and other important archival information on the Graduate Council's activity. This repository will provide a permanent record of the business of the Graduate Council, and it will be maintained by the Office of the Provost.

III. APPROVAL OF NEW AND REVISED GRADUATE PROGRAMS

A. Process for Consideration

1. New Programs

The process for proposing and approving new graduate programs at Northeastern University is outlined in the New Degree Program Proposal Guidelines document, which is available on the Registrar's website. Permission to proceed with a new graduate program proposal must first be granted by the relevant College Dean and secondly by the Provost.

In the case of university-wide academic programs, proposals may be initiated at the Provost's Office level. After these two approvals have been granted, preparation of a full proposal for a new graduate program may commence.

Proposals for new PhD and non-research doctorate programs must identify an alternative academic credential that may be considered for conferral in those cases when the requirements for the PhD degree are not fulfilled, if such an alternative is appropriate.

2. Revisions to Existing Graduate Programs

For proposals that involve changes to existing programs, including but not limited to name changes, curricular modifications, credit requirements and other substantive changes, the Graduate Council will consider such changes as follows:

The Graduate Council will consider and vote on all program name changes and significant curricular modifications. Significant curricular modifications include: changes to the core requirements of the degree program; the addition or removal of courses that are reflected in transcriptable credentials (e.g., major, minor or concentration); the addition or removal of courses outside the program's home college from program core requirements or elective lists; and changes to the number of credits required to complete the degree.

The Graduate Council will be informed of any significant changes to elective lists that do not involve courses from outside the program's home college, or changes to non-transcriptable credentials within a graduate program (e.g., specializations). These actions will be included as administrative items on the Graduate Council agenda.

The Graduate Council will consider new courses and substantive changes to individual courses brought forward through the curriculum workflow system (Courseleaf or successor system) and placed into either a consent or extracted for regular agenda deliberation.

Revisions not explicitly covered by III.A.2 shall be considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Provost or their designee.

B. Levels of Approval

1. Program, Departmental, and School Approvals

The approval process at the program, department and School levels, as appropriate and specified in Section III.A, is specific to those respective units, but must include a positive vote of the faculty at one or more of these levels in order for the proposal to be forwarded to the college level. In the case of university-wide academic programs, proposals may start the approval process at the Graduate Council. At all stages of approval, the vote count and date of the vote(s) shall be recorded in Courseleaf (or successor system).

2. College Approval of Final Program Proposal

College approval of the final proposal to establish a new graduate program is required using a college faculty-approved process. Section V provides further guidance for approval of interdisciplinary programs. During the regular academic year, approval or denial of a proposal at any level of college consideration, with a brief justification, should be issued to the unit that generated the proposal within forty-five calendar days of submission of the proposal.

The College Dean or Graduate Associate Dean is responsible for transmitting the college-approved proposal to the Provost's Office. If overlap with one or more colleges is anticipated, the deans should discuss at this time so that any objections are heard and possibly remediated before submission. The Provost should be made aware of these discussions.

3. University Approval Process for New Programs

The department chair and the graduate coordinator (depending on the program unit structure) of the proposing unit shall present the program on behalf of the unit(s) at the Graduate Council meeting in which the proposal is considered. The College-approved proposal is reviewed and voted upon by the Graduate Council and reviewed by the Provost's Office. Provided that the vote of the Graduate Council is positive and the Provost's Office approves the proposal, it is then forwarded to the Faculty Senate with a recommendation.

At each stage of the approval process, the record of the actions at all previous stages, including the votes, shall accompany the proposal. It is the responsibility of the Associate Dean for Graduate Education or unit proposing the new degree to monitor the progress of the proposal.

Before the proposal is sent to the Senate, the chair of the Graduate Council will consult with the Provost and relevant Dean(s) regarding the proposal and finalize any remaining details. This review should take place within 10 calendar days of the proposal having been reviewed and voted upon by the Graduate Council. If the Provost approves the program proposal in its final form it is forwarded to the Faculty Senate for review and recommendation.

The new program proposal is reviewed by and voted upon by the Faculty Senate, and if approved, forwarded to the Provost for consideration and, upon approval, to the Board of Trustees for consideration and vote.

A negative decision at any stage of review precludes the program proposal from further consideration.

IV. GENERAL REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Part IV describes regulations and requirements for all graduate degree and non-degree programs. Additional regulations and requirements may be found in the University Graduate Catalog. Program-specific policies that are not addressed by the Graduate Council bylaws must be made available, in writing, to students in the program.

A. Guidelines for Degree Designations for Graduate Programs

Degree designations should follow discipline-normed standards, as well as higher education standard conventions. Any deviation from these guidelines should be justified in the program proposal.

1. Degree Designation for Master's Programs

There are a number of naming conventions for master's programs. In the case of Master of Arts and Master of Science, these degrees may or may not be designated (e.g., Master of Science in Chemical Engineering is a designated degree). The name(s) should follow established practice in the academic and professional area to be served, including consideration for accreditation and credentialing.

2. Selection of Name

The norms will be adhered to in the naming of degree programs:

- a. If the degree program is in the sciences or engineering, then the name of the degree programs should be Master of Science.
- b. If the degree program is in the arts or humanities, then the name of the degree program should be Master of Arts.
- c. If the degree program is practice-oriented, either with no explicit scientific methodology, or with a method that is derived from practice rather than taught as preparation for practice and/or focuses upon a particular professional area, then it should be considered a professional program. This type of program is similar in all other respects to an MA or MS except for the professional orientation noted above: e.g., Master of Professional Studies, Master of Business Administration, Master of Laws, Master of Legal Studies.
- d. If the degree program is in the social sciences and requires a scientific methodology, where this qualification is taken to mean the knowledge and rigorous application of the principles of orderly investigation to the phenomena of nature and human experience, then the name of the degree program should be Master of Science or Master of Arts, depending on the norms in the discipline.

3. Degree Designation for PhD Programs

The Graduate Council sets forth the criteria a program must meet to qualify as a doctoral program. These guidelines address the choice between names for a research doctoral program. Broadly, the choice is between the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and more specified doctoral degrees, e.g. Doctor of Science (ScD).

As with the decision regarding designated versus undesignated master's degrees, accepted practice and professional recognition and credentialing must be strong considerations in the choice. To offer a PhD degree, a program must be primarily oriented toward research and require a dissertation.

4. Degree Designation for Non-PhD Programs

Doctoral Programs which are practice- or clinically-oriented, and do not require a dissertation presenting original and independent research, are considered clinical or professional doctoral programs, and should be so designated. While fully recognized at commencement, graduates of these programs are not individually hooded at the University hooding ceremony. These degrees include, but are not limited to: Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Audiology (AuD), Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), and Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), Doctor of Law and Policy (DLP).

B. Regulations Applying to All Graduate Degree Programs

A copy of each graduate degree program as approved by the Board of Trustees and as officially amended is on file in the Office of the Provost. This record contains the goals, learning objectives, and all requirements for the program. All descriptions of the program in the University, college and department publications must conform to this officially approved record.

Standards of admission are specific to certificate and degree programs and are found in the graduate portion of each college's and/or offering unit's website.

1. Admissions Requirements

Prior to beginning a graduate program at Northeastern, students must have:

- a. received a bachelor's degree or equivalent from an accredited college or university;
- b. received a master's degree or equivalent degree from an accredited college or university; or,
- c. received a first professional or equivalent degree from an accredited college or university; or,
- d. been accepted into an approved bachelors-to-graduate-degree program at Northeastern or in conjunction with an affiliated institution.

2. Transfer and other Advanced Standing Credit

Transfer credits from other institutions (or other programs within the University) will only be accepted at the discretion of the student's destination academic unit and the associated College with the following constraints:

- a. For graduate certificate programs, a maximum of 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours of credit earned at another institution may be accepted towards the credential being pursued at Northeastern, provided the credits meet the above listed standards.

- b. For master's degree programs, a maximum of 9 semester hours or 12 quarter hours of credit earned at another institution may be accepted towards the degree being pursued at Northeastern, provided the credits:
 - i. consist of work taken at the graduate level for graduate credit,
 - ii. carry grades of 3.000 or better,
 - iii. have been earned at an accredited institution,
 - iv. have not been used toward any baccalaureate or advanced degree or certificate at another institution.

Advanced standing is based on criteria established by the offering school or college and implemented in coordination with the Registrar.

The combination of advanced standing and transfer credit shall not exceed 30 percent of the credits required for the degree. Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is limited to 25 percent of the degree credits.

Graduate course credits earned at Northeastern by undergraduate students enrolled in a PlusOne program will be applied toward both the undergraduate and graduate degrees as prescribed by the graduate program in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed 16 semester hours or 21 quarter hours. Transfer credit may not be applied to graduate degrees that are completed as part of a PlusOne program.

- c. For doctoral programs, a maximum of 30 percent of the total semester or quarter hours of required coursework may be granted upon the recommendation of the admitting college's graduate committee, subject to the conditions in IV.B.2.b.

Transfer credits must have been earned within five academic years of the date of matriculation in the Northeastern program to which they are to be applied.

Grades earned in courses to be applied as transfer credits are not counted as part of the overall grade point average earned at Northeastern and are posted with a grade of "T" to the transcript.

3. Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements with other institutions may include specified credit-sharing arrangements. For joint accelerated Master's (so-called "PlusOne") program agreements, up to 16 semester hours or 21 quarter hours may be shared between the undergraduate and Master's degree requirements. Prior to final approval and execution, any and all articulation agreements shall be brought forward to the Graduate Council for information and discussion, and then must be approved and signed by the Provost. Approved agreements shall be included in the year-end report of Graduate Council actions submitted to the Faculty Senate.

4. Provisional or Special Students

Some applicants may be accepted as provisional, not to exceed two terms, in order to meet specific admissions requirement(s) as specified by the graduate program. Special students are non-degree students taking courses, not to exceed 12 semester or 16 quarter hours, while not admitted to a specific program.

5. Uniform Credit System

One credit hour of academic credit consists of three hours of work per week throughout the term, usually one hour of class contact and two hours of outside work. When students are registered for thesis credits, directed study or internship, the appropriate number of credit hours will be determined using the same method. Programs may vary the ratio of class time to preparation time depending on the learning outcomes and accreditation standards appropriate in their field(s).

A quarter hour is evaluated as three-quarters of a semester hour.

When students are registered for thesis credits, directed study, or internship, the appropriate number of credit hours will be determined using the same method.

6. Undergraduate Credit for Graduate Courses

Undergraduate students who have achieved junior or senior status may enroll in graduate courses for credit toward their undergraduate degrees if they meet all prerequisites as determined by the Graduate Director and they receive permission from the instructor of the course and from the student's undergraduate academic advisor.

7. Time Limit for Course Credit

Course credits earned in the program of graduate study, or accepted by transfer, are valid for a maximum of seven years unless the relevant Graduate Office grants an extension.

8. Academic Progression

Grades submitted to satisfy, in whole or in part, the requirements for any graduate degree or certificate of advanced study must yield a cumulative grade point average of 3.000 or higher. This requirement may be supplemented by additional restrictions established by the graduate program or the college's Graduate Office such as, but not limited to, the maximum number of individual courses with grades below 3.000 that may be obtained without being required to withdraw or a minimum grade point average in each semester.

Students falling below 3.000 will be placed on academic probation and if the student remains on academic probation for 2 terms, they may be terminated from the graduate program. A Ph.D. student will be considered to be on academic probation if their cumulative grade point average falls below 3.000 and/or if they are not making acceptable

research progress as defined by the college through an academic review process that occurs at least annually.

No more than two courses may be repeated to satisfy the curricular requirements for the degree. A specific course may not be repeated more than once. The last grade earned in each of these repeated courses will be counted in the calculation of the cumulative grade point average. Courses with a specified attribute of “repeatable” can be repeated up to the specified limit, and the earned grade in each occurrence of course completion will count toward the calculation of the cumulative grade point average.

Any incomplete grades must be made up within one calendar year from the term in which the student took the class that resulted in the incomplete course grade.

9. Language Requirements

The committee in charge of the degree program may establish a language requirement.

10. Required Training

Graduate programs may require relevant training that all of the program’s students must complete.

C. General Regulations and Requirements for Graduate Certificate Programs

1. Certificates that appear on the transcript

a. Definition

A graduate certificate program is a program of study requiring at least three graduate courses and not fewer than 12 semester hours or 16 quarter hours of graduate credit. Successful completion of such a certificate program will be recorded on the student’s transcript. Appropriate graduate credits taken as part of a graduate certificate program may be counted towards a graduate degree, at the discretion of the graduate degree program.

b. Admission

All students admitted to a certificate program must satisfy the general requirements for admission as a graduate student and the requirements for the specific certificate program.

c. Procedures for the Approval of New Certificate Programs

New certificate programs are developed following the procedure outlined in the Guidelines for New Degree Programs found in the Office of the Provost website at:

<https://provost.northeastern.edu/policies/>.

If the certificate program is identified as a component of an existing master’s degree, following discussion and approval by the Graduate Council, additional approval by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees is not required. The Provost will notify the Faculty

Senate, President and Board of Trustees of the decision. Certificate programs that are comprised substantially of new courses follow the full approval process.

d. Procedures for Certificate Program Review

Certificate programs will be reviewed in the context of departmental reviews. Information about these reviews can be found in the Office of the Provost website at <https://provost.northeastern.edu/policies/>.

e. General Regulations

Except as indicated herein, certificate programs shall be subject to the same regulations and procedures as Master's Degree programs.

2. Transcript Notation

Only approved degrees, certificates and concentrations appear on the transcript.

D. General Regulations and Requirements for Master's Degree Programs

1. Admissions Requirements

All students admitted to a master's program must satisfy the general requirements for admission as a graduate student and the requirements for the specific master's program. To be eligible for admission, with the exception of PlusOne students, applicants must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

2. Course Requirements

A candidate for the Master's Degree must satisfactorily complete an approved program conforming to the requirements of the graduate school and department or program in which the candidate is registered.

The requirements for the master's degree are a minimum of 30 semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree except in the College of Professional Studies in which 45 quarter hours of graduate work are required.

Undergraduate level coursework will not be accepted to meet the requirements for the master's degree.

3. Comprehensive Examination

The committee in charge of the degree program may require a final written or oral comprehensive examination(s) for partial fulfillment of degree requirements.

4. Thesis

If a thesis is required in partial fulfillment of degree requirements, it must show independent work based, in part, on original material and must meet the approval of the student's thesis committee. The committee in charge of the degree program is responsible for providing instructions concerning preparation of the thesis.

The student must submit the thesis to ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) according to the time schedule provided by the relevant Graduate Office to allow for acceptance before the degree clearance deadline. Information on archiving a thesis is available in the relevant Graduate Office.

E. General Regulations and Requirements for PlusOne Degree Combinations

1. Credit Sharing

Not more than four graduate courses or sixteen semester hours (or 21 quarter hours), whichever is greater, taken while a student is in undergraduate status and participating in an accelerated Master's (so-called "PlusOne") program at Northeastern, may be used to satisfy the requirements for both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. Exceptions to this credit sharing limit (due to significantly higher credit requirements for the graduate degree or other special provisions) must be approved through governance processes.

2. Use of Master's-Level Credits Earned While in Undergraduate Status

Unless they have been accepted into and are enrolled in a designated PlusOne program before the undergraduate degree is conferred, students who took graduate classes to fulfill requirements toward an undergraduate degree at Northeastern may not use those credits later toward a Master's degree. If the student took graduate classes resulting in credits beyond those used for the undergraduate degree program (were not used in undergraduate degree audit), those credits may be considered for use toward a subsequent degree program. If course credits are used toward both the undergraduate and graduate degrees in a PlusOne, they cannot be used for other credentials (e.g., a certificate).

Graduate course credits 1) earned while a student was in undergraduate status and enrolled in a designated PlusOne program, 2) used to fulfill requirements toward the undergraduate degree, and 3) eligible to be applied toward the designated PlusOne Master's degree program, must be designated for such use within the subsequent 3 academic years after the student receives the bachelor's degree in which those credits were earned.

F. General Regulations and Requirements for Professional Doctorate Degree Programs

1. Admissions Requirements

All students admitted to a professional doctorate degree program must satisfy the general requirements for admission as a graduate student and the requirements for the specific professional doctorate degree program. To be eligible for admission, applicants must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

2. Academic Classification and Degree Candidacy

- a. Doctoral Student: Students in this classification have been admitted to a doctoral program.
- b. Doctoral Candidate: Each program in which the term “candidacy” is used shall have a policy defining candidacy. Students in this classification will have completed all departmental, college and university requirements except for the dissertation (if applicable). These requirements vary by program but minimally include completion of approximately 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours of acceptable graduate work beyond the bachelor’s degree or possession of a previously earned master’s degree that is acceptable to the department and certification by the Graduate Office. The requirements frequently include a comprehensive examination and/or a proposal defense.

3. Academic Residency Requirement

In the context of a doctoral degree program, the “residency requirement” refers to either:

- a. a minimum number of credits or semesters that must be completed at the degree-granting institution, or
- b. a minimum duration during which the degree candidate must be enrolled full-time at the degree-granting institution.

In those programs in which the term “candidacy” is used, after reaching candidacy, students must register for Dissertation for a minimum of two semesters in order to fulfill their formal residency requirement. Continuation status enrollment is for students who are post-candidacy, have completed all coursework and their residency requirement, and are actively engaged in completing a dissertation.

4. Responsible Conduct of Research

All doctoral students for whom Responsible Conduct of Research training is required must complete training according to the University’s Policy on the [Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

5. Course Requirements

A student enrolled in a professional doctorate degree must satisfactorily complete an approved program conforming to the requirements of the graduate school and department or program in which the candidate is registered.

The requirements for the professional doctorate degree shall be determined by the program.

Undergraduate level coursework will not be accepted to meet the requirements for the professional doctorate degree.

6. Qualifying Examination(s)

In departments that require qualifying examinations, students must be notified in writing of the nature and regulations governing these examinations and of how their performance on the examinations will affect their normal progress towards the degree. The Graduate Office shall be made aware of the department regulations concerning such examinations.

7. Dissertation Committee

For programs requiring the dissertation, the dissertation committee shall have at least three members, two of whom shall be from Northeastern University. The chair of the dissertation committee will be a faculty of Northeastern University and will hold an appropriate terminal degree for the discipline. Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the dean of the relevant college (or their designee) based on the qualifications and experience of the faculty member who would serve as chair.

8. Comprehensive Examination

For programs requiring a comprehensive examination, the committee in charge of the degree program may require a final written or oral comprehensive examination(s) for partial fulfillment of degree requirements.

9. Thesis or Dissertation in Practice

If a thesis or dissertation in practice is required in partial fulfillment of degree requirements, it must show independent work based, in part, on original material and must meet the approval of the student's committee. The committee in charge of the degree program is responsible for providing instructions concerning preparation of the thesis or dissertation in practice.

The student must submit the thesis to ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) for archiving in sufficient time to allow for acceptance before the degree clearance deadline. Information on archiving a thesis is available in the Graduate Office.

10. Time Limitation for Achieving Candidacy and Degree Completion

For programs in which the term "candidacy" is used, degree candidacy must be achieved within three years of entering the doctoral program. For all programs, the degree must be completed within seven years after entering the program. A student may request an extension of these timeframes from the home college Graduate Office.

11. Pursuit of an Academic Credential Outside Student's Major

A student enrolled in a doctoral program may seek to pursue academic credentials (e.g., Master's degree or certificate) outside of their major only if, prior to completing more than one-third of the required credits for that credential, they: 1) obtain the approval of their primary advisor; 2) obtain the approval of their home college Graduate Office; and 3) apply to and are accepted into the major offering that credential.

G. General Regulations and Requirements for the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study

The Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) provides specialized study above the master's degree. It is a course of study that falls between the masters and doctoral degree and culminates in a graduate certificate.

1. Admissions Requirements

An applicant for the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study must hold a Master's Degree in a related field from an accredited institution and must complete the admission procedure described in the material of the graduate schools. All students admitted to a CAGS program must satisfy the general requirements for admission as a graduate student and the requirements for the specific CAGS program.

2. Course Requirements

A candidate for the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study must satisfactorily complete an approved program conforming to the requirements of the graduate school and department or program in which the candidate is registered. The candidate must complete a minimum of 24 semester hours or, in the case of the College of Professional Studies, 32 quarter hours of credit beyond the Master's degree.

H. General Regulations and Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

The formal requirements for the PhD degree are the following: completion of the coursework mandated by the individual degree program, fulfillment of the residency requirement, achieving sufficient progress in degree milestones specified by the relevant PhD program, formal training in the Responsible Conduct of Research for students as appropriate, qualifying and/or comprehensive examination(s) or equivalent if required by the degree program, a final oral examination conducted by the student's PhD committee and submission of a dissertation to the relevant Graduate Office and to ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) for archiving. The dissertation must be based on original and independent research.

1. Admissions Requirements

All students admitted to a Doctor of Philosophy program must satisfy the general requirements for admission as a graduate student and the requirements for the specific PhD program.

2. Academic Classification and Degree Candidacy

a. Doctoral Student: Students in this classification have been admitted to a doctoral program.

b. Doctoral Candidate: Every degree program shall have a policy defining candidacy. Students in this classification will have completed all departmental, college and university requirements except for the dissertation. These requirements vary by program but

minimally include completion of approximately 30 semester hours of acceptable graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree or possession of a previously earned master's degree that is acceptable to the department and certification by the Graduate Office. The requirements frequently include a comprehensive examination and/or a proposal defense.

3. Academic Residency Requirement

In the context of a doctoral degree program, the "residency requirement" refers to either:

- a. a minimum number of credits or semesters that must be completed at the degree-granting institution, or
- b. a minimum duration during which the degree candidate must be enrolled full-time at the degree-granting institution.

After reaching candidacy, students must register for Dissertation for a minimum of two semesters in order to fulfill their formal residency requirement. Continuation status enrollment is for students who are post-candidacy, have completed all coursework and their residency requirement, and are actively engaged in completing a dissertation.

4. Responsible Conduct of Research

All doctoral students for whom Responsible Conduct of Research training is required must complete training according to the University's Policy on the [Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

5. Course Requirements

The program committee in charge of the degree program specifies the doctoral course requirements.

6. Qualifying Examination(s)

In departments that require qualifying examinations, students must be notified in writing of the nature and regulations governing these examinations and of how their performance on the examinations will affect their normal progress towards the degree. The Graduate Office shall be made aware of the department regulations concerning such examinations.

7. Annual Review of Student Progress

Units shall define milestones for achieving satisfactory academic progress and shall establish a published process by which the academic progress of every PhD student will be evaluated through an annual review. A copy of each review shall be submitted to the student and the Graduate Office. If the annual academic review reports that a student is not making sufficient academic progress due to research performance, the PhD student will be placed on academic probation. After two consecutive semesters on academic probation, the student may be dismissed.

8. PhD Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee shall have at least three faculty members, two of whom shall be from Northeastern University. The chair of the dissertation committee (who is presumed to be the thesis advisor) will be a full-time tenured or tenure-track member of the faculty of Northeastern University and will hold a PhD (or other research doctorate) or an appropriate terminal degree for the discipline. Colleges may permit full-time faculty from other ranks to serve in this role based on the research qualifications and experience of individual faculty members.

The PhD committee should be appointed early enough to advise in the formulation of the student's program and in refining the research topic for the dissertation. Within the constraints of the above criteria, the PhD program faculty will determine the process by which dissertation committees are established. The final list of dissertation committee members shall be reported to the college's Associate Dean for Graduate Education or unit managing the degree program.

If a student's major advisor leaves Northeastern (including transition to emeritus status), that person may continue the research direction of the dissertation or thesis. However, a co-advisor must be appointed from the academic department or program. The student will then have two advisors, one an official member of the Northeastern faculty who will be available for research and administrative matters and the ex-Northeastern advisor. If a new major advisor is appointed, the former Northeastern faculty member may serve as an outside member of the committee.

9. Comprehensive Examination(s) and/or Proposal Defenses

Degree programs may require a comprehensive examination(s) and/or an oral defense of the dissertation proposal as the final step before becoming a PhD candidate. The purpose of the comprehensive examination(s) is to test the knowledge and skills of the student in a particular area and his/her knowledge of recent research developments in the field. The administrative home unit for each PhD program shall establish the process by which comprehensive examination committees are established. Units may require an oral defense of the dissertation proposal in lieu of, or in addition to, a comprehensive examination.

10. Dissertation

Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy must complete a dissertation that embodies the results of extended research and makes an original contribution to the field.

11. Oral Defense of the Dissertation

An oral defense of the dissertation is required and must be held at least 14 calendar days before the degree conferral date. The defense shall be public and conducted with the committee members present either in person or via electronic means. After the public session, a private session may be held to examine material that is subject to a

confidentiality agreement. Following the presentation, the candidate will field questions from the committee in public or private. In the case where neither the candidate nor the committee members are present in person on campus (i.e., the candidate and all committee members are connected only remotely via electronic means), there shall be a location established and technology enabled for public, in person attendance of the defense by the University community, and this accommodation made known to the University.

12. Submission of the Dissertation

The student must submit the dissertation to ProQuest (or a University-sanctioned successor system) according to the time schedule provided by the relevant Graduate Office to allow for acceptance before the commencement clearance deadline.

13. Time Limitation for Achieving Candidacy and Degree Completion

Degree candidacy must be achieved within three years of entering the PhD program, and the PhD degree must be completed within seven years after entering the PhD program. A student may request an extension of these timeframes from the home college Graduate Office.

14. Pursuit of an Academic Credential Outside Student's Major

A student enrolled in a PhD program may seek to pursue academic credentials (e.g., Master's degree or certificate) outside of their major only if, prior to completing more than one-third of the required credits for that credential, they: 1) obtain the approval of their primary advisor; 2) obtain the approval of their home college Graduate Office; and 3) apply to and are accepted into the major offering that credential.

I. General Regulations and Requirements for Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees

Northeastern University offers individually designed and approved interdisciplinary graduate programs. The individually designed program is for the student who wishes to pursue graduate studies in an area that substantially overlaps two or more units. In such cases, that student may design, in consultation with his or her faculty advisor(s), an interdisciplinary program. The program will correspond in scope and depth to Northeastern's established degree standards but need not agree exactly with the regulations of individual units. Individually designed, interdisciplinary degree programs must be approved by the appropriate Graduate Office(s).

There are also approved, specified interdisciplinary programs in which two or more units have jointly established a graduate program. As with individually designed programs, such approved, specified programs must correspond to Northeastern's established degree standards, but may not agree exactly with the regulations of individual units.

The general regulations and requirements for graduate programs (Sections IV. A. – F.) apply to interdisciplinary programs. Additional requirements are put forth in the following sections.

1. University-approved Interdisciplinary Programs

Interdisciplinary programs are University-approved programs in areas of study that combine study in two or more units and have a specified curriculum.

Each interdisciplinary graduate program shall be managed as established in the approved design of the program. All interdisciplinary programs, both masters and PhD, shall identify a committee with representation from all of the units involved to oversee the administration of the program in accordance with the guidelines established in Section IV. A-G. All administrative details, including but not limited to, admission, probation notification and graduation clearance, shall be carried out by the unit designated as the administrative home. Curriculum design and any subsequent modifications to a program shall be approved by the established procedures within all of the units involved.

2. Individually Designed Interdisciplinary Programs

In order to pursue an individually designed, interdisciplinary graduate program, a student must have been accepted into an approved graduate program that will serve as the administrative home unit for the interdisciplinary program.

Successful application for admission to an individually designed interdisciplinary program consists of a written proposal describing the areas of proposed study and research. Part of this proposal will be a list of courses to be taken; a description of the qualifying and comprehensive examination process to be used, if any; a timeline; and any other requirements of the program. This proposal must be designed and prepared in consultation with a faculty member at Northeastern University who is qualified to serve as the thesis or dissertation advisor (see Section IV.F.6). At least two units must participate in order for the proposal to be deemed interdisciplinary. The proposal must correspond in scope and depth to Northeastern's established degree standards. All of the units and the respective Associate Dean(s) for Graduate Education of the participating college(s) must approve the proposal. Approval of the proposal indicates that appropriate curricular and other academic norms for the specified degree are satisfied. A proposal for a PhD must define an area of study in which original and independent research can take place.

Admission of the student to the interdisciplinary program of study requires favorable recommendation by all units involved, including the administrative home unit. It also requires the commitment by a faculty member at Northeastern University to be the advisor of the student and Chair of the interdisciplinary committee for the student. In the case of an interdisciplinary PhD program, this faculty member must meet the qualifications defined in Section IV.C.2. This faculty member may or may not be a member of the

administrative home unit. The committee must be assembled within the first semester of the program and must include faculty members from all of the participating units. At least two units must be represented on the committee. This committee will be responsible for overseeing the completion of the degree requirements. It will also be responsible for the administrative elements of the program, such as the monitoring of satisfactory progress; the design and grading of the preliminary and comprehensive exams, if applicable; graduation clearance; etc. This interdisciplinary committee is also responsible for an annual review of the progress of the student and for reporting this progress to the administrative home unit on an annual basis.

V. PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAM SUSPENSION, REINSTATEMENT AND ELIMINATION

A. Definition of Suspension

The purpose of suspension is to allow a unit to remedy problems within a program or to consider the program for elimination at a later date. If a program is in suspension, it means that the unit may no longer recruit or accept students into that specific program. Suspending admissions to a program and suspending a program are identical actions. Students already in the program must be allowed to complete the program within a reasonable period of time and the unit must make provisions to educate the students in a manner consistent with the curriculum in effect when the students entered the program.

B. Proposal for Suspension or Elimination of a Program

A recommendation for suspension or elimination of a program should address the following information:

1. The reasons for the specific request, accompanied by data, including enrollment data.
2. Plan for students currently in the program to complete their program of study.
3. Impacts of the suspension or elimination on faculty affiliated with the program.
4. Impacts on courses included in other programs' curricula.
5. In the case of suspension, a statement of conditions necessary for reinstatement.

Proposals should follow specific guidelines provided on the Registrar's website.

C. Procedures for Suspension and Reinstatement of a Program

A proposal to suspend a program may be initiated by the faculty of the department in which the program resides, by the Dean of the parent College, or by the Provost. If the faculty of the department or unit initiates the suspension, the faculty of the College in which the program resides as well as the faculty of the unit that houses the program must vote to approve the suspension. The Provost and the Chair of the Graduate Council must be notified in writing with reasons for the suspension. The reasons for the suspension must accompany the form.

A program that has been placed on suspension may be proposed for reinstatement. Reinstatement shall be proposed by the department, Dean or Provost who proposed the suspension of the program. The faculty of the department or unit and the faculty of the College within which the program resides must vote to approve the reinstatement. The Provost and Chair of the Graduate Council must be notified in writing of the reinstatement and of the reasons for it.

A program may also be proposed for suspension or reinstatement by the Provost, the Dean of the College in which the program resides, or the faculty of the unit in which the program resides. A procedure analogous to the procedure for elimination, found in Section VI.D. below, shall be followed except that in this case, action by the Faculty Senate is final. No action by the President or Board of Trustees is needed. The recommendation for reinstatement must demonstrate that the conditions set in the original recommendation for suspension have been satisfied. In this case, the reinstatement must be voted on by the same bodies that voted on the suspension.

A program that has been suspended for five years shall be considered for elimination using the procedure described in Section VI.D below.

D. Procedures for Elimination of a Program

A program may be recommended for elimination by vote of the faculty of the unit offering the program. It may also be recommended for elimination by the Dean of the College in which the program resides or by the Provost. The recommendations should follow the guidelines listed below.

1. The proposal shall be considered and voted upon by the faculty of the department/unit in which the program resides.
2. The proposal shall be considered and voted upon by the faculty of the College in which it resides.
3. The proposal shall be transmitted to the Graduate Council, which may choose to study the request or appoint an ad hoc committee to do so. If an ad hoc committee is established, it will convey its recommendation to the Graduate Council.
4. The Graduate Council will convey the proposal and their recommendation to the Faculty Senate, which shall consider it and vote upon it. If the Senate does not approve the proposal, it shall not go forward.
5. If the Senate approves the proposal, it shall be transmitted to the Provost.
6. At each stage the record of the actions at all previous stages, including the votes of relevant governing committees, shall accompany the proposal. It is the responsibility of the Associate Dean for Graduate Education to monitor the progress of the proposal.