Guidelines for Graduate Programs
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1. Introduction

The Benjamin M. Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources (Statler College) at West Virginia University (WVU) is authorized to admit qualified students to graduate programs that lead to successful completion of the degrees of master’s of science (M.S.) and doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.). The guidelines presented here, in conjunction with the University Graduate Catalog and departmental guidelines, describe in detail the minimum College requirements for the above mentioned degrees.

Each department and program within a department may impose stricter requirements than those required by the College. These requirements are listed in the department guidelines and procedures, and are available on the department website to prospective and current students.

1.1 Roles of the Faculty, College, and University

The research and course work requirements of students are administered through research advisors, Advisory and Examining Committees, academic advisors, and graduate program coordinators in the various departments.

- The **academic advisor** is the faculty member that approves the student’s course selections each semester, approves registration and add/drop forms, and maintains the student's files.
- The **Advisory and Examining Committee** (AEC) advises the student in the selection of courses and in the conduct of the student's research program. The AEC also evaluates the technical quality of the student's research, decides whether to admit the student to candidacy (Ph.D. only), and evaluates the final thesis or dissertation. Normally, the chairman of the AEC is also the director of the student's research (Research Advisor).
- The **graduate program coordinator** is the person designated by the department chair to assure that the regulations governing the student's graduate program have been fulfilled.

The roles of the research advisor, academic advisor, AEC chair, and graduate program coordinator may be vested in one to four individuals, depending on the policies of the individual department.

The administration and oversight of the departments and programs are guided through the department chair, College dean, Office of Student Services, Office of the University Registrar, and Office of Admissions.

- The **Department Chair** and the **College Dean** are responsible for ensuring that the guidelines are followed by all parties. The Dean may delegate certain tasks to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or to a specified faculty member if there is a special need.
- The **Statler College Office of Student Services** is the unit the College dean delegate’s responsibility to ensuring that the guidelines are followed by student and faculty.
- The **Office of the University Registrar** (OUR) oversees graduation/degree audits, registration, grading, and all academic record-keeping for the University.
- The University's **Office of Admissions** manages all applications for the University. Applications, transcripts, and standardized test scores will be submitted to WVU Admissions.
1.2 Degrees Offered

The degrees offered by the Statler College, as well as all degrees offered by West Virginia University are listed on the University's Academic Programs and Majors list.

2. Admission

To enter any of the degree programs, a prospective student must first submit to the WVU Office of Admissions a completed online application, and include:

- Original, official transcripts of all college work attempted
- English proficiency test scores, for international applicants, as required by WVU
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, if required by the program

Depending on the requirements of specific programs, prospective students may also have to submit additional material, such as:

- A resume
- Statement of purpose (typically one page), providing any additional information that would help the Admissions Committee in determining the applicant’s suitability
- Letters of reference, as specified by the program

2.1 Eligibility

There are three types of master’s degrees granted in the Statler College:

1) Master of Science in an engineering discipline – The Master of Science degree in an engineering discipline requires an undergraduate degree in the same discipline, or closely allied discipline with appropriate remedial course work determined by the department.
2) Master of Science in engineering – The Master of Science in engineering degree is intended for students who wish to earn an engineering master’s degree but do not have an undergraduate degree in the same field or a closely aligned field.
3) Master of Science in an Applied Science area – The applied science master’s programs are intended for students wishing to obtain a master’s degree in one of these non-engineering disciplines (Safety Management, Software Engineering, and Computer Science).

For these degree programs, students will normally be required to obtain a baccalaureate level of proficiency in subjects directly related to their area of graduate study by taking undergraduate prerequisite courses, either prior to starting or as an integral part of their degree program. The degree designation and additional course requirements will be determined by the department admitting the student. The two types of engineering degrees both require a calculus-based undergraduate education in an accredited program or an internationally recognized program. The applied science areas do not.
Students who do not hold a correspondingly named bachelor’s degree may be admitted into either a discipline-designated program or the undesignated Master of Science in engineering degree program, depending on their credentials.

Additionally, there are three types of doctoral degrees granted in the Statler College:

1) **Doctor of Philosophy in an Engineering discipline** – To be eligible for admission into an engineering Doctorate of Philosophy program, a candidate is expected to hold or expect to have received, by the time of enrollment, a B.S. or an M.S. degree in:
   - Some discipline of Engineering from an institution which has an ABET-accredited program in that discipline, or which has an internationally recognized program in Engineering or Mineral Resources
   - Mathematics/Physical Sciences (as specified by individual programs)

2) **Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science** – To be eligible for admission into the Computer Sciences Doctorate of Philosophy program, a candidate is expected to hold a B.S. or an M.S. degree in:
   - Computer Science, Engineering, or
   - Mathematics/Physical Sciences (as specified by the program)

3) **Doctor of Philosophy in Occupational Safety and Health** – To be eligible for admission into the Occupational Safety and Health Doctorate of Philosophy program, a candidate is expected to hold a B.S. or an M.S. degree in:
   - Industrial Hygiene, Safety Management, Engineering, or
   - Mathematics/Physical/Life Sciences (as specified by the program)

For potential doctoral students, although a bachelor’s degree is the minimum requirement, applicants are normally encouraged to hold a master’s degree in a relevant discipline.

### 2.2 Test Scores

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) is required for all applicants from countries where the native language is not English. The College minimum scores for these tests are the same as those of the University, which can be found at WVU Admission website. This requirement will be waived for students who have recently completed a four-year bachelor’s degree in the United States.

At the discretion of the admitting program, applications may be considered from students who lack adequate TOEFL or IELTS scores, provided they intend to enroll in the WVU Intensive English Program (IEP). Successful completion of the IEP is required for enrollment into any academic program.
Departments or programs may also require applicants to submit scores achieved in the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Failure to achieve minimum required levels may be used as basis to reject applicants or to assign them to provisional status.

### 2.3 Entrance and Classification

Not all students who meet minimum College and program requirements will necessarily be accepted. Faculty members in a given graduate program have the right to set standards and conditions more restrictive than those set forth in these guidelines and the right to limit enrollment. For example, a program may choose to reject an applicant because his or her goals are not perceived to match the current needs and resources of the program. Similarly, although a student may be admitted solely for the purpose of enrolling in advanced coursework (e.g., non-degree students); program faculty may decline to allow that student to continue towards a degree even though the student has completed all required coursework successfully.

Students admitted to a graduate program will be classified in one of the following categories:

1) **Regular** – To be admitted as a regular graduate student, an applicant must have an equivalent grade point average (GPA) of 3.0/4.0 or better in all previous college work, and must meet all other requirements set by the department or program, including minimum GRE scores. Any exceptions to the stated requirements must be approved by the Dean.

2) **Provisional** – An applicant not qualifying for the regular graduate student admission status, either due to insufficient GPA, insufficient GRE scores, incomplete credentials, or inadequate academic background, may be admitted as a provisional student.
   - Any applicant with a GPA below 2.75 in any previous college work cannot be admitted without special approval from the Dean. Applications will be returned to the program coordinator if the application shows a GPA less than 2.75 unless it is accompanied by a signed approval from the Dean. Students are notified of their provisional status by WVU’s Office of Admissions.
   - The admitting program is responsible for communicating to the student the requirements they must meet before attaining regular status. The *Provisional Student Notification of Requirements Form* must be used for this purpose. One copy of the notification should be given to the student, another kept in the student’s files, and a third given to the Dean’s office.

3) **Non-degree** – A student who is not deemed qualified for admission to regular or provisional status, or who does not desire to pursue a degree, may be admitted as a non-degree student. Each department determines the minimum qualification requirements for admission as non-degree students. Such students are allowed to take graduate courses but are not allowed to pursue a graduate degree.

Admission to a Ph.D. program does not confer or guarantee candidacy for the Ph.D., which requires a separate decision.
2.4 Intra-University Transfer

A student may initiate a transfer to another department within the College or another program within the University by contacting the graduate program coordinator in the department in which the student is currently enrolled, and the Dean’s Office. The department’s graduate program coordinator will then send the student's departmental file, along with an Academic Status Update form to the program that the student is interested in transferring to.

After a decision is made by the new department to accept the transfer, the Academic Status Update form is returned to the Statler College Office of Student Services and the departmental file is transferred to the new academic unit. If not, the departmental file is returned to the department originating the request, and the student may remain in that department.

2.5 Second Degree Masters Students

A student desiring to obtain more than one master’s degree, either enrolled concurrently or returning after earning a master’s degree at WVU, may use up to 25% of previous graduate level coursework towards the second degree. The Approval for Second/Concurrent WVU Master Degree form must be completed for this coursework and needs to be approved by the degree-granting unit. The student must successfully complete additional credit hours so as to constitute the remaining 75% of the credit hours required by the additional master’s degree. Individual departments or programs may require higher percentages of original coursework to be earned for a second degree.

3. Academic Status

There are two categories of status: regular/non-degree and provisional. The requirements to continue as a student for each category are discussed next. The following section discusses requirements to change status from provisional to regular.

3.1 Requirements for Each Status

The minimum academic standards for students are as follows:

- **Regular and Non-degree** – To be in good standing, a regular or non-degree student must maintain at least cumulative GPA of 3.0/4.0 grade point average throughout the time enrolled in graduate work. A student failing to achieve this standard will be placed on probation.
- **Provisional** – A student not admitted as a regular or non-degree will be admitted as provisional. A provisional student must obtain and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0/4.0 after the completion of the first 9 credit hours of graduate study or he/she will become eligible for suspension.
3.2 Change of Status

Change of status from provisional to regular may be made for a student with a cumulative GPA of 3.0/4.0 or higher for graduate courses when the student has met the conditions outlined in his/her conditions for acceptance as a provisional student.

For provisional students, by the end of the semester in which the 18th credit hour is completed, the student must be elevated to regular student status, and then the regulations governing good standing for regular students will apply. Failure to meet the provisions of admission, or failure to achieve the required grade point average, will result in suspension.

A non-degree student seeking admission to a graduate program must apply to the specific program. A maximum of 12 credit hours of coursework can be applied toward fulfilling a degree requirement if approved by the graduate program coordinator for that program.

3.3 Probation and Suspension

Graduate students are placed on probation the semester after their cumulative GPA falls below 3.0/4.0. Additionally, a grade of unsatisfactory (“U”) in graduate-level research (697 or 797) makes the student eligible for probation. Two consecutive grades of “U” in research make the student eligible for suspension.

Otherwise, College policies regarding probation and suspension mirror those set by the University.

3.4 Full-time/Part-time

A student is classified as either full-time or part-time in any given enrollment period. A graduate student is classified as full-time if enrolled for at least 9 credit hours during each of the fall and spring semesters and at least 6 credit hours during the summer semester.

3.5 Withdrawal from the University

A graduate student seeking to withdraw from the University must follow the established University procedures. The student must report to the Office of the University Registrar, which will direct the student to the appropriate office(s).

4. Program Requirements

4.1 Degree Options and Hours

For master’s students, the College faculty believes that the desirable characteristics of graduate education are the experience gained in advanced coursework and performing and reporting on a
research endeavor. Consistent with that philosophy, the College is authorized to grant master’s degrees under each of the following three options:

1) **Thesis Option** – This option requires a minimum of 24 credit hours of course work and at least 6 credit hours of research leading to the thesis.
2) **Problem Report Option** – This option requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of course work and at least 3 credit hours of a research or design project leading to a formal written report.
3) **Course Work Option** – This option requires a minimum of 33 credit hours of course work. In addition, the department must require successful completion of a written or oral comprehensive examination. The department or program can choose to offer students within a designated program the course work only option, where courses are determined by the program or the AEC.

For Ph.D. students, the College, consistent with its philosophy, believes that one of the required characteristics of doctoral education are the experiences gained in performing and reporting in an original research endeavor. For this reason, all doctoral programs require a research track culminating in an original research project (see section 6, for further details of course and research requirements).

4.2 **Course Requirements**

Specific course requirements are determined by the student’s program and AEC.

For master’s students, no more than 40 percent of course work at the 400 level can count toward meeting degree requirements.

The College requires Ph.D. programs to have a minimum of 18 semester hours of course work, beyond the course credit required for a master’s degree, at the 500 and higher levels with an average of 3.0 or better.

Only courses with grades of “A”, “B”, or “C” (not “S”) can be used to meet the minimum coursework requirements. Grades of “S” or “U” will only be recorded for research credits and select seminar courses. The College normally will not issue a grade of “I” (incomplete) for research courses.

4.3 **Research Requirements**

The faculty of the College believes that the experience gained in performing and reporting a research endeavor should be over a prolonged period. Therefore, a significant portion of doctoral credit is research based.

- Ph.D. in Engineering and the Ph.D. in Occupational Safety and Health degrees require a minimum of 24 credit hours of research at the Ph.D. level (797) leading to a dissertation.
- Ph.D. in Computer Science degree requires a minimum of 18 credit hours of research at the Ph.D. level (797) leading to a dissertation.
Additionally, master’s students (except coursework only students) are also required by their AEC to perform basic research.

- Master’s students under the thesis option are required to complete a minimum of 6 credit hours of research at the M.S. level (697).
- Master’s students under the problem report options are required to complete a minimum of 3 credit hours of research at the M.S. level (697).

### 4.4 Transfer Credit

A student wishing to apply graduate course credit earned at another institution to a master’s or Ph.D. degree at WVU must complete an Application for Transfer of Graduate Credit to WVU. This form requires the signature of the appropriate Department Chair or graduate program coordinator. An official transcript from the institution where the course credit was taken must be on file with the WVU Office of Admissions.

For M.S. students, a maximum of 12 semester (vs. quarter) credit hours from other institutions may be transferred for credit at WVU in master’s programs in the College. Individual graduate programs can choose to accept fewer transfer credit hours. Only courses with grades of “A” or “B” may be considered for transfer.

For Ph.D. students, appropriateness of accepting transfer credit is left to the discretion of the student’s AEC and department with the restrictions that only courses with grades of “A” or “B” may be considered for transfer and no more than one-third of the minimum semester course credit hours required by the program may be transferred.

After the student completes the appropriate section of the Application for Transfer of Graduate Credit form, the Department Chair or Graduate Coordinator will perform the following tasks:

- Verify that courses from other institutions qualify as valid graduate level work.
- Verify that the request is within the maximum number of allowable credit hours.
- Verify that the credit has been earned within the acceptable time limit.

When the completed application form is returned to the Statler College Office of Student Services, it will then be forwarded to the WVU Office of the University Registrar. That Office will match forms with transcripts and enter the credit on the student’s permanent record.

### 4.5 Course Load

No more than 15 credit hours of graduate courses may be carried by a student in any fall or spring semester, and no more than 12 credits may be earned in the summer semester. A student wishing to carry more than the maximum course load must file a Course Overload Request.
4.6 Graduate Credit by Senior Petition

Undergraduate students wishing to obtain graduate credit by senior petition must complete the Senior Petition for Graduate Credit. Policies regulating an undergraduate student enrollment in a graduate-level course for graduate credit may be found in the Undergraduate Catalog.

4.7 Residency

For residency requirements see WVU’s Graduate Catalog.

4.8 Requirements for Ph.D. Candidacy

Programs that admit students with only a B.S. degree are encouraged to require such students to demonstrate the competencies expected of a master’s graduate in addition to the competencies required by the doctoral program before achieving candidacy.

Each major under the doctoral program will specify in writing its own requirements and standards for a student to be admitted to candidacy. At a minimum, these requirements will include one written examination, completion of all course requirements, and an oral defense of a written research proposal. The AEC may approve the research proposal conditioned upon stipulated changes to the proposal. In such cases, the AEC Chair should ensure that the required changes to the proposal are made by the student before signing the Approval of Candidacy. The AEC Chair must provide a copy of the revised research proposal to all members of the AEC before signing his or her approval.

At the completion of the candidacy requirements, the results must be reported to the Dean by the student’s AEC using the Admission to Candidacy for the Ph.D. form. For a positive recommendation for admission to candidacy, no more than one negative vote may be cast. A minimum of one opportunity for reexamination must be available for each student. Students who fail to receive a positive recommendation on re-examination for admission to candidacy are terminated at the end of that semester and may not re-enter the program.

4.9 Thesis, Problem Report, and Dissertation Approval Procedures

The AEC must approve the thesis/problem report or dissertation, with no more than one member not signing the approval sheet, before this requirement for degree completion can be considered completed. The thesis/problem report or dissertation must be produced according to the University’s regulations governing the preparation of theses and dissertations. An electronic version of the approved thesis/problem report or dissertation must be submitted to the University library along with the ETD packet. Approval must be obtained from the library.

The student shall furnish each member of the AEC, and the department, with a copy of the thesis/problem report or dissertation. The copy may be bound, electronic, or both, at the discretion of the department.
5. Plan of Study and the Advisory and Examining Committee

5.1 Plan of Study

A Plan of Study must be prepared by the student and the Advisory and Examining Committee (AEC, see below), which outlines the coursework the student must finish and its timeline, the research topic (if applicable for Master’s students and required for Ph.D. students), and the composition of the AEC. This plan must be approved by the student, all members of the AEC, the Graduate Program Coordinator, the Department Chair, and the College Dean by the end of the second semester of the student's attendance or by the completion of the 12th credit hour applicable to the degree requirements, whichever is later. Otherwise the student may be refused permission to register for the following semester.

All students:

1) The AEC may add course requirements to the Plan of Study.
2) The plan of study for a student admitted to a Ph.D. program with only a B.S. degree normally will require sufficient coursework to attain the competencies expected of graduates of that master’s program as well as the competencies expected for the Ph.D. program.
3) The plan of study must include courses to remove deficiencies as well as courses required by the program curriculum. Deficiency courses requirements are determined by the Graduate Program Coordinator at the time of enrollment.
4) The Plan should schedule deficiency courses in a timely manner such that a decision regarding qualification for change of status to regular status can be made at the end of the semester in which the 18th credit hour is completed.

The College provides templates for M.S. Plan of Study and Ph.D. Plan of Study. Any revisions to a plan of study necessitate submission of a complete, revised plan which incorporates all approval signatures.

5.2 Advisory and Examining Committee (AEC)

Each graduate student will form an Advisory and Examining Committee (AEC), with:

- M.S. committees consisting of a minimum of three members.
- Ph.D. committees consisting of a minimum of five members.
- For Ph.D. students, at least one of the five members of the committee must be from outside the degree-granting department.
- The majority of the members of the AEC must be regular members of the graduate faculty.
- A minimum of two members for M.S. and four member for Ph.D. committees must be members of the College Graduate Faculty.

Additionally, each department can impose stricter rules on the AEC selection process.

The AEC Chair should be selected by the student in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
or the Department Chair. Normally, the AEC Chair should be a member of the degree-granting program. The Chair must be a regular member of the College Graduate Faculty. Non-tenure track faculty may serve as Chair if they are a regular member of the College Graduate Faculty.

Members should be selected by the student in consultation with the AEC Chair. All members should be selected based on their perceived ability to contribute to the progress and evaluation of the student’s research and their ability to work cooperatively with other members and the student. The College Dean and the Department Chair each has the right to appoint one member to this committee.

5.3 Changing the Membership of the AEC

Members, including the Chair, may resign from the committee after providing a written explanation to the Graduate Coordinator and to the Chair of the department. Any changes to the AEC must be signed by the previous and new members of the committee, to the extent that a previous committee member is available on campus. The resigning member must complete an AEC Membership Modification Form.

5.4 Student Petition to Resolve Controversies

Attempts to resolve controversies regarding a graduate student’s academic progress should first be between the student and the chairperson of the AEC, followed by the graduate program coordinator, the department chair, and the Dean, in that order. If no satisfactory solution of problems can be achieved by the above procedure, the student may then follow the formal University Policies and Procedures for appeals.

The Student Conduct Code addresses both academic and non-academic rights and responsibilities, sanctions, and procedural due process, and includes procedures for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The code outlines the procedures to be followed in handling graduate student grievances and appeals.

6. Graduation

6.1 Grade Point Averages Required for Graduation

The College requires an overall GPA of at least 3.0/4.0 GPA for (1) all courses taken as a graduate student (graduate or undergraduate level) at WVU; and (2) all courses taken as required for a degree by the Plan of Study. Individual programs and departments may set higher minimum requirements in their written guidelines.

6.2 Final Examination for Thesis/Problem Report or Dissertation

A student should schedule the final oral and/or written examination upon completion of a draft of the thesis/problem report or dissertation, and/or completed coursework, and after fulfilling all
requirements set by the AEC. The student will initiate the formal request by the department for the final examination using the Request for Examination form.

The examination is conducted by the AEC. The AEC chair must indicate in advance the time and place of the final examination on the Request for Final Examination form sent to the Dean before the examination can be scheduled. Final examinations are open to the public. The final examination must be given:

- No sooner than three weeks after the form is submitted and no later than three weeks before commencement for Ph.D. candidates. This lead time is required for public notice to the University community.
- No sooner than two weeks after the form is submitted and no later than three weeks before commencement for master’s students.

The AEC may vote to:

1) Pass unconditionally
2) Pass conditionally with minor modifications to the problem report, thesis, or dissertation
3) Defer with recommendations for additional work to satisfactorily complete the research and/or the problem report, thesis or dissertation.
4) Fail

If the vote is to pass with minor modifications, the chair should withhold his or her approval until the student has made all stipulated modifications. A vote to defer is not counted as a “fail,” but only one deferral is allowed. More than one negative vote of the committee members will constitute a failure of this examination. The department or program will report the results of the final examination to the Dean’s Office. The student must be given at least one opportunity for reexamination. The department or program may establish guidelines to determine how many opportunities are given for reexamination and whether the student is re-examined on the portions failed. Students who fail the additional opportunities for re-examination are terminated at the end of that semester and may not re-enter the program.

All students must pass a final oral and/or written examination to be certified for graduation. The department or program will report the results of the final examination to the Dean’s Office.

6.3 Graduation Request

After successful completion of the final examination, students must complete the Final Approval for Graduation form and submit it to the Student Services office, along with other College and Departmental requirements.

Students must be active and enrolled at WVU in the semester they plan to graduate. Students in their final semester, who have no course work or research to complete, can register for 1 credit hour, usually research, to satisfy the University enrollment requirement.
Students must apply for graduation in the semester in which they plan to graduate. Students failing to graduate in the semester that they applied will be required to enroll again and apply for graduation in the following semester.

6.4 Quality

The quality control of each program will be the joint responsibility of the AEC, the Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Chair, and the College Dean.

7. Deadlines and Time for Completion

7.1 Deadlines

The graduation date for each semester can be obtained from the College Office of Student Services. It is the student responsibility to see that all deadlines are met. Failure to meet the specified deadlines may result in delay of graduation to the following semester.

- Application for Graduation and Diploma - An application for graduation and diploma must be submitted online through the student’s MIX/STAR account.
- Request for Final Examination - Requests to the Dean’s Office using the Request for Final Exam. No examination is to be given until the approval is received. A new form must be filed each time the examination is re-scheduled or repeated. Early scheduling of the final examination is recommended. Timelines (1 week for M.S. and 3 weeks for Ph.D.) will be strictly adhered.
- Final Examination for Thesis/Problem Report or Dissertation – Final examinations, or oral defense, must be given according to the suggested deadlines set by the University Library for a given semester. Final examination material will be given to the AEC chair after the Request for Final Examination has been made. The results, through the return of the signed shuttle sheet, must be delivered to the Statler College Office of Student Services within 24 hours of the defense.
- Thesis, Problem Report, or Dissertation Submission - The student must submit to the University Library an electronic copy of the approved problem report, thesis, or dissertation with the ETD packet, according to the deadline set by the library. The library will notify the Statler College Office of Student Services upon the initial submission and again when approval has been given.
- Final Deadlines - The Alumni Data Form must be completed and delivered to the departmental graduate program coordinator at least one week before the graduation date. The Final Approval for Graduation form for must be completed and delivered to the Dean’s Office at least one week before the graduation date. If this form is not submitted, the student will not graduate.

7.2 Maximum Time for Completion

All requirements for master’s degrees must be completed within eight years preceding the student’s graduation. This is a WVU requirement. Courses taken more than eight years previously must be revalidated for master’s degree credit and procedures to revalidate are outlined in the policy on
Revalidation of MS Course Work.

All requirements for Ph.D. degrees must be completed within five years after the student has been admitted to candidacy.