



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
*Office of the Dean*

**MEMORANDUM**

TITLE: Spring 2023 Graduate School Policy Memo

TO: Deans, Department Chairs/Program Heads, and Graduate Coordinators

FROM: James Beck, Senior Graduate Policy Program Coordinator, The Graduate School

\*Please give careful attention to this memorandum, but please note that it is not an exhaustive list, and faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with all policies affecting graduate education at FSU.

A copy of this memo will be posted on the [Graduate School's Faculty/Staff Website](#) as well as uploaded to the [Graduate Policy Database](#). Please feel free to forward this memo to any additional faculty or staff in your unit who would like to review it.

**New/Updated Graduate Policies and Procedures:**

\*The following items have been approved by the Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) and subsequently either the Faculty Senate Steering Committee (FSSC) or Faculty Senate (FS).

**1. Established a University Deadline for Enrollment in Defense Course for Thesis, Treatise and Dissertation Students**

- **New Policy:** A sentence will be inserted in the Graduate Bulletin which stipulates that the student must be enrolled in their defense course at the time of their defense announcement in the Manuscript Clearance Portal, which should be at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense examination.
- **Explanation:** The defense must be recorded on the student's transcript, but it has become a problem every semester where several thesis and doctoral students are not enrolling in their defense course in their final term, even though they have applied for graduation and are defending and finishing their degrees. Many times, the defense course is being added to the student's record at the very end of their final term. This can lead to the credits being identified as missing during the final degree clearance checks from the Academic Dean's Office and Registrar's Office, which in some cases has caused delays to degree clearances. Additionally, in some cases, the Manuscript Clearance

Advisors are reviewing manuscripts where the student passed their defense, and the student's committee is issuing the grades for the defense in the Manuscript Clearance Portal, but the defense course is not recorded on the student's academic record. With this policy in place, such issues will be reduced.

## **2. Adjusted the "Academic Courtesy" Submission to Committee Timeframe for Dissertations**

- Policy Update: The Graduate Bulletin is being updated to state the following (see red for updated language):

"Academic courtesy requires that the dissertation be submitted to each member of the supervisory committee at least four weeks before the oral examination **unless all members of the examination committee agree to a shorter reading period.**"

- Explanation: With this change in place, it essentially creates a flexible new window. I have deemed it the "four weeks or earlier" statement. This allows the student's supervisory committee to agree to a shorter reading period, which could necessitate having the student submit their manuscript to the group later for review (i.e., 2 weeks instead of 4 weeks prior to the defense). Some units prefer this shortened timeframe, as they do not feel that the committee needs 4 weeks to review a dissertation and it could create a situation in which the student stops working on their dissertation for 4 weeks in the time leading up to the defense and Manuscript Clearance Deadline.

## **3. Update to University-Wide Foreign Language Requirement for the Master of Art (MA) Degree**

- Policy Update: The Graduate Bulletin is being updated to state the following (see red for updated language):

### **"Language Requirements**

**There is no University-wide foreign language requirement for the master's degree. Each department, school, or college for units where there are no departments, sets its own language requirements based on the degree awarded.**

### **Additional Master of Arts (MA) Requirements**

In addition to the requirements listed above, candidates for the Master of Arts (MA) degree must meet the following requirements:

- Six or more semester hours of graduate credit in one or more of the following fields: art; classical language, literature, and civilization; communication (not to include speech correction); English; history;

humanities; modern languages and linguistics; music; philosophy; religion; and theatre.

- Degree requirements that include proficiency in a foreign language may be satisfied by demonstrated certification by the appropriate language department, or completion of a specified number of high school or college semester hours in a foreign language, as set by individual programs. All courses must earn a minimum grade of "B" or better."
- Explanation: This change eliminates the university-wide foreign language requirement for the MA degree and now allows each department/school/college to set their own language requirements (including none, if so desired). This change will take effect in Fall 2023 for newly admitted MA students. Grandfathering will be permissible for currently enrolled or returning MA students, if such programs allow it, **without necessitating a catalog or bulletin change**. The Graduate School will be reaching out to the MA programs for next steps and implementation.

#### 4. Other Graduate Bulletin Updates Pertaining to Manuscript Clearance for Thesis, Treatise and Dissertation Students

- Policy Update 1: In the Graduate Bulletin, under the "Clearance for Degrees" Section, it will note the following:

"A variety of resources for the manuscript clearance process are available on The Graduate School's main website. The Manuscript Clearance Advisors are also available for scheduled office hours if a student has questions regarding formatting and the manuscript clearance process."

- Explanation: The Graduate School offers a variety of resources, aside from just face-to-face or virtual workshops. The updated language reflects The Graduate School's interest to create other forms of media to assist the thesis, treatise, and doctoral students in the formatting of their manuscripts (e.g., short instructional videos, hosting office hours, etc.).
- Policy Update 2: In the Graduate Bulletin, under the "Clearance for Degrees" Section, it will note the following:

"If an extenuating circumstance arises, in which a thesis, treatise or dissertation student requires a non-substantive edit to be made to the formatting of their post-defense manuscript (prior to the final manuscript clearance deadline) and they are unable to make the edit on their own, then an Exception Request can be submitted by the student to The Graduate School for consideration. If the Exception Request is approved, the Manuscript Clearance Advisor will be

permitted to make the minor edit as specified by the student to the manuscript for the student.

- Explanation: The Graduate School will now have some flexibility, if an extenuating circumstance arises, for our Manuscript Clearance Advisors to be able to make minor, clerical edits to the post-defense manuscript on behalf of the student. For example, The Graduate School has experienced some cases in which the students are finalizing the formatting of their manuscript at the very end of the semester (not content-related) and missed a capitalized letter in a heading, have a spacing issue in the table of contents, messed up a page number, or missed a period in a sentence, etc. but they are traveling, had a serious accident, or a family emergency and cannot make the edit on their own prior to the final manuscript clearance deadline. For these exceptional circumstances, The Graduate School will now have the flexibility to make the edit on behalf of the student (if the student gives The Graduate School permission to do so) in order to prevent any delays in manuscript clearance. Such requests would only be for extenuating circumstances, they would need to be approved as an exception and be purely a formatting alteration, the student would need to give The Graduate School permission to make the edit, and the edit would need to be minor and non-substantive.

#### **5. Updated Language in Graduate Bulletin for the Project Master's Thesis Equivalent Track**

- Policy Update: Fine-tuned some language in the Graduate Bulletin pertaining to the project track master's students.
- Explanation: For master's students in a thesis-equivalent project track, they no longer need to adhere to the thesis formatting guidelines and deadlines. Instead, they may defend their project up until the last regular class day of the semester unless an earlier deadline is set by their academic unit. Thesis-equivalent project master's program students are required to submit a record of their output (in electronic format) to their academic unit by the last regular class day of the semester, per the FSU Academic Calendar, for storing and cataloging, unless an earlier deadline is set by their academic unit. No additional forms are required for submission to the Manuscript Clearance Advisor in the Graduate School. Both a successful defense and submission of the project must be completed by the last regular class day of the semester in which the student intends to graduate unless an earlier deadline is set by their academic unit. In addition, the submission of the project must be entered into the Graduate Tracking System by The Graduate School by the end of the defense semester and prior to the "Grades due" deadline, per the FSU Academic Calendar.

#### **6. Procedure Update to the Manuscript Clearance Portal for Thesis, Treatise and Dissertation Students**

- Portal Update: In Fall 2023, The Graduate School will be introducing a new submission field in the Manuscript Clearance Portal. Students who performed Human Subjects or

Animal Subjects Research will need to attach/include their IRB or IACUC documentation in the Manuscript Clearance Portal. Reminders will be provided to students in the Manuscript Clearance Portal that such information also needs to be included in the back matter (appendix) of their final, content-approved manuscript prior to the post-defense deadline.

- Explanation: Many thesis, treatise and dissertation students fail to provide the required IRB or IACUC information in the back matter of their manuscript. This update to the Manuscript Clearance Portal will help the Manuscript Clearance Advisors, as well as the students, with the efficiency and turnaround of the formatting of their manuscripts and assist with the tracking of student research. This change will also help in identifying problematic cases earlier for students who fail to get the appropriate IRB or IACUC approvals, which is a serious breach of research integrity and standards.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns regarding the items noted above, please let me know. Thanks.

All the best,

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