



Memo

TO: Deans, Department Chairs, Directors

FROM: Nancy Marcus, Dean, The Graduate School, Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor

SUBJECT: New and Revised Graduate Academic Policies - Changes coming Fall 2016

DATE: June 13, 2016

Every year at the start of the Fall semester I send out a memo that highlights new, revised, and key policies that relate to graduate education. This year the Faculty Senate approved two new policies and revisions to two other policies. I am providing you with information about these policies now so that you can incorporate them into your Graduate Student Handbooks with the new academic year. Please read the policies carefully and as appropriate be explicit in your handbooks about any program specific standards. All of these policies will take effect in Fall 2016 and thus it is important that faculty and staff associated with each program understand the policies and that each program provides explicit guidance to the students.

The new policies and revisions will be incorporated in the 2016-2017 edition of the Graduate Bulletin. Reference page numbers are not available at this time, but will be noted in the annual memo at the start of the fall semester. If you have any questions please contact me at [nmarcus@fsu.edu](mailto:nmarcus@fsu.edu) or James Beck at [jpbeck@fsu.edu](mailto:jpbeck@fsu.edu).

NEW POLICIES – Please note the establishment of two new policies

1. **Leave of Absence** – This new policy (see attached) was established to recognize that under exceptional circumstances a graduate student may need to interrupt the pursuit of a graduate degree. The circumstances justifying a leave include, but are not limited to: personal or family medical conditions, call to active military duty, parental leave, death in immediate family, or completion of an off-campus internship. The student must complete the “Request for Leave of Absence Form” (see attached), provide appropriate documentation and a rationale for the leave request. Requests for a leave should be scrutinized carefully and not be used as a means to simply avoid enrollment, especially at the dissertation stage; payment of tuition and fees; and the re-admission process. A leave of absence is a complete separation from the university. An approved leave acknowledges that there is a reasonable justification e.g., a serious health issue that requires the student to interrupt his or her studies. At the end of the leave the student need not re-apply and the

time to degree clock resumes. Students on leave will not have access to university resources and faculty should not engage in academic interactions with such students.

Faculty and administrators are encouraged to read the policy carefully as programs have the latitude to not approve leave requests, though there is an appeal process. In accordance with the policy, programs should note the Leave of Absence policy in the Graduate Student Handbook and clarify any restrictions or requirements that are unique to the program.

2. **Language of the dissertation, thesis, or treatise and defense** – This new policy (see attached) clarifies that the typical language of the dissertation is English and that defenses shall be conducted in English. Under special circumstances the Major Professor, the Academic Unit Head and the Supervisory Committee may approve writing the body of the thesis/dissertation in a language other than English if doing so is essential for scholarly reasons. The Major Professor shall immediately notify the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Graduate School for all cases where such approval has been granted. Notification requires completion of the “ETD Alternative Language for the Dissertation /Treatise/ Thesis Form” (see attached).

REVISED POLICIES – Please note the following policy revisions approved by the Graduate Policy Committee and Faculty Senate in 2015-2016.

1. **Residence policy** – The policy of requiring doctoral students to complete 24 graduate credit hours within a 12- month time frame to meet the residence/residency requirement (Graduate Bulletin, p. 75) will be replaced with the **Scholarly Engagement** requirement. Doctoral students are still required to complete a minimum of 24 dissertation hours and many students complete far more than this minimum. The Continuous Enrollment policy also still applies.
  - a. The purpose of the **Scholarly Engagement** requirement is to ensure that doctoral students are active participants in the scholarly community. To meet the Scholarly Engagement requirement, doctoral students should interact with faculty and peers in ways that may include enrolling in courses; attending seminars, symposia, and conferences; engaging in collaborative study and research beyond the university campus; and utilizing the library, laboratories, and other facilities provided by the university. The goal is to prepare students to be scholars who can independently acquire, evaluate, and extend knowledge, as well as develop themselves as effective communicators and disseminators of knowledge. Each academic unit with a doctoral program should include a program specific statement in its Graduate Handbook describing how its students can meet the Scholarly Engagement requirement.
2. **Provisional graduate students** – The policy regarding the admission of graduate students in provisional status was revised and clarified. Of particular note with the current policy which is published in the Graduate Bulletin, p. 52 is the requirement for enrollment in at least 9 hours regardless of the nature of the program. The revised policy (effective Fall 2016) will state that “While in provisional status a graduate student must register for graded graduate-level coursework (5000-level or above; excludes S/U courses) commensurate with the load requirements of the program, and must earn at least an average of 3.0 for all graduate-level coursework taken.” Thus, if the program is normally undertaken full-time, then the student would be expected to enroll in at least 9 hours.

However, if it is a part-time program then it might be appropriate to stipulate enrollment in 6 hours.