
Environmental Assessment Professional Science Master's Graduate Student Handbook

2026-2027

University of Kansas Edwards Campus
Overland Park, KS



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Preface

This Student Handbook is a resource for graduate students in the Professional Science Master's (PSM) in Environmental Assessment at the University of Kansas. It provides essential information about program expectations, procedures, and academic guidelines to support students throughout their progress in the program. Students should consult this Handbook regularly while enrolled in the PSM program and use it alongside the broader policies that govern all KU students.

The PSM in Environmental Assessment is an interdisciplinary degree within the Environmental Studies Program under the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The PSM was established to meet the growing workforce demand for professionals who can bridge scientific expertise and applied environmental problem solving with strong stakeholder communication. Designed for both full-time students and working professionals, the program provides flexible course delivery formats including online and evening classes at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. This program also offers an Accelerated Professional Science Master's degree for undergraduate students majoring in the Environmental Studies degree at KU that meet qualifications and offers Graduate Certificates in Environmental Assessment and Environmental Justice.

All students are responsible for understanding the University of Kansas Student [Rights and Responsibilities policies](#). Questions about program requirements or policies should be directed to the Environmental Assessment [Program Director and/or Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

University Support Resources

The University of Kansas offers a variety of support services and resources for students. These include:

- The [Academic Achievement & Access Center \(AAAC\)](#), which works with programs to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed at KU
- [The KU Libraries System](#)
- [The KU Writing Center](#)
- [KU Career Center](#)
- [KU Edwards Campus Student Services](#)

Program Directory

Environmental Studies, Chair:

Dr. Nathaniel Brunsell

Email: brunsell@ku.edu

Primary Program contacts

Environmental Assessment PSM Program Director, Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) &

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Terri Woodburn

Email: terriw@ku.edu

(913)897-8427

Graduate Academic Advisor:

Renee Williams, Senior Academic Advisor

rcwr@ku.edu

(913)897-8494

General Program Policies and Procedures

Admission

Deadlines

Applications due dates for each term is listed below with priority dates based on KU Edwards Campus scholarship opportunities. Due to some classes being in an 8-week structure there are opportunities for mid-term start dates – reach out the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) for additional information.

- Fall – August 1st; priority date of May 1st
- Spring – December 15th; priority date of November 1st
- Summer – May 1st

Application Materials & Procedures

The following components should be included in your online application:

- A completed [Graduate Application Form](#) found on the Graduate Admissions website.
- A copy of official transcript(s) from all post-secondary institutions attended showing proof of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution, or a foreign university with equivalent bachelor's degree requirements.
 - The student must have an undergraduate major in the natural, physical, or applied sciences, engineering, or related fields, OR coursework of at least 20 semester hours in the natural and applied sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physical geography, physics, statistics, and/or civil/environmental engineering). For those without the necessary background courses in undergraduate science, some additional coursework will need to be completed prior to the start of the graduate student program.
- A statement of interest and goals: a 1-2 page narrative that summarizes your education, employment history, your long-term career goals, and how this degree program will help you achieve these goals.
- At least two letters of recommendation from persons qualified to offer judgment on your work ethic and ability to undertake graduate-level work.
- International students must also demonstrate [English proficiency](#). Admissions will **not** result in an F-1 Visa, as the program does not qualify for the F-1 Visa status.

GRE is not required.

Admissions Contact Information

If you have questions about the academic program or curriculum, contact the [Director of Graduate Studies](#). If you have questions about the application process or required materials, contact the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

Enrollment

The schedule of classes is published online in early March for Fall and Summer terms and late September for Spring terms. Students should discuss their course selections with their advisor. Enrollment for continuing graduate students opens late March for the Fall and Summer terms and mid-October for Spring terms. Enrollment for new graduate students

opens late April for Fall and Summer terms and mid-November for Spring terms. Enrollment for Accelerated Master's students will need to be discussed with the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) as enrollment timing will shift between the undergraduate and graduate terms.

As many students in this program are working professionals, they are typically enrolled as part-time students. However, a student's level of enrollment may impact financial aid eligibility. See the University's [policy on graduate student enrollment](#) for additional information.

A student should ensure that there are no enrollment holds on their account. Holds on a student's account could impact their ability to enroll. If students enroll after 11:59pm the day prior to classes beginning for a term a late enrollment fee will be added to the student's account.

Students are highly encouraged to consult with the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) if there is a need to make changes to their enrollment after the start of a semester. Students can review the University Registrar's website covering [considerations and impacts of a drop or withdrawal](#). Depending on a student's situation, there may be other options available or additional steps that need to be taken. In some situations a request for a [Leave of Absence](#) (LOA) may be necessary.

Permission Numbers

If a student requires a permission number to enroll in an Environmental Assessment course they should contact either the [Graduate Academic Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies](#). If a course offered outside the program is approved for use in the program and a permission number is required, the student should contact the instructor of record for the course requesting permission to enroll. The instructor will be able to provide instructions for their department's process for issuing permission numbers.

Transfer Credit

At the discretion of the program, up to nine (9) hours of graduate credit taken at a regionally accredited graduate school may be transferred and applied to a KU master's degree plan if the credits were taken prior to the final semester of enrollment at KU and if the courses are approved as meeting program requirements. Only work graded B (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) or higher may be transferred. KU does not accept transfer credit for institutes, workshops, or for life/work experience. Credit will not transfer for courses that were previously counted toward the completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree.

Good Academic Standing

To be considered in “good standing” in any graduate program, the University requires graduate students to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or “B” average) and making timely progress toward meeting their degree requirements. While this program is built as a 2-year master’s program, the primary student base of working professionals may take longer to complete. University policy sets a [maximum time to degree](#) of 7 years for a stand-alone master’s degree. A student must have all courses, including the Capstone courses, successfully completed prior to this time limit.

Lapse in Enrollment

At times, exceptional circumstances require students to delay or discontinue their enrollment in the program. If a student does not intend to enroll for the term, they must determine the appropriate course of action in consultation with their advisor:

[Leave of Absence](#): Students may petition for a Leave of Absence (LOA) of up to one calendar year. A leave of absence may be granted in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave), to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals. A Leave of Absence may only be granted upon request of the student in advance of the leave. The request can be made by a form provided by the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#). If granted, the Leave of Absence will maintain the student’s place in the Program. Leave of Absence petitions must be submitted by the advisor and will provide evidence of the program’s endorsement of the petition.

[Voluntarily Discontinue](#): Students may elect to Voluntarily Discontinue from the program and must inform the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) in writing of this decision. The advisor will submit the necessary forms to the College. This option requires the student to seek re-admission to the Program if they choose to return at a future date. If a student elects to Voluntarily Discontinue and subsequently return to the program, the time that has elapsed does not count against the time to degree.

Academic Integrity & Misconduct

Academic integrity is a foundational principle of the Professional Science Master’s program, and we expect all students to uphold the highest standards of honesty, responsibility, and ethical conduct in their academic and professional work. Maintaining integrity means that students fully and accurately acknowledge all sources used in

research, writing, data analysis, and project development. Failure to credit a source constitutes plagiarism and is a serious breach of academic standards.

Students are responsible for ensuring that their work, whether for assignments, examinations, applied projects, or collaborative activities, is completed independently or by authorized means, as defined by course expectations. When questions arise about proper citation, use of external materials, or the boundaries of collaboration, students should consult faculty well in advance of deadlines to avoid unintentional violations.

Students who fail to uphold these principles are subject to University sanctions for academic misconduct. Formal definitions, procedures, and potential consequences are outlined in the [University Senate Rules and Regulations](#), which all students are expected to review and understand.

Grading

[Article II, Section 3](#) of the University Senate Rules and Regulations provides detailed information on regulations governing the grading of graduate coursework. The following are of particular relevance for graduate students in this program:

A-F Plus/Minus (+/-) Grades

Plus/minus (+/-) grades are used in many Environmental Assessment classes. The plus or minus sign describes intermediate levels of performance between a maximum of A and a minimum of F. Intermediate grades are calculated as 0.3 units above or below the corresponding letter grade.

Passing Grades

Only courses graded C or above are considered passing and may be counted for graduate credit. Courses graded C-, D, or F may not be used to fulfill degree requirements. As noted above, graduates must also have a minimum GPA of 3.0.

Incomplete (I) Grades

Incomplete (I) grades are used to note, temporarily, that a student's work has been satisfactory to date, but that they have been unable to complete a portion of the required course work during that semester due to circumstances beyond their control. Incomplete work must be completed within the time period prescribed by the faculty member, at which point a permanent grade will be assigned. After one

calendar year from the original grade due date or after the prescribed deadline, an Incomplete (I) grade will automatically convert to a grade of F or U, or the lapsed grade assigned by the faculty member.

Students must request an Incomplete from their instructor and fill out an Incomplete Grade Request Form obtained from the faculty member or [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) for approval.

Annual Student Progress Review

All graduate students will be evaluated on an annual basis to achieve the following goals:

- To identify students who are under performing and in need of assistance.
- To keep track of graduate student performance and achievements.
- To review progress to degree.

The review occurs a minimum of once per year as a student meets with the Graduate Academic Advisor to prepare for enrollment or during graduation timeline checks.

Grievance Procedures

For any grievances, please contact the Environmental Assessment [Program Director or the Graduate Academic Advisor](#). They will assess the situation and act accordingly. For more information regarding a more formal grievance procedure, please refer to the [Policy Library](#).

Petitions

If a graduate student has a compelling reason to seek exemption from a program requirement or University policy, they may submit a petition to the Environmental Assessment [Program Director and Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

Petitioners should make their request in writing (via email is sufficient), explaining the reasons why the student is seeking exemption from specific rules, as well as how the educational goals of the rules reflected will still be fulfilled.

In cases where the policy or requirement is a program requirement (for example, a course requirement for a degree), the Program Director will issue a final decision (for example, that the student may be exempt from a course requirement based on coursework taken at the master's level at a previous institution).

In cases where the policy or requirement being petitioned is a University policy, the Program Director will decide whether to support the student's petition. If they are in support, the program will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs (COGA) accompanied by supporting materials as required. The petition form specifies the supporting material needed for each kind of petition. These materials must accompany the petition sent to COGA. Refer to University policy for additional information regarding the more common University petitions, such as [leaves of absence](#), [enrollment requirements](#), and [time limit extensions](#).

In cases where the Program Director declines to support a University petition, no paperwork may be submitted to COGA. COGA only accepts student petitions in cases where there is documented departmental support and when the petition itself is submitted by a representative of the department.

Students should always consult with the Graduate Academic Advisor or DGS prior to submitting a petition to ensure that a petition is necessary and that all the appropriate supporting documentation is accounted for.

Advising and Mentoring

Graduate Academic Advising

This program has a Graduate Academic Advisor within the Jayhawk Academic Advising (JAA) team who provides comprehensive support intentionally structured around the student lifecycle: Connection, Entry, Progression, Completion, and Transition. Each phase is designed to meet students where they are in their academic journey and guide them forward with purpose and confidence. Students are encouraged to engage proactively with their advisor to receive individualized support, including academic planning, enrollment guidance, referrals to university resources, program-specific advising, and the development of meaningful advisor-student relationships that foster both academic and professional success.

Upon admission, students are connected via email with the JAA Graduate Academic Advisor assigned to their academic program. Students will also be contacted via phone by the JAA Student Success Navigator Team to:

- Schedule a technology onboarding session
- Receive access to the Online Graduate Orientation

- Schedule a Graduate Welcome Meeting with their assigned JAA Graduate Academic Advisor

These initial touchpoints are designed to help students navigate university systems, connect with key resources, and begin their graduate studies with a strong foundation for success.

Following that, continuing students can set up an advising meeting with their JAA Graduate Academic Advisor at any time through [Jayhawk GPS](#).

Faculty Advisor and Career Mentoring

The Environmental Assessment PSM [Program Director](#) is the faculty advisor for all students. The faculty advisor will work with students on choosing coursework best suited to their career goals and skillsets needed and to guide them through their graduate degree and capstone project. While the program only has one primary faculty advisor, mentorship will be provided in a variety of opportunities and avenues. Students may reach out to adjunct instructors (who are industry professionals) with questions about the professional sector, request connections through the faculty advisor to other industry professionals for career guidance, and participate in program-hosted, hybrid networking events with alumni and the Industry Advisory Board members. Additionally, each student will create a Capstone Panel of faculty and industry members to mentor them during the Capstone project process. A mentorship module of resources and information is provided in the program's Career Development Canvas site that students have access to throughout their time in the program and within the Capstone course Canvas site.

Change of Faculty Advisor

The Environmental Assessment program is structured as a coursework only degree, with the Capstone project completed within designated Capstone courses. The Program Director serves as the instructor of record for these courses and acts as the primary faculty advisor for all students.

Students select their own Capstone Panel members with approval of the faculty advisor, and the Panel Lead may be any full-time faculty member in the Environmental Assessment program. A different faculty member may serve as the Panel Lead if either the Program Director (as faculty advisor) or the student determines that the student's project would be better supported by another faculty member.

Professional & Career Development and Resources

The Environmental Assessment PSM is a professional-focused degree for those already in or going into industry. Due to this focus, professional development is a core component of this degree and educational experience. The PSM degree has a professional core of coursework that includes environmental policy and regulations, project management, strategic communications, and other skillsets. These professional skillsets are also embedded in the science courses of the program, which also utilize applied projects through case studies, writing technical reports as seen in industry, and in some instances, work with community or industry stakeholders.

In addition to this coursework, additional career development is built into the Capstone course and provided through a program-wide Canvas site that students have access to during their time within the program. Resources available through this Canvas site includes an msIDP – an Individual Development Plan for STEM master’s students going into industry, mentorship resources, networking resources, and more.

Research and Travel Funding Opportunities

The Office of Graduate Studies offers a [Graduate Student Travel Fund](#) intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Environmental Assessment program students may also apply for the Zadigan Graduate Research Scholarship. This is a limited fund and students will be notified of the call for applications via email when available.

Students interested in applying for either fund should contact the Environmental Assessment [Program Director](#).

Information for Graduate Assistants (GTA/GA)

There are no GTA, GRA, or GA positions available directly through the Environmental Assessment PSM program at Edwards Campus. Students may apply for opportunities available through the Department of Earth, Energy, & Environment with EVRN courses or faculty, or through other programs at Lawrence Campus. Please note that these opportunities require work completed in-person on Lawrence Campus.

Degree Requirements & Procedures

Academic Catalog

The University [Academic Catalog](#) is the definitive source for requirements and regulations for every academic program. However, the Catalog is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a contract. [Environmental Assessment PSM degree requirements](#) listed in the Catalog have been approved by established University Governance procedures. Degree and program requirements and course descriptions are subject to change. This handbook serves as a supplement to provide further details on the requirements, policies, and procedures described in the Catalog.

Professional Science Master's Degree Requirements

The Environmental Assessment PSM is a coursework only degree that students can complete as either full-time or part-time status. The program is a total of 33 credit hours, which includes a Capstone practicum requirement. The PSM program structure includes a professional core of 12 credit hours, a science core of 9 credit hours, science electives of 9 credit hours, and 3 credit-hours for the Capstone course series (EVRN 814 (1 cr. hr.) and EVRN 815 (2 cr. hr.)). The course options within these sectors are shown on the [Degree Requirements](#) page in the Academic Catalog, along with a sample [Degree Plan](#). The Degree Plan will be individualized with the help of the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) to meet each students' skillset/career needs and timeline. Through the selection of core course options and electives, this program can be tailored to multiple environmental career avenues including environmental science, community resilience/sustainability, and environmental policymaking.

The curriculum for this program prepares students to integrate scientific expertise with real-world environmental problem-solving and stakeholder communication skills. Courses blend foundational environmental science, applied analytical training, and professional practice through case studies, real-world projects, and technical report development. Additionally, there is an Environmental Research Lab at KU Edwards Campus available to students within the program that is utilized for optional in-person, hands-on elective courses and for Capstone research as needed. Various field equipment is also available for use for Capstone projects. Please contact the [Program Director](#) for access and equipment training as needed.

Accelerated Professional Science Master's Requirements

Undergraduate students majoring in Environmental Studies at KU may be eligible to apply for the Accelerated Master's program, allowing them to begin graduate coursework during their senior year and complete both the bachelor's and master's degrees in five years. This option is ideal for students seeking a streamlined path into the environmental science workforce. Candidates for the Accelerated PSM should have a 3.2 GPA or when they apply, and can be from the B.S., B.A., or B.G.S degree tracks. [Admissions requirements](#), suggested timeline for the application, and [degree requirements](#) are provided in the Academic Catalog. An advising appointment will be needed with the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) and/or the [Program Director](#).

Graduate Certificate Requirements

A Graduate Certificate is a way to gain a credential for expertise in an outside area of study in addition to your primary program, or can provide advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. Note that students must be fully admitted to a graduate certificate by the end of the last course that will count to fulfill the certificate. Current students wishing to complete a graduate certificate should apply as early as possible. The Environmental Assessment [Program Director](#) must approve the addition of any graduate certificates before applying.

Graduate Certificates available associated with this program are the [Environmental Assessment Graduate Certificate](#) and the [Environmental Justice Graduate Certificate](#). Both certificates require 12 credit hours of directed coursework as described in the Academic Catalog. Students interested in adding the Environmental Justice Graduate Certificate to the Environmental Assessment PSM degree may count up to 6 credit hours toward both the degree and certificate depending on the courses selected. The same is true for graduate certificates such as Environmental Geology and Project Management, provided through other KU programs. If there is a different KU graduate certificate that is of interest, contact the Environmental Assessment [Program Director](#) to determine if there are overlapping coursework requirements that may count toward the PSM.

Graduation Requirements (PSM & Graduate Certificates)

In addition to all program requirements, students planning to graduate must complete all [University graduation requirements](#) **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

A Graduate Certificate student must apply for graduation from that certificate during the semester in which they complete the final course – even if this occurs prior to the completion of their master’s degree.

University Policies and Degree Requirements

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs, hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that *most commonly* affect graduate students are included.

Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

General Policies

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. Your department or program may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

Admission

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor’s degree (as evidenced by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained).

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

English Proficiency Requirements

The University requires all applicants, international or domestic, to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are multiple ways to prove English proficiency:

- Declaration of native or native-like speaker status on the online application for graduate study.
- Official scores from an English proficiency standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS-Academic, or PTE), sent by the testing agency to the University of Kansas. Official scores must be less than two years old. Scores must be reported to KU directly by the testing service. Self-reported scores or unofficial scores are not accepted. TOEFL scores should be sent by ETS to KU institution code 6871. IELTS should be sent to KU Graduate Admissions via the e-delivery service. PTE score sheets containing the Score Report Code and Registration ID should be emailed to graduateadm@ku.edu for verification.
- Graduation with a baccalaureate degree (or higher) earned in residence from an accredited English-medium college or university or an accredited college or university in the United States. Degrees earned online may not be used to verify English proficiency. Note: this option is not sufficient for employment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.
- AEC Curriculum: Students who haven't taken one of the listed tests may complete coursework through the KU [Applied English Center](#) (AEC) to demonstrate English proficiency.
- US Military Employment: If you are employed as an officer in the U.S. military with documentation of selection or promotion to the rank of Major or higher (or the equivalent U.S. Navy or Coast Guard rank), then you will be considered fully proficient and will not be required to complete AEC testing.

Additional English Competency Requirements for GTAs:

English proficiency requirements for GTAs are governed by the Kansas Board of Regents and must be met separately from the English proficiency requirement for admission to a KU graduate program. Detailed information on English proficiency requirements for GTAs may be found on Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' [Spoken English Competency page](#).

Related Policies and Forms:

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)

Enrollment

For graduate students, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While individual units may have additional enrollment requirements, for students who are required to enroll full-time (e.g. students holding a GTA/GRA/GA appointment, international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, students receiving federal financial aid, etc.) the University defines full-time enrollment it as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s). *See Doctoral post-comprehensive enrollment.
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a Competency-Based Education (CBE) program

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s).
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a CBE program

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU's definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

Students not enrolled by 11:59pm the day before the first day of classes will be assessed a late enrollment fee. The University Registrar then deactivates the KU ID of any not enrolled by the last Friday in October (for Fall) or last Friday in March (for Spring). Students who wish to enroll after that must submit a [Permit to Re-Enroll](#) to be reactivated.

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Withdrawal form may be submitted on their behalf. Please note that voluntarily withdrawing from your program does **not** automatically withdraw you from coursework. You must also withdraw from all classes in Enroll & Pay via the “Withdraw from the University” option.

Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from all courses, as well as any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current [Academic Calendar](#).**

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on [Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript](#).

Your graduate program coordinator (or similar title) is available to guide you through any enrollment scenarios or questions that come up. In order to avoid problems on your record, please consult with them prior to dropping or changing enrollment.

Related Policies:

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements](#)

[Graduate Credit \(Including Transfer Credit\)](#)

The University's Graduate Credit [policy](#) defines KU's conditions for the following:

- Definition of graduate credit for the purposes of a course “counting” towards a graduate degree or graduate certificate at KU;
- Transfer of graduate credit to KU from an outside institution;

- Reduction in the required number of graduate hours for Master's students;
- Counting credit hours taken as non-degree seeking student towards a later graduate degree at KU;
- Counting credit hours taken as a certificate seeking student toward another graduate degree.

Transfer Credit

The transfer credit option allows master's students to add graduate-level coursework completed at another institution to their KU transcript to count toward their KU degree. Upper-level coursework taken as an undergraduate, even courses numbered at the graduate level, is not eligible for transfer in any case. Additional restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses and the number of credit hours that can be counted toward a KU master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department or program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

No transfer of credits is allowed for the Ph.D. In circumstances where students enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution or other relevant graduate coursework, it may be possible for students to request a reduction in the number of hours required for the Ph.D. Students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Reduced Credit Hour Degree

KU policy defines 30 hours as the minimum for master's degrees. Departments may petition for a reduced hour degree master's degree for individual students in cases where they may provide evidence that the student entered the program especially well-prepared to complete a graduate-level degree and the student is able to maintain a superior grade point average. Reduced credit hour degrees must be based on coursework or experiences that can be objectively measured, such as coursework or qualifying internship or study abroad programs. Professional or life experience does not qualify. A reduction in hours is distinct from a transfer of credit and is reserved for students whose prior coursework doesn't qualify for transfer

credit (e.g. was already used to fulfill requirements towards a completed degree) and there are no modifications on the transcript.

Restrictions apply to the number of credit hours that can be reduced for a master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below.

In all cases, a reduction in hours must first be approved at the department or program level, so to begin the process for approval, students should consult with their DGS. Students must also provide documentation of the coursework or experience being used to justify the reduced hours (e.g. transcripts, program descriptions).

Because there is no minimum number of required hours for the Ph.D., reduction of required hours based on prior degrees or experience is determined solely at the program level. Doctoral students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Related Policies:

- [Graduate Credit](#)
- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements](#) (on Reduced Hour Master's Degree)

Credit/No Credit

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their cumulative graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

Students make the CR/NC election via the Registrar's CR/NC [online request](#) form. Elections and changes to elections can only be made during the specific CR/NC

period. For regular semester courses, this period begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. Exact dates may be found on the current KU [Academic Calendar](#). Please keep in mind, short courses may have [alternate dates](#).

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling; however, in cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information.

Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.3.8](#)

Probation & Dismissal

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student that is not making [satisfactory progress](#) toward completing their degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student of why they are not making satisfactory progress, what they must do to return to good standing, and the deadline for doing so.

Students are most commonly placed on probation due to their graduate cumulative [GPA](#) dropping below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Individual Schools/the College may set more stringent GPA requirements.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constituting a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to;

- Lack of progress on the thesis, dissertation, or capstone project
- Unacceptable academic performance on program milestones outside of coursework (e.g. exams)

- Unsatisfactory grades or GPA within foundational required courses (despite the overall cumulative GPA)
- An unsatisfactory result in their department's annual progress evaluation

Nearing or going beyond their maximum time to degree. See the Time Limits section below for more information.

Students should carefully review the [Good Academic Standing policy](#) for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook or the degree requirements section and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise their cumulative GPA or otherwise meet the communicated terms of the academic probation, the department will reconsider their continuation in the program, and in most cases will recommend the student for dismissal. Once dismissed, a student is no longer able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete their degree. Students dismissed from any graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate program at the University of Kansas.

A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss their status with their advisor.

Related Policies:

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

Grading

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' (GPA) [Grading policy](#) governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in [Article II](#) of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of GPA.

Students should also consult their advisor and the departmental grading section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

Related Policies:

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)

Time Limits

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study, the doctorate degree in five (5) years of study, and both the master's and doctorate together in six-seven (6-7) years of study.

Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, students are encouraged to use a Mentoring Agreement Template and/or adapt to their own needs to support effective mentoring and a positive mentoring relationship.

Note that individual schools/the College/degree programs may require Mentoring Agreements for students who are nearing their maximum time to degree.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)<https://policy.drupal.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-program-time-constraints>
- [Doctoral Degree Comprehensive Oral Exams](#) (on exam expiration and recertification)

- [Doctoral Program Profiles with Time to Degree Information](#)
- [KU CLAS Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- [Univ. Michigan Rackham Graduate School Mentoring Plan Templates](#)
- [KU Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs IDP template](#)

Leave of Absence

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the University and the department and while “stopping the clock” on their time to degree. When a student is on Leave of Absence status it is understood that they have temporarily suspended their graduate work and therefore will not make use of University resources, including faculty time.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done through a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department’s internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student’s need for a leave of absence.

In order for a Leave of Absence to be approved, the student must be withdrawn from all active and/or future enrollment. Withdrawal for the purposes of Leave of Absence is still subject to all Registrar deadlines, required forms, and applicable tuition and fees.

Students on Leave of Absence are automatically reactivated after their leave is over and are eligible to enroll for their intended semester back during the normal enrollment periods. See the KU [Academic Calendar](#) for exact dates that enrollment begins.

If at any time plans change and a student wishes to return and enroll before leave was supposed to end, they may contact their department to be reactivated early.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Leaves of Absence \(policy\)](#)
- [Leave of Absence \(GPA website, form linked at bottom of page\)](#)

Required University Milestones

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the following milestones are required for all students and specific regulations apply:

- Master's Final Culminating Exam (written or oral)/Thesis Defense for Master's degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Exam
- Doctoral Final Exam/Dissertation Defense

*A final culminating effort is not required for departments with an approved coursework-only master's degree option in the Academic Catalog (note that programs with a capstone are considered coursework only).

Before a student is allowed to complete any of these three exams, pre-approval from the school/College is required in advance of the exam date. This pre-approval request will be submitted on the student's behalf by their department after the exam date has been scheduled. The school/College reviews the student record and verifies all University requirements have been fulfilled. The full list of these requirements may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their departments well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

There are additional policies requirements for oral exams. The following are University policies pertaining to oral exams:

Oral Exam Committee Composition

All voting committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. Additionally, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty in the candidate's department or program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply, especially for doctoral exam committees. Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the University policies pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam

committee. Your graduate program coordinator can assist with confirming the qualifying status of any faculty member at KU, or outside of KU.

Oral Exam Attendance

Oral Exams may be conducted in-person, remotely, or a hybrid of both. There are no University level requirements for physical presence; however, there are strict regulations on participation.

In all cases, all committee members must be present, either physically or via phone/video conference, for an exam to commence. **If a committee member does not arrive or appear, the exam may not begin and if a committee member leaves or loses connection such that they cannot fully participate, the exam may not proceed. Oral examinations that do not meet these attendance requirements are not valid.**

Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

Graduate Certificate Requirements

The University offers a variety of [Approved Graduate Certificate Programs](#) to encourage current graduate students to pursue interdisciplinary study, gain a credential for expertise in an outside area of study, or provide an option for a coherent course of advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. Note that students must be fully admitted to a graduate certificate by the end of the last course that will count to fulfill the certificate. Students wishing to complete the certificate should apply as early as possible. Students whose interests or career goals may be served by a Graduate Certificate should familiarize themselves with the University's policies relating to Certificate programs (found below) early in their graduate career, in addition to individual certificate program requirements.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Graduate Certificate Programs: Eligibility and Admission Criteria](#)
- [Policies & Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs](#)

Graduation Requirements (Master's & Ph.D.)

In addition to all program requirements, students [planning to graduate](#) must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs Graduation Checklists ([Master's](#) | [Doctoral](#))

These graduation checklists provide a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be consulted by every graduating master's or doctoral student as soon as graduation is expected. Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for [formatting](#) and [electronic submission](#) of the thesis or dissertation. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

We strongly encourage students to submit an Application for Graduation as early as possible; ideally prior to the 20th day of classes of the semester they intend to graduate.

Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs Funding Opportunities

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs (GPA) offers funding opportunities in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to GPA. Some of the available funding includes:

[Summer Research Scholarships](#): intended primarily for post-comp doctoral students.

[Graduate Student Travel Fund](#): intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (max \$750) only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Doctoral Student Research Fund](#): Designed to support KU doctoral students who need assistance to carry out research that advances progress toward the degree. Applications for this fund are accepted only for a limited time as funding is available. Students are

eligible to receive one award from this fund during their doctoral career. Students should check the link above for additional information and restrictions.

Policies Regarding Freedom of Expression on Campus

Kansas State Law (HB2333) requires postsecondary educational institutions in Kansas to publish in their handbooks and orientation programs the institution's policies, regulations, or expectations of students regarding free expression on campus.

Per KU General Counsel, this includes the following two policies:

- [KU Public Assembly Policy](#)
- [Kansas Board of Regents Statement on Free Expression](#)

Note that the two policies listed above apply to ALL members of the campus community; they are not specific to graduate students.