

Doctoral Student Handbook

Prepared for

Doctoral Students and Graduate Faculty



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

COMMERCE

Created by
The Graduate School

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CONGRATULATIONS!

Welcome to Texas A&M University-Commerce!

The Graduate School is pleased you have chosen to pursue your doctoral studies at Texas A&M University-Commerce. As you progress through your doctoral program, you will become aware that numerous rules and procedures must be followed for you to be successful. The Graduate School is here to help guide and assist you during each step of your doctoral program.

If you print out a hard copy of this handbook, please be aware that it is subject to change. The most current handbook will always be available online. Therefore, as you progress through your doctoral program, please check the [Graduate School's forms and guidelines web page](#) for the most current version of this handbook.

Everyone in The Graduate School will work with you to ensure your success. Ask questions or let us know of any concerns you might have; we are here to help you. If you have questions or concerns that are not answered in this handbook, please feel free to contact the Doctoral Degree Coordinator (903-886-5167 or Vicky.Turner@tamuc.edu) or The Graduate School (903-886-5163).

Table of Contents

<u>DOCTORAL DEGREES AWARDED AT A&M-COMMERCE.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAMS</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>COMMUNICATION.....</u>	<u>5</u>
EMAIL FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATION.....	5
GRADNEWS.....	6
<u>REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE.....</u>	<u>6</u>
MAJOR.....	7
MINOR	7
RESEARCH TOOLS.....	7
DOCTORAL DEGREE RESIDENCY	8
CATALOG PRIVILEGES	9
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS	9
ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FOR DOCTORAL DEGREE	9
<u>COURSEWORK</u>	<u>9</u>
DEGREE WORKS	9
REGISTRATION.....	9
COURSES: DEFINITION, VALUE AND NUMBER.....	10
SEMESTER HOUR:	10
COURSE NUMBERS:	10
GRADUATE STUDENT COURSE LOAD	10
STUDENT CLASS SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENTS.....	10
WITHDRAWAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY.....	11
<u>EARNING GRADUATE CREDIT</u>	<u>11</u>
TIME LIMITATION	11
GRADE POINT AVERAGE	12
INCOMPLETE GRADES (GRADES OF X)	12
TRANSFER OF CREDIT AND EXPERIENTIAL CREDIT	13
CORRESPONDENCE COURSES	13
INDEPENDENT STUDIES	13
REPEATING A COURSE.....	13
<u>ACADEMIC RULES AND PROCESSES.....</u>	<u>13</u>

ENROLLMENT LIMITATION OR ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL	13
GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING	14
ACADEMIC PROBATION AND SUSPENSION FROM DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAMS.....	14
CLASS ATTENDANCE RULE.....	15
ACADEMIC HONESTY	16
DOCTORAL YEARLY REVIEW	17
DOCTORAL 7-YEAR REVIEW AND DOCTORAL COMPLETION PLAN	17
<u>THE DISSERTATION</u>	<u>18</u>
DISSERTATION CREDIT	18
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE.....	18
STAGE 1: THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL	18
PROCESS TO SCHEDULE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE.	18
RESEARCH COMPLIANCE.....	19
IRB APPROVAL.....	19
PROPOSAL SUBMISSION.....	20
PROPOSAL APPROVAL.....	20
STAGE 2: DATA COLLECTION.....	20
STAGE 3: THE FINAL DISSERTATION	20
SCHEDULING THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE.....	20
DISSERTATION DEFENSE.....	21
SUBMISSION OF FINAL DISSERTATION.....	21
FINAL DISSERTATION APPROVAL.....	21
<u>GRADUATION</u>	<u>22</u>
FILING FOR GRADUATION	22
<u>RESOURCES FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS</u>	<u>23</u>
UNIVERSITY WEBSITE	23
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WEBSITE	23
GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES PAGE.....	23
DOCTORAL DEGREE COORDINATOR	23
LIBRARY	23
WRITING CENTER	23
COUNSELING CENTER	23
OFFICE OF THESIS AND DISSERTATION SERVICES	23
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS (IRB, ETC.)	23

Doctoral Degrees Awarded at A&M-Commerce

1. **Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)**
 - a. Educational Administration
 - b. Higher Education
 - c. Supervision, Curriculum, and Instruction
2. **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**
 - a. Counselor Education and Supervision
 - b. Educational Psychology
 - c. English

Admission to Doctoral Degree Programs

Students wishing to be considered for admission into a doctoral program must meet the general requirements for admission to the Graduate School:

- 1) Have an overall undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 on a 4.00 scale, a 3.00 for the last 60 undergraduate hours, or a 3.40 for a master's degree and work beyond the master's level;
- 2) Submit all departmental required documents such as GRE scores, letters of recommendation, interviews, portfolio, etc. Individual departments may establish additional requirements for admission to a specific degree program. Applicants will be required to fulfill any additional requirements established by the major department.

Applications that have met the requirements listed above will be forwarded to the major department. The department will review each application and make a recommendation regarding admission status to the Dean of the Graduate School who will send notice of the admission decision to the applicant. Some departments have specific dates for the departmental review of applications and some require interviews.

Application submission deadlines are available: [Information for Prospective Doctoral Students](#)

An individual is either granted full admission or denied full admission to a doctoral program. There is no provisional or conditional admission status. A doctoral student who has not enrolled for 1 year must apply for readmission under current admission standards for doctoral programs. If a student does not enroll for a semester, their matriculation will close and they must contact the Graduate School to open their registration again.

Communication

Email for University Communication

1. Email is considered an official means of communication at Texas A&M University-Commerce.
2. Each student will be assigned a university email address when his or her application for admission to the university is processed. This email address will remain active throughout the student's academic career. Email accounts will expire after one long semester (Spring or Fall) in which the student is no longer enrolled at Texas A&M University-Commerce.

3. Student emails are Gmail accounts, which allows use of additional G-suite applications (Docs, Sheets, Google Drive, etc). It should be noted that faculty and staff emails are through Outlook and thus run on a separate system. All graduate assistants will also be assigned an Outlook email for work purposes, in addition to their student Gmail account.
4. Students are expected to monitor their official Texas A&M-Commerce email accounts regularly. The university recommends checking emails at least once per day. Student should report any problems with e-mail accounts or access to email to the Texas A&M-Commerce Technology Services Help Desk at 903-468-6000.
5. Requests to substitute non-university email addresses for purposes of official communication will not be honored.
6. Electronic mail is subject to the same policies regarding information disclosure as other methods of communication. The privacy of personally identifiable information must be protected under the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The confidentiality of email cannot be assured and any confidentiality may be compromised by access consistent with applicable law or policy, including this policy, by unintended redistribution or due to current technologies inadequate to protect against unauthorized access. Students, therefore, should exercise extreme caution in using email to communicate confidential or sensitive matters and should not assume that their email is private or confidential. Examples of confidential or sensitive information include, but are not limited to: drivers' license numbers, credit card numbers, social security number, grades, current or past academic history, medical information and medical history, criminal history, personal bank account numbers and payroll information other than gross pay.

GradNews

GradNews is a weekly newsletter sent out each Friday during the Fall and Spring to all registered graduate/doctoral students during the semester. It is also sent out on the first Friday of the Summer I and Summer II terms. This newsletter includes important upcoming dates and events for students, provides information on different topics related to graduate students (student account information, offerings happening on campus, etc.), and also includes a section for our Thesis and Dissertation students. If someone is not receiving GradNews, they can contact Graduate.School@tamuc.edu.

Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

- A minimum of 90 semester hours beyond the baccalaureate degree, or 60 semester hours beyond the master's degree, is required for the doctoral degree.
- At least 45 hours of graduate course credit must be earned from A&M-Commerce (not including dissertation hours).
- All courses applied toward a doctoral degree must be 500-level or higher. If a course is offered at both the 500 and 600 level, the 600 level course must be taken.
- Master's level 595 research courses cannot be used toward a doctoral program.
- Undergraduate courses taken for graduate credit are not applicable to a doctoral degree.
- No more than 12 graduate semester credit hours (including hours completed in non-degree status) beyond the master's degree taken prior to admission to a doctoral program can be applied toward a doctoral degree.
- Credit for no fewer than 9 semester hours and not more than 12 semester hours of dissertation (718) will be given.

Major

A major requires a minimum of 36 semester hours excluding dissertation hours (718); however, a specific program may require additional semester hours for a major. (Specific program requirements are listed under each degree in the [Graduate Catalog](#).)

Minor

Students selecting the 60 hours beyond the master's degree option are not required to have a minor. A minor consisting of a minimum of 30 semester hours is required in all 90-hour programs except the Counselor Education and Supervision, Educational Psychology, and English programs. The minor requirement can be fulfilled by one of the following options:

- a. *A comprehensive minor with all course work in one academic area.* A committee member will be assigned from the academic area and will determine the courses to be taken and will be involved in evaluating the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation, and the dissertation defense.
- b. *A split minor of two academic areas with at least 12 hours in each area (a 12-18 or 15-15 format).* A committee member will be assigned from each academic area. They will determine the courses to be taken and will be involved in evaluating the written and oral qualifying examinations, the dissertation, and the dissertation defense.
- c. *An interdisciplinary studies minor in three academic areas (a 12-9-9 format).* In rare cases, an interdisciplinary studies minor consisting of at least 9 hours in each of three academic areas may be approved. A committee member will be assigned from each of the academic areas and will be involved in the evaluation of the written and oral qualifying examination, the dissertation, and the dissertation defense.

Regardless of the option chosen, the following conditions will apply:

- Assignment of minor advisors rests with the head of the minor department or departments.
- All courses applied to the minor areas must be approved by the head of the appropriate minor department.
- At least one dissertation committee member must be from outside the student's major department.
- Transfer courses applied toward a minor must be in academic areas taught at Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Research Tools

All research tools courses must be taken at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Candidates for the doctoral degree must possess proficiency in the use of the research skills necessary to successfully complete the doctoral dissertation. Research tools courses must include bibliographic research skills, so that the candidates are able to find, evaluate, use, and communicate information in all its various formats. It is preferred that students demonstrate these proficiencies early in their program; however, students should at the very least show research proficiency prior to taking the qualifying comprehensive examinations. Students cannot be admitted to doctoral candidacy until the research tools requirement has been met.

These requirements are to be viewed as minimal requirements. Consequently, a department may require additional research tools courses either for all their students or as a requirement for an individual student based upon that student's need.

Research tools requirements for doctoral degrees in the College of Education and Human Services can be met by successfully completing required coursework.

- The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) requires 12 hours of specified coursework.
- The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) requires 15 hours of specified coursework.
- Courses must be completed with a minimum grade of “B”.
- Only doctoral research tools courses approved in advance of their offering, by the Graduate Council, can be used to satisfy these requirements.
- These course requirements cannot be met through individual studies courses (689 or 589).

The research tools requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in English can be met with any of the following options:

1. Twelve semester hours of college-level classes in one foreign language, as verified by official transcript, or
2. Successful completion of a foreign language reading exam, as assessed by department faculty and written verification sent to the Graduate School, or
3. Verified native or near-native competence in a second language, as assessed by department faculty and written verification sent to the Graduate School, or
4. Completion of any four of the following courses, with a grade of “B” or above: ENG 501, ENG 520, ENG 599, ENG 613, ENG 686, ENG 710, ENG 780, PSY 612.

Doctoral Degree Residency

After admission to a doctoral degree program, each student is required to engage in activities that fulfill departmental residency requirements. The departmental residency plan specifies requirements in the following areas:

1. Involvement in events that broaden intellectual growth.
2. Use of academic support resources.
3. Faculty-student interactions that promote scholarship, mentoring, and opportunities for evaluation.
4. Involvement with cognate disciplines and research scholars in those disciplines.
5. Engagement in meaningful peer interactions.

Please check with the major department for specific requirements. Successful completion of residency is conferred by approval of the department.

Catalog Privileges

A student may use the degree requirements from any catalog in effect between the semester the student is admitted to the doctoral degree program and the semester the student's degree is conferred, provided the catalog used is not more than 10 years old at the time the degree is conferred.

Comprehensive Examinations

Upon the completion of coursework, doctoral students take written and oral comprehensive examinations. The comprehensive examinations are designed to test the student's knowledge in the major and minor fields and are administered under the direction of an advisory committee consisting of representatives from the major and minor departments. Students must contact their major department for information regarding the comprehensive examinations. A doctoral student who does not pass the comprehensive examinations may be suspended from the doctoral program; however, upon the recommendation of the advisory committee and with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, the student may be permitted to repeat the examinations. A doctoral student who does not pass the comprehensive examinations on the second and final attempt will not be allowed to pursue further study at the doctoral level. This procedure also applies to the final oral examination and dissertation defense.

Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degree

After the qualifying comprehensive examinations, all research tools have been satisfactorily completed, and all requirements have been verified by the Graduate School, the student will be admitted to candidacy. Notification of admission to candidacy will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School. After a student has been admitted to candidacy and all coursework (except 718 Dissertation) has been completed, the student may qualify for reduced tuition for 718. The degree can be conferred no sooner than 8 months after admission to candidacy. Students must have successfully passed all qualifying comprehensive exams and been granted doctoral candidacy by the Graduate School before they can schedule their proposal defense.

Coursework

DegreeWorks

DegreeWorks (digital degree plan) is a web-based planning tool to help students and advisors monitor student progress toward degree completion. DegreeWorks is not a substitution for consultation with an academic advisor. DegreeWorks shows the student in an easy-to-read format, the courses and program requirements that must be completed to achieve their chosen degree. All currently enrolled doctoral students who attend A&M-Commerce should use DegreeWorks.

Registration

Registration dates, times, and instructions are available on the [Registrar's website](#). MyLeo (A&M-Commerce web application for students) allows eligible students to register online. Students can access MyLeo through the university's main webpage or [here](#).

The academic year is divided into two long semesters, fall and spring, and a summer semester of two terms. Additional mini-terms may be available.

Courses: Definition, Value and Number

Semester Hour: The semester hour is a unit of credit. It is defined as one hour of lecture per week, or its equivalent in laboratory work, for one semester or its equivalent, as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Each course has a value of three semester hours unless otherwise specified.

Course Numbers: Graduate courses are numbered at the 500, 600, 700, 5000, and 6000 levels.

Graduate Student Course Load

During the fall or spring semester, a student taking nine (9) or more graduate semester credit hours is considered full-time. The maximum course load for a full-time graduate student during the fall or spring semester is fifteen (15) graduate semester credit hours. To enroll in more than fifteen (15) graduate semester credit hours, the student must have approval from the Dean of the Graduate School. A student taking six (6) graduate semester credit hours is considered half-time.

The maximum course load for a full-time graduate student during each summer term is seven (7) graduate semester credit hours. A student taking six (6) graduate semester credit hours in a summer term (summer I or II) is considered full-time for that term. A student taking nine (9) graduate semester credit hours (combination of summer I and II) is considered full-time for the entire summer (summer I and II).

A graduate student holding a full-time graduate assistantship enrolled in six (6) graduate semester credit hours is considered a full-time student. Graduate students must be enrolled in nine (9) graduate hours to be considered full-time for *financial aid*. See the section "Graduate Assistantships" for information about course loads for graduate assistants.

The maximum course load for a mini-term is three (3) graduate semester credit hours.

Only in unusual circumstances shall a doctoral student register for more than twelve (12) graduate semester credit hours in a given semester (fall or spring), and then only if approved in advance by the Dean of the Graduate School or other comparable official.

Doctoral students admitted to candidacy and enrolled in three (3) graduate semester credit hours of 718 dissertation are considered half-time. Doctoral students who are enrolled in nine (9) graduate semester credit hours of organized classes and who are performing research related to their dissertation may be required to register for an additional three (3) graduate semester credit hours of dissertation for a total of 12 graduate semester credit hours.

Student Class Schedule Adjustments

Students are expected to make all necessary adjustments in their class schedules by the 4th class day of a fall or spring semester and the 2nd class day of a summer term. Eligible students may

use **MyLeo** (Texas A&M University-Commerce Web Applications for Students) to process drops/adds. Students not eligible to use **MyLeo** may submit an online drop/add sheet to the **Registrar's Office**. The student must obtain approval to add and drop courses from the department/instructor and submit the drop/add sheet to the Registrar's Office. Students may add classes until the 4th class day during the fall and spring semesters and 2nd class day during the summer terms. Students may drop a class with a full refund (if remaining enrolled) until the 12th class day during the fall and spring semesters and 4th class day during the summer terms.

The student desiring to add a course(s) after the 4th class day of a regular semester or 2nd class day of a summer term should submit an online drop/add sheet to the **Registrar's Office**. The student should obtain department/instructor approval and then dean approval. The drop/add sheet is then routed to the Registrar's Office. Students will not be allowed to add classes after the 12th class day during fall/spring or the 4th class day during a summer term.

No course may be added to student schedules after the last day to change schedules as stated in the university calendar, except in very special cases and then only by approval of the instructor and appropriate dean.

Withdrawal from the University

A student wishing to withdraw from all courses **before the end** of a semester or summer term for which he/she is registered must clear his record by filing an application for voluntary withdrawal on a form, which can be secured online at the following link: <https://dms.tamuc.edu/Forms/withdrawalform>. This is a withdrawal from the semester, not the university.

This action must be taken by the date stated in the <https://calendar.tamuc.edu/> as the last day to drop a class or withdraw. Any student who withdraws from the University is subject to the conditions outlined in the section regarding Scholastic Probation or Suspension. **It is the students' responsibility to withdraw from classes if he/she does not plan to attend during the semester in which they have enrolled.** A student has one year from the first day of a semester to appeal a withdrawal refund.

Earning Graduate Credit

Time Limitation

Coursework taken beyond the master's degree that is over 10 years old at the time the doctoral degree is to be conferred cannot be used toward the doctoral degree. A doctoral student who has not enrolled for more than one (1) calendar year must apply for readmission under current admission and program standards for doctoral programs. At no time is a doctoral student allowed to pass the 10-year program deadline. If the student does not complete all requirements for the degree and graduation by their 10-year program deadline, they will be removed from the program.

Grade Point Average

A grade point average of 3.00 or better on all graduate work completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce, and an overall grade point average of 3.00 or better on all graduate courses completed, is required for graduation.

If a course is retaken, the last grade will be counted toward graduation and computation of the overall grade point average.

No grade of “C” (including a grade of "U") or below will count toward a doctoral degree. A course in which an “F” is received is considered a course completed.

Only grades earned at Texas A&M University-Commerce will be calculated into student’s grade point average.

Incomplete Grades (Grades of X)

Students, who because of circumstances beyond their control are unable to attend classes will, upon approval of their instructor, receive a mark of “X” (incomplete) in all courses in which they were maintaining passing grades.

When an “X” is given for a grade in a course, the credit hours are not included for up to one year when calculating the grade point averages. A grade of “X” converts to a grade of " F" one year from the close of the semester/term in which the grade was originally recorded if the course requirements have not been satisfied. The hours are included in the number of hours attempted.

Recording a grade of “X” requires the filing of a plan for completion. The plan will be submitted with the official grade record sent to the department head who will forward it to the dean's office. The plan will include: (1) why the grade was given, and (2) steps necessary for the student to receive the final grade.

Once an incomplete has been assigned, the course cannot be dropped; a grade must be assigned.

A grade of “I” will only be given for the courses in thesis and dissertation (518 and 718) at the end of the terms/semesters in which the student has been accurately recorded to have completed **more than 60%** of the term/semester. A grade of “I” will be given for terms/semesters prior to the term/semester in which the final document is completed. Once the final document is completed, the number of hours required for 518 (6 sch) or 718 (9-12 sch) will convert to an “S” indicating satisfactory completion of the thesis or dissertation. The time limit imposed on the grade of “X” (one year) does not apply for these courses.

Transfer of Credit and Experiential Credit

Credit for work taken in other graduate schools is granted in accordance with an evaluation by the Graduate School and upon approval by the student's advisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School; however, under no circumstances will a course with a grade lower than "B" be transferred. Transfer course content must be in academic areas taught by A&M-Commerce. While there are no limitations on the number of hours that can be transferred, a minimum of forty-five hours of graduate credit must be earned from A&M-Commerce.

Awarding of experiential credit will be based solely on experiential learning that is part of an official agreement between the University and another national, state, or regionally accredited institution or certifying agency.

Correspondence Courses

Credit earned by correspondence will not apply toward a doctoral degree.

Independent Studies

Registration in an individual studies (689), research, or similar course shall imply an expected level of effort on the part of the student comparable to that associated with an organized class with the same credit value. The maximum number of individually arranged (689) hours permissible toward a doctoral degree program (excluding master's credit) is twelve (12). Exceptions must be initiated in writing by the department head and approved by the appropriate academic dean and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Repeating a Course

When a course is repeated, only the last enrollment for the course will be used in computing the grade point average. Any student who enrolls in the same course a second time must notify the Registrar's Office during the semester in which the course is being repeated. When the semester is completed, the Registrar's Office will then update the grade point average to reflect the duplication of the course. After a degree is conferred, courses taken before the degree was conferred (regardless of whether the course is applied to the degree) cannot be repeated and the grade point average cannot be recalculated.

Academic Rules and Processes

Enrollment Limitation or Administrative Withdrawal

Enrollment in any graduate course is subject to approval by the department offering the course, the instructor teaching the course, and the Dean of the Graduate School, whether or not such is specifically stated in the course description. A student may be prevented from enrolling in the course, or dropped from the course if it is already in progress, if the Graduate Dean, Department Head, or a faculty member considers the student physically or mentally incapable of performing satisfactorily or safely in a course, or if the student becomes a threat to the instructor or others in the course or is disruptive in any way. In such cases, the Graduate Dean will confer with the faculty member and Department Head involved and then take appropriate action. Any tuition refund to which the student is entitled will be determined

according to the University schedule for refunds and will be based on the date on which the student was dropped from the course.

Good Academic Standing

Good Standing is defined as follows for graduate students enrolled at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Entering students who have been fully admitted (without any type of conditional admission, provisional status, or other restriction) will be considered in good standing. A student will remain in good standing if, and only if, he or she has a cumulative graduate grade point average of at least 3.00 and is free of the following holds: holds indicating delinquent financial indebtedness, academic suspension, academic probation, provisional status, and disciplinary suspension. A graduate student must be in compliance with ethical and professional standards as determined by the student's academic department and university rules and procedures, University Procedure **13.99.99.R0.13 Good Academic Standing**.

Students who are not in good standing are not eligible to graduate until good standing has been achieved.

Academic Probation and Suspension from Doctoral Degree Programs

Academic probation is when a student is allowed to enroll for the next term, but must raise their overall graduate GPA to 3.0 by the end of that next term.

Academic suspension is when a student is not allowed to enroll for future terms due to their overall graduate GPA being below a 3.0, unless they submit an appeal and are approved by their Academic Department and Graduate Dean to continue taking courses while on suspension. If a student is placed on suspension a second time they will not be able to take courses until the suspension period is over.

- A student who fails to achieve and maintain an overall 3.00 graduate grade point average during any semester of enrollment will be placed on academic probation. A student who fails to achieve a 3.00 overall graduate grade point average by the end of the following semester of enrollment will be placed on academic suspension for a minimum of two semesters (two summer terms count as one semester).
- A student placed on academic suspension for two semesters may appeal for reinstatement at the end of the two-semester suspension period.
- A second suspension of a student will result in dismissal from the program, and the student will not be allowed to pursue further study toward a doctoral degree at A&M Commerce.
- All courses completed while the student is on probation and those completed upon enrollment following suspension must be appropriate to the degree sought.
- No course with a grade of "C" or lower (including a grade of "U") will count toward a doctoral degree.
- A student receiving a grade of "C" or lower (including a grade of "U") in a third graduate course results in dismissal from the program, and the student will not be allowed to pursue a further

doctoral degree at A&M-Commerce. This provision applies to all courses taken, including duplicated courses.

- Courses taken from other institutions will not be transferable if taken during a period of suspension from Texas A&M University-Commerce.
- Students on academic probation or suspension are not eligible to change their degree or major.
- Individual departments may reserve the right to dismiss from their programs students who, in their judgment, would not meet the professional expectations of the field for which they are training.

Class Attendance Rule

As found in the [Graduate School catalog](#), students are expected to be present for all class meetings of any course for which they are enrolled. Students are responsible for learning about and complying with the attendance policy stated in the catalog, *Student's Guidebook*, and/or faculty syllabus. Faculty members will provide details on requirements and guidelines for attendance in their classes in their course syllabi. Faculty members will keep students' attendance records.

Students are responsible for requesting makeup work when they are absent. They will be permitted to make up work for absences that are considered excused by the faculty member. The method of making up this work shall be determined by the faculty member.

The student is responsible for providing the faculty member reason(s) for his/her absence. The faculty member then determines the validity of the reason(s) for the absence and whether the student is to be excused for the absence. Faculty members may consider the following as excusable reasons for absence:

1. Participation in a required/authorized university activity.
2. Verified illness.
3. Death in a student's immediate family.
4. Obligation of a student at legal proceedings in fulfilling responsibility as a citizen.
5. Others determined by individual faculty to be excusable (e.g., elective University activities, etc.).

Appeals can be made through normal administrative channels by speaking first with the instructor, and as necessary the head of the instructors department, then the dean of the college.

A record of excused and unexcused absences will be maintained by a faculty member since certain financial assistance and other programs may require attendance records.

When requested by the student, faculty will inform the student who has been absent whether make-up work is allowed and whether absences jeopardize the student's standing in a class.

It is the prerogative of the faculty to drop students from courses in which they have accrued excessive absences as defined in the course syllabus. In such cases, faculty recommend through the Department Head to the appropriate College Dean, that a student be dropped from a class. The faculty member will

document absences and will make a reasonable effort to communicate with the student prior to recommending the drop. If approved, the College Dean will forward the recommendation to the Registrar's Office.

Students who wish to drop a course or withdraw from the university are responsible for initiating this action.

If a student believes a final course grade is unfairly impacted by attendance requirements, an appeal can be made. This appeal process is explained in University Procedure **13.99.99.R0.05 Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation**.

Academic Honesty

Graduate students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work. Faculty and staff members are expected to uphold and support student integrity and honesty by maintaining conditions that encourage and enforce academic honesty. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academically dishonest. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to:

CHEATING: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise. Unauthorized materials may include anything or anyone that gives a student assistance, and has not been specifically approved in advance by the instructor.

COMPLICITY: Intentionally or knowingly helping, or attempting to help, another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

ABUSE AND MISUSE OF ACCESS AND UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS: Students may not abuse or misuse computer access or gain unauthorized access to information in any academic exercise.

FABRICATION: Making up data or results, and recording or reporting them; submitting fabricated documents.

FALSIFICATION: Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such as that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.

FORGERY: Making a fictitious document, or altering an existing document, with the intent to deceive or gain advantage.

MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS: Submitting substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor of the class for which the student submits the work.

PLAGIARISM: The appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING GROUP PROJECTS: If someone in a group commits academic misconduct the entire group could be held responsible for it as well. It is important to document clearly who contributes what parts to the joint project, to know what group members are doing, and how they are acquiring the material they provide.

UNIVERSITY RULES ON RESEARCH: Students involved in conducting research and/or scholarly activities at Texas A&M University-Commerce must also adhere to standards set forth in University Procedure **15.99.03.R1 Ethics in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work**.

VIOLATION OF DEPARTMENTAL OR COLLEGE RULES: Students may not violate any departmental or college rule relating to academic matters.

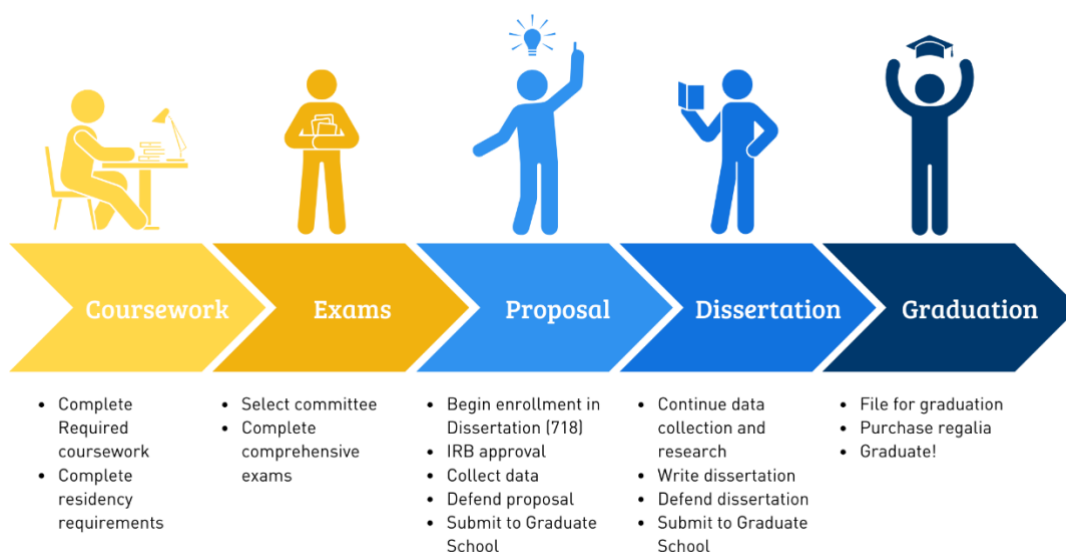
If a graduate student is accused of academic dishonesty, the University Procedure **13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty** will be followed.

Doctoral Yearly Review

Each year, doctoral departments hold a review of all their active doctoral students’ academic program progress. Notification is sent to each student concerning their progress in the program as well as addressing any issues or concerns. Students should contact their advisor if they have questions.

Doctoral 7-year Review and Doctoral Completion Plan

Once a doctoral student reaches 7 years in their program, they will be required to complete a Doctoral Completion Plan. The student works with his/her advisor to create the plan, which is submitted to the Graduate School for final approval. The Doctoral Completion Plan details the specific steps, actions, and deadlines the student must complete to graduate by the 10-year deadline. Failure by the student to follow the Completion Plan and meet all the deadlines may result in the student’s dismissal from the doctoral program.



The Dissertation

Dissertation Credit

The dissertation course (718) is required for all doctoral programs, and credit will be given for no less than nine (9) semester hours and no more than twelve (12) semester hours of dissertation. After doctoral candidates are admitted to candidacy, they will be required to enroll in at least three hours of Dissertation 718 each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed and approved by the advisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School. Doctoral candidates will not be required to enroll during the summer term, unless the student is using the counsel and advice of the major advisor and/or university facilities, such as the library. Students who fail to enroll for dissertation during a fall or spring semester after admission to candidacy will be prohibited from enrolling until the tuition has been collected for those semesters. Individual departments may impose additional course requirements beyond those required by the Graduate School. If a student does not show to their advisor successful proposal/dissertation progress in a semester of 718, or if a student does not show to complete **more than 60%** of the term/semester, they will be assigned a grade of U. A grade of U is equal to a grade below a B and will count towards academic action.

Dissertation Committee

A doctoral advisory committee will be appointed for each doctoral student to oversee the dissertation process from initial proposal to completion of the final dissertation. After consulting with the student and the faculty member in question, the head of the major department will appoint one faculty member from the major field as the dissertation advisor. After consultation with the advisor and the student, the department head will approve at least one or two other department members to serve on the committee, as well as an outside member. The committee will consist of a minimum of two faculty members from the student's major and one from the minor area of study (if the student has a minor), with at least one committee member from outside the student's major department (see University Procedure **11.04.99.R0.23 Doctoral Advisory Committees and Dissertations**). Once the committee has been formed and the paperwork signed, the student will submit the electronic form: [Dissertation Committee Form](#) to the Graduate School at TDS@tamuc.edu for review and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Stage 1: The Dissertation Proposal

Process to Schedule Dissertation Proposal Defense. Scheduling of the dissertation proposal defense is a major step in the academic advancement of a doctoral student at Texas A&M University-Commerce. The student will work with the members of the advisory committee in developing the dissertation proposal. The proposal will be presented to the advisory committee in a session that will be open to all Graduate Faculty Members. **Students must submit the electronic form: Schedule Form for the Proposal Defense** (fully filled out and signed by all parties) and a copy of the proposal document to **the Graduate School by the 20th of the month preceding the month** in which the presentation of the Dissertation Proposal Defense is to be held. Should the 20th fall on Saturday or Sunday, the form must be filed on the Friday prior to the 20th. It is the responsibility of the student to collect all required signatures, and to submit the completed form to the Graduate School.

Students may not hold their proposal defense and final defense within the same semester. Graduate School proposal approval must be at least one semester prior to their final semester and graduation.

Research Compliance. To ensure integrity and compliance in research, all doctoral students must successfully complete training in *Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship*, which is good for three (3) years (<http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx>). Students conducting studies that do not require research committee (i.e., IRB) approval may begin data collection after receiving approval from their advisor and completing the online training for Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship. Proof of completion of training must be submitted to the Graduate School/Thesis and Dissertation Services (TDS) with the proposal submission. Additional training is required for students whose research involves human participants and approval from the IRB committee must be obtained. Data collection may begin once approval from the appropriate reviewing body is received. Proof of approval (an approval letter sent to the student's advisor) must be submitted to the Graduate School/TDS with the proposal submission.

Any data collection, regardless of human participation, prior to completion of the required trainings and receipt of the required approval is an ethical violation and the use of those data will be disallowed. For questions or clarification about the student's responsibilities regarding research compliance, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at, ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu, or 903-886-5766. Additional information is located online at <http://www.tamuc.edu/Research/>.

A student and his or her advisor must complete the following if their proposed research/study involves human subjects.

Human subject research is defined as a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to general knowledge, which involves the collection of data from or about living human beings. In addition, all student research involving human subjects outside the classroom is considered to be in this category (see <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/humanSubjectsIRB.aspx>)

1. Students must complete the Human Subjects online training **and** gain approval for the inclusion of human subjects in their research/study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. The online training can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/humanSubjectsIRB.aspx>
2. Students, with the help of their advisor, must complete the protocol application forms. A student's advisor submits the protocol application forms to IRB (ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu). The Departmental IRB Representative and/or IRB committee may require revisions. The IRB approval letter must be included in the students' dissertation proposal submissions. The IRB approval letter is not the same as Graduate School/TDS approval.

IRB Approval. As stated above, students must work with their advisor to obtain IRB approval. The IRB paperwork should be worked during the planning of the proposal defense and be ready to submit right after holding the proposal defense. You must obtain the IRB approval letter before you can submit your proposal packet to the Graduate School as it is a requirement for proposal approval. The proposal does not need to be approved by the Graduate School before data collection begins.

Proposal Submission. The student must gain Graduate School proposal approval at least one semester prior to graduation. The proposal and final defense cannot be in the same semester. After the proposal defense, and obtaining IRB approval, students must submit their [Dissertation Proposal Packet](#) and proposal documents to the Graduate School/TDS for review and approval.

Proof of research compliance must be included with the proposal submission to the Graduate School/TDS. Students may not begin collecting data for their study until they have received advisory committee approval, completed all required ethics training, and gained University IRB approval, if applicable. It is the responsibility of the student to submit his or her proposal packet with all required signatures and all related documents listed below to the Graduate School/TDS by the applicable deadline.

- Dissertation proposal document (Word document),
- [Dissertation Proposal Packet](#) which includes the following:
 - Dissertation Proposal Approval Form
 - Advisors Consent to Submit Dissertation Proposal
- A copy of all required training certificates (CITI training reports)
- IRB approval letter (if applicable)
- iThenticate similarity report (and score justification provided by the advisor if the score is above 12%)

Access to iThenticate requires a license, so students are not permitted to run an iThenticate report for themselves. The doctoral advisor or another member of the student's advisory committee must run and interpret the report for the student. Contact TDS@tamuc.edu with questions regarding how to print and save the report or how to share the report with the Graduate School/TDS.

Proposal Approval. TDS will conduct a format-only review based on the Graduate School/TDS template and formatting guide. The student will be contacted via LeoMail with changes to the proposal. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her LeoMail regularly. Approvals are communicated by TDS to the student's LeoMail.

Stage 2: Data Collection

Once the student receives IRB or other appropriate research approval, they may begin data collection. The proposal does not need to be approved by the Graduate School before data collection begins.

Stage 3: The Final Dissertation

Scheduling the Dissertation Defense. A student should review his or her DegreeWorks degree plan (or contact the Graduate School) prior to filling out and submitting the Final Defense schedule form to ensure they have Graduate School proposal approval. A completed and signed **Schedule Form for Final Dissertation** must be filed to the Graduate School by the 20th day of the month prior to the month the defense is to be held. Refer to the University **academic calendar** for the dissertation defense

deadline for the semester you intend to graduate. It is the responsibility of the student to collect all required signatures and to submit the completed form to the Graduate School.

Dissertation Defense. The student will defend the completed dissertation and respond to any questions related to his/her program of study before the advisory committee in a session open to all graduate faculty members. Students must be in good academic standing with the Graduate School and have a proposal approved by the Dean of the Graduate School to be eligible to defend.

Submission of Final Dissertation. Registration in the dissertation course (718) is required the semester that the final dissertation is submitted and semester of graduation. It is the responsibility of the student to submit his or her final dissertation document and all required documents electronically to the Graduate School/TDS (TDS@tamuc.edu) by the deadline indicated on the TDS web page for that particular semester. A complete submission using the electronic: [Final Dissertation Submission Form](#) will include the following:

- Final dissertation document (as a Word document)
- Dissertation Final Defense Report (part of the electronic document)
- Advisor's Approval to Submit Dissertation form, (part of the electronic document)
- Dissertation Information Sheet with title page included
- iThenticate Similarity Report (and score justification provided by advisor if the score is above 12%)
- Survey of Earned Doctorates (required for PhD students only, not EdD students)
- Payment of applicable fees for dissertation and graduation (paid through your myLeo)

Access to iThenticate requires a license, so students are not permitted to run iThenticate report for themselves. The doctoral advisor or another member of the student's advisory committee must run and interpret the report for the student. Contact TDS@tamuc.edu with questions regarding how to print and save the report or how to share the report with the Graduate School.

It is the student's responsibility to submit the final thesis and all required documents to the Graduate School/TDS by the deadline.

Final Dissertation Approval. TDS will conduct a format-only review based on the Graduate School/TDS template and formatting guide. The student will be contacted via LeoMail with any changes to the dissertation. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her LeoMail regularly. After making all changes, the student will resubmit his or her corrected dissertation until he or she receives notification of approval. Approvals are communicated by TDS to the student's LeoMail. Final approval of the dissertation rests with the Dean of the Graduate School. Once the student receives approval from the Graduate School/TDS the student will upload the dissertation to ProQuest and pay for copyrighting (if applicable), any personal bound copies the student would like to order, and any other outstanding Graduate School fees.

Graduation

Filing for Graduation

Commencement exercises are held three times each academic year in May, August, and December. Students must file for graduation online through MyLeo during the semester they plan to graduate. Students will be approved for graduation and the degree conferred after they have satisfactorily completed all degree requirements and they have been approved by the Graduate Committee of the department and the Graduate School. Please check the University **Academic Calendar** for deadline dates for filing for graduation. Graduation information and the graduation application are available [online](#). Students may apply for graduation through **MyLeo**. A student must be in good academic standing in order to complete graduation requirements. Participation in the commencement ceremony does not guarantee conferring of any degree. Texas A&M University-Commerce has the right to rescind any conferred degree if the University becomes aware that the student did not meet degree requirements.

Resources for Doctoral Students

University Website

<http://www.tamuc.edu/>

The Graduate School Website

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/>

Graduate School Resources Page

<https://www.tamuc.edu/gradresources>

Doctoral Degree Coordinator

Vicky Turner

903-886-5167

Vicky.Turner@tamuc.edu or Graduate.School@tamuc.edu

Library

<https://www.tamuc.edu/library/>

Writing Center

<https://www.tamuc.edu/writing-center/>

Counseling Center

<https://www.tamuc.edu/counseling-center/>

Office of Thesis and Dissertation Services

Karin Thomas

Dissertation and Thesis Specialist

Karin.Thomas@tamuc.edu

903-886-5968

McDowell Business Administration Building 250

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (IRB, etc.)

903-886-5766