

THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

Comprehensive examinations

Comprehensive examination requirements and administration of the thesis/dissertation process vary by program and academic school. Graduate students should refer to the guidelines established by their programs regarding specific program requirements. In addition, graduate students should refer to the thesis and dissertation manual found on the Graduate School website (<https://graduate.vcu.edu/current-students/progress-to-degree/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/>) for guidelines regarding the preparation and submission of theses and dissertations and for scheduling the final defense.

Master's degree candidates may have a thesis requirement — or its equivalent in the form of a research project, performance, exhibit or other production. In some programs, master's degree candidates may elect a non-thesis option. In such cases, the program may allow a candidate to change from the thesis to the non-thesis option, or vice versa, once. Such action requires written approval of the department head and the faculty adviser and/or the student's advisory committee.

All doctoral candidates are required to prepare dissertations and the associated additional submission requirements as articulated in the thesis and dissertation manual.

At the time of defense, a thesis or dissertation must be approved by members of a student's advisory committee with no more than one negative vote. A committee member's approval is given by signing the ETD approval form (<https://graduate.vcu.edu/current-students/progress-to-degree/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/>). A disapproving committee member must also sign the approval form as a dissenting member and must provide a written dissenting opinion to be sent to the Graduate School.

Revised 5/8/2012
University Graduate Council

Electronic theses/dissertations – mandatory

Electronic theses and dissertations are digital representations of the traditional work completed by graduate students in partial fulfillment of requirements for graduate degrees. An ETD can be a simple textual document converted to a standard electronic format such as Adobe PDF or a complex combination of images and formats.

The VCU Graduate School thesis and dissertation website, as developed by the University Graduate Council and VCU Libraries, serves as a guide for the preparation of electronic graduate theses and dissertations for graduate students in all programs within the university. Information and a video tutorial are available on the VCU Libraries Research Guides website (<http://guides.library.vcu.edu/etd/>).

Thesis/dissertation submission deadlines

All requirements for theses/dissertations must be completed by the deadline published in the Academic Calendar (<http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/>) of the semester in which the candidate plans to graduate, including:

- Final defense of thesis/dissertation
- ETD approval form with all approval signatures, including the graduate dean's and, if applicable, documentation of IRB or IACUC approval number

- Submission of the ETD to the VCU Scholar's Compass according to instructions in the VCU Graduate School thesis and dissertation manual (<https://graduate.vcu.edu/current-students/progress-to-degree/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/>) (Candidate should confirm with adviser/program director all internal schedules for submission of copy, defense and approval.)
- Survey of Earned Doctorates (<https://sed-ncses.org/login.aspx>) (All doctoral students must complete the SED.) Refer to the Graduate School thesis and dissertation manual (<https://graduate.vcu.edu/current-students/progress-to-degree/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/>) for further information.

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University Graduate Council

Grades of satisfactory (S), unsatisfactory (U) or fail (F) in thesis and dissertation courses

All thesis and dissertation credits are to be graded each semester as satisfactory (S), unsatisfactory (U) or fail (F). There is no limit to the number of these credits a student may take while pursuing completion of the degree. Receipt of the grade of U is formal notification to the student of unsatisfactory progress. A grade of U is a permanent grade and associated credits do not count toward a degree. Future satisfactory performance following a grade of U is reflected in the assignment of the grade of S in subsequent semesters. A grade of S or U is not included in the calculation of the GPA. A student who receives a final grade of F in the thesis or dissertation will be dismissed from the graduate program. A student who receives three Us in a thesis/dissertation course will be dismissed from the program.

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University Graduate Council