

College of Education “Lifeline”

Frequently Asked Questions by Graduate Students

First Term Enrollment

Validating Admission: Graduate students make their admission official (or “validate”) by registering for at least one course during the semester in which they are formally admitted to the University.

Deferment of Admission: Students who do not validate their admission by registering for courses in their first semester may contact the Graduate Director and request a Deferment of Admission. This request must be made in writing within 12 months of the initial requested entry date and before the program’s application deadline for the new term. If a request for deferment is not activated within 12 months, students will be dropped from their program and must reapply for admission.

First Day Class Attendance: All graduate students are required to attend class the first day a class meets, for both online and in person courses. In online-only programs, you will need to complete a survey or activity on the first day to “take attendance”. Students who are unable to attend the first class meeting should contact their professor to ensure they meet course enrollment requirements. Students are responsible for dropping undesired courses by the end of the fifth day of classes to avoid fee liability and academic penalty.

Changing Your Registration during Add/Drop Week: After a student has completed their initial registration on the date assigned, they may add or drop a course(s) during Add/Drop Week (first five days of class) through their Student Self-Service account. Courses dropped during the first five days of class will be removed from your USF transcript. If you do not formally withdraw from a course in Student Self-Service, you will be charged for the course. Students may continue to withdraw between the second and tenth weeks of the semester, but after Add/Drop Week you will be liable for tuition and fees for any withdrawn courses.

Time Limits

Masters and Education Specialist Students: Degrees must be completed within **five (5) years** of the student’s date of admission.

Doctoral Students: Degrees must be completed within **seven (7) years** of the student’s date of admission. Students will typically reach doctoral candidacy within four years, but this may vary by program.

Time Limit Extensions: Students may request **one** Time Limit Extension based on documented exceptional circumstances that prevent completion of the degree within the standard time limits listed above. Time Limit Extensions are valid for a maximum of two (2) years from the date of the request.

Program Advisors and Planned Program of Study

Assignment of an Advisor: All students must have a Faculty Advisor who will assist the student in determining an academic course of action, and in creating and completing the planned program of study. Typically, the faculty advisor is the program director or coordinator for your chosen graduate program. To identify the director in your chosen program, contact your department or visit the [COEDU Graduate Programs](#) website.

Major Professor: Upon admission to an Education Specialist or doctoral program, students are required to meet with the department's Graduate Program Coordinator or other program advisor in their first semester to select a Major Professor and form a supervisory committee. The Major Professor will serve as the student's primary academic advisor throughout the course of their program.

Planned Program of Study: The Planned Program of Study form lists the coursework that students must take in order to complete their degree program. Any changes to this document must be formally reviewed and approved by the student's program and the College. The Planned Program of Study is not official until the student, their program advisor, and the Department Chair have signed, and the form is reviewed and approved by the Graduate Support Office.

- ❖ *Rule of thumb for submission:* Master's and Specialist students should submit their Planned Program of Study with all required signatures by the end of their first semester of study. Doctoral students may take a semester or two longer to choose committee members and identify a research focus; they should plan to submit their Planned Program after they have completed 18 hours of coursework, or before they apply for the Qualifying Exam.

Change of Graduate Major

Change of Major: Students may file a Change of Graduate Major Application only after they have validated their admission by completing coursework in their first semester of study. You must also be in good academic standing with a GPA of at least 3.00. Students can only change to a new major at the same or lower degree level as their current major (ex: a Ph.D. to an Ed.S., or an M.A. to an M.Ed.). A Change of Graduate Major restarts the degree time limits and the Catalog year; students will have to meet the **new** Graduate Catalog requirements in place at the time they begin their new major.

- ❖ *Transferring USF coursework:* Courses taken under the previous major are **not** automatically transferred to the new major. You must include any courses you wish to use for your new major on the Change of Graduate Major Application or they will not count towards your degree.

Grade Policies and Academic Standing

Full-Time Student Definition: To be considered full-time, graduate students must be registered for a minimum of **nine (9) credit hours** in both the fall and spring semesters and a minimum of **six (6)** in the summer semester.

Good Academic Standing: Students must maintain an overall Grade Point Average (GPA) of **3.00** to remain in good academic standing in their program. Students must maintain a 3.00 GPA in all coursework taken for their major and a 3.00 GPA overall in order to graduate. No grades of **C- or below** will be accepted towards a graduate degree. Students who do not maintain good academic standing will automatically be placed on Academic Probation. Once placed on probation, students must meet with their program advisor and create a plan to raise their GPA.

Grade Forgiveness: There is **no grade forgiveness** at the graduate level. Students who register for classes and do not drop them before the Add/Drop deadline will not have these courses deleted from their transcripts. If a student retakes the same course twice, the grades from both course sections will be factored into the GPA.

Missing Grades ("M"): The University policy is to issue a missing (M) grade automatically when the instructor does not submit final grades for a course. Students will need to contact their instructor or the department to resolve an M grade. Missing grades that are not cleared within the next academic semester will be converted to "M/F" grades or "M/U" grades, which are computed into students' Grade Point Averages.

Incomplete Grades (“I”):

- ❖ If students cannot finish all course requirements due to extenuating circumstances, they may contact the course instructor to request an incomplete (I) grade. To be eligible for an “I” grade, the student must have completed the majority of their coursework before the end of the semester, the coursework that has been completed must be satisfactory, and the student must request consideration for an I grade as soon as possible (no later than the last day of finals week).
- ❖ The course instructor and student must complete and sign an I Grade Contract that describes the work to be completed, the date it is due, and the grade the student would earn factoring in a zero for all incomplete assignments. An I grade not cleared within the next academic semester, including summer semester, will revert to the original grade noted on the contract. Students seeking to remove incomplete grades should not re-register for the course in question.

Note: Incomplete and missing grades must be resolved in order to be cleared for program benchmarks such as internships, qualifying or comprehensive exams, admission to doctoral candidacy, and graduation.

Graduate Petitions and Course Withdrawals

Graduate Petitions: Students who are actively enrolled in a graduate program will need to file a Graduate Petition to add, drop, or change credit hours after the first week of the semester. Students must fill out the petition form with information about the course(s) they are trying to add/drop, and include a justification statement for why they need to change their registration. The Graduate Petition Form can be found on the [Office of Graduate Studies Forms website](#) or the [GSO Additional Forms and Processes webpage](#). A petition will not be processed if you have an administrative hold on your account.

Fee Reimbursements: A Fee Adjustment Form is used if a student would like to have tuition and fees reimbursed after withdrawing from courses during the semester. A Late Registration Fee Waiver Request is used if a student registers late for courses due to extenuating circumstances and wishes to appeal a late fee assessment. Criteria for consideration are listed on each form (see also criteria for Course Withdrawal below). The request must be submitted within six months of the semester in question.

Course Withdrawal: Students who wish to withdraw from a course may drop the course directly via Student Self-Service through the tenth week of the semester. If students do not withdraw before the ten-week deadline, they will need to file a Graduate Petition to withdraw from a course. Following are acceptable criteria for late withdrawal via petition:

1. Student illness of such severity or duration to preclude completion of the course(s) as confirmed in writing by a physician
2. Death in the immediate family (parent, grandparent, spouse, child, or sibling) as confirmed by documentation (death certificate, obituary) indicating the student’s relationship to the deceased
3. Involuntary call to active military duty as confirmed by military orders
4. University error as confirmed in writing by an appropriate USF official
5. Other documented exceptional circumstances beyond the control of the student

Please note: Tuition and fees **will still be assessed** for any dropped courses.

Students who wish to completely withdraw from their degree program should file a Graduate Voluntary Withdrawal Form in addition to withdrawing from their current coursework. Please see the Graduate Studies Forms webpage for a link to the form.

Retroactive Drops and Withdrawals: Requests for retroactive actions **will not** be considered for approval. This includes petitions to drop an individual course after the last day of classes in a semester. Except in cases of administrative error, a student's academic record is locked once their final semester has ended.

- ❖ *Exception:* If a student encounters extenuating circumstances (see list above), they can request to withdraw from all courses in their previous semester within six months of the semester ending. This request will apply to **all courses** taken in the previous term.

Transferring Coursework

External Course Transfers: With the approval of their department and the Office of Graduate Studies, students may transfer structured graduate coursework taken at external institutions to their USF degree program. External course transfers must meet the following requirements:

1. Coursework must be listed at the graduate level (5000-7000) with a grade of **B (3.00) or higher**.
2. Transferred coursework must not have been used to fulfill requirements for a completed degree. If you have already completed courses required for your USF program, you can waive the courses in common between the old and new programs and substitute different electives in their place.
3. Transferred coursework must not be more than ten (10) years old at the time of graduation or course currency is required.

You must include an official transcript from your previous institution with relevant courses marked when you submit a Course Transfer Form. Grades from transfer credit are not calculated into your USF GPA. **No more than 50%** of a program's total minimum credit hours can be transferred from another institution.

Internal Course Transfers: Internal coursework from USF also falls under the course transfer policy and is included in the 50% maximum transfer limit described above. Students can transfer courses they took as a non-degree seeking or Graduate Certificate student, courses completed under a different graduate major, or graduate courses taken during undergraduate studies (if they were not used to complete undergraduate degree requirements). Internal course transfer requests must meet the same general requirements as external course transfers listed above.

Reinstatement and Readmission

General Enrollment Policies: A graduate student who is not registered and enrolled for a minimum of **six (6)** credits in a 12-month period is automatically placed in inactive or non-degree seeking status. If a student goes inactive, they must be formally reinstated or readmitted to their program to continue their studies. Both options are at the discretion of the program and admission is not guaranteed. Students who are readmitted are bound by the policies and procedures in place at the time of the readmission.

Reinstatement: Students who have not exceeded their initial time limit for degree completion may apply for reinstatement to their program with a Graduate Major Reinstatement Form. You must submit an updated Planned Program of Study along with the request for reinstatement. Students who are reinstated may choose to follow their original Graduate Catalog or any subsequent Catalog.

Readmission: Students who have exceeded their time limit for degree completion and/or course currency limits (10 years after initial admission) must reapply for admission. You must submit a new application for admission along with any supporting materials and fees. Doctoral students will also need to reapply to candidacy after completing one semester of coursework. Students who are readmitted must meet the degree requirements and policies of the current Graduate Catalog in effect.

Florida Teacher Certification Requirements

State Certification Programs: Some programs in the College of Education lead to Florida Teaching Certification or state-level endorsement in a specific subject area. To determine what additional courses and/or state exams are required in a state certification program, please contact the program advisor.

Program Internship/Practicum: Students whose programs require an internship or practicum course should check with their program advisor regarding its requirements and deadlines. Some programs require students to submit their application for an internship or practicum one to two semesters in advance.

Test Scores: Some programs require students to complete and pass state teaching exams, including but not limited to the General Knowledge Test (GKT), the Professional Education Exam, and/or Subject Area Exams in your chosen area of study. Check with your advisor at least two semesters prior to graduation to see if any of these exams are required for your program.

Graduation and Commencement

Enrollment in Final Semester: Students must be enrolled in a minimum of **two (2)** credit hours of graduate-level coursework in the semester they apply for graduation, [unless they have completed all course requirements (including the thesis/project or dissertation) and required exams (comps)] regardless of if they have already finished all coursework and/or required dissertations, theses, or projects.

Applying for Graduation: Students must formally apply to graduate through Student Self-Service. The graduation application must be submitted by the priority application deadline for the current semester to be considered on-time. The deadline to apply for graduation typically falls around the sixth week of the semester; exact application dates for each semester can be found on the [Registrar's Graduation website](#).

❖ *Note:* Please make sure your personal information (name, address, etc.) is up to date when you apply for graduation. If you have changed your name (or other personal information) while enrolled, you will need to submit a Name Change Request to the Registrar's Office.

Late Graduation Applications: Any students who apply for graduation after the priority application deadline must also submit a Late Graduation Application Form to the Graduate Support Office. Students who apply late for graduation are not guaranteed to have their name printed in the Commencement brochure, and their final transcripts and/or diplomas may be delayed.

Withdrawing from Graduation: If a student has applied for graduation and later determines that they will not be graduating in that semester, they must submit a Graduation Application Withdrawal Form to the Graduate Support Office as soon as possible. See the [GSO Graduation webpage](#) for current deadlines. After withdrawing, you will need to formally reapply for graduation in the semester you plan to graduate.

Commencement Ceremony: If you plan to participate in the formal graduation ceremony, there is a separate application you must complete. The application and information about upcoming ceremonies can be found on the [USF Commencement website](#). Your name as shown in the Commencement Brochure is provided by the University Registrar's Office. For name changes, please contact the Registrar's Office directly.

Final Transcripts and Diplomas: Once the Graduate Support Office has completed the degree certification process for the current semester, it will take approximately 6-8 weeks for your diploma to be mailed to you and for your degree to post to your transcripts.

❖ *Note:* If you need verification that you have completed all degree requirements prior to receiving your diploma, you may request a Letter of Completion from GSO. This letter serves as proof of degree completion for employers and/or universities.

Program-Specific Information

Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Programs

Internship: All MAT programs have a required teaching internship that students must complete in order to graduate. Students must apply for Internship at least two semesters in advance. For more information, see the [Clinical Education – Internships](#) page on the College of Education website.

Teacher Certification Exam Scores: All MAT students must take and pass both the state Subject Area Exam (in their selected area of study) and the Professional Education Exam as two of their requirements for graduation. Please contact the MAT program advisor for details, or visit the [COEDU Teacher Certification website](#) for information about state exams and test preparation resources.

Comprehensive Exam – Master’s and Specialist Programs

Comprehensive Exam: All Master’s and Education Specialist students must take and pass a comprehensive exam in their final year of study. Students must be enrolled in at least **two (2)** hours of graduate credit during the semester they take the comprehensive exam. Check with your program advisor or Major Professor to learn more about the exam format, application process, and deadlines in your chosen program.

Education Specialist Programs

Choice of Thesis or Project: All Specialist students are required to plan and successfully complete an individual thesis or project. Students should meet with their Major Professor and supervisory committee to determine which option is most suitable for their professional and academic goals.

Registration Requirements: Students must register for a minimum of **two (2)** graduate credit hours in the xxx-6971 thesis course or the EDG 6975 project course in each semester they work on the Ed.S. thesis or project. Students should also be registered for two (2) thesis/project hours in the semester they submit the final thesis or project and apply for graduation.

Supervisory Committee: Specialist students are required to select a Major Professor and form a supervisory committee who will help them complete their thesis or project research. Specialist committees must have a minimum of **three (3) members**, including the Major Professor and one member external to the student’s discipline. Once students have selected their committee members, they must complete and submit a Supervisory Committee Appointment Form to the Graduate Support Office to have their committee formally approved by the College.

Thesis: After defending their thesis to their committee, Ed.S. students must submit their manuscript to the USF Electronic Thesis & Dissertation (ETD) Office. The final approved thesis and all required forms and surveys must be uploaded to the ETD website by the semester deadline. Students who miss the final submission deadline will not be approved to graduate in that semester and will need to defer to the next one. For more information on thesis submission requirements and current deadlines, please visit the [USF Electronic Thesis & Dissertation website](#).

Project: Ed.S. projects are less formal than a thesis, and they do not have to be submitted to the ETD Office for final approval. Once the project is completed and approved by the committee, students must submit a Record of Ed.S. or Master’s Project Completion Form and a copy of the project to the Graduate Support Office at least three weeks before the end of the semester. See the [Specialist Thesis/Project webpage](#) for a link to the Project Completion Form and more information.

Doctoral Programs: Qualifying Exam and Admission to Candidacy

Doctoral Supervisory Committee: Doctoral students will need to meet with their Program Coordinator in their first few semesters of study to select a Major Professor and form a supervisory committee. Doctoral committees must have a minimum of **four (4) members**: this includes the student's Major Professor, at least two other members from the student's area of study, and at least one member external to the major or department. Once students have selected their Major Professor and committee members, they must complete and submit a Supervisory Committee Appointment Form to the Graduate Support Office.

- ❖ *Note:* Doctoral students must have an approved supervisory committee form on file to be cleared for program milestones like the Qualifying Exam and admission to candidacy.

Qualifying Exam: Doctoral students must complete the Doctoral Qualifying Exam when they have no more than nine (9) hours of coursework (excluding dissertation hours) left in their program. Students must be enrolled for a minimum of **two (2)** credit hours in the semester they take the exam. The College of Education offers both college-wide and program-specific exam options; check with your Major Professor to determine which Qualifying Exam options are available in your program and to obtain additional information regarding the exam.

Applying for Doctoral Candidacy: Once a doctoral student has completed all of their coursework and passed the Qualifying Exam, they must apply for Candidacy before they may begin taking dissertation hours. Students must file an Admission to Candidacy Form in the semester they take and pass the Qualifying Exam, or in the following semester once their exam results are verified. Additionally, students must be enrolled for a minimum of **two (2)** credit hours in the semester they submit their application for candidacy.

Doctoral Programs: Dissertation and ETD Submission

Dissertation Hours: Doctoral students who have been admitted to candidacy must register for a minimum of **two (2)** dissertation hours each semester they work on the dissertation until they reach the minimum number of required dissertation hours for their program. This includes the semester the student defends their dissertation **and** the semester they submit the dissertation to the ETD Office for publication. Please check with your program advisor or review the Graduate Catalog for the minimum dissertation credit hours required in your program.

Dissertation Defense Sessions: All doctoral students must complete a Proposal Defense and a Final Defense of their dissertation research. Students **may not** defend their final dissertation in the same semester or within 90 calendar days of the date on which they successfully defended their proposal. Students will need to submit a formal Request for Proposal/Final Defense at least two weeks before they plan to defend their dissertation. To view the Request for Defense forms and other required dissertation paperwork, please visit the [Doctoral Dissertation Process webpage](#).

Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Submission: The Office of Graduate Studies requires all doctoral students to submit their final dissertation to the USF Electronic Thesis & Dissertation (ETD) Office. The final approved dissertation and all required forms and surveys must be uploaded to the ETD website by the semester deadline. Students who miss the final submission deadline will not be approved to graduate in that semester and will need to defer to the next one. For more information on the entire ETD process and current deadlines, please visit the [USF Electronic Thesis & Dissertation website](#).

USF Web Resources

All information in the COEDU Lifeline has been adapted from the resources listed below. Please refer to the following websites for more information.

College of Education Resources

- ❖ [College of Education Homepage](#)
- ❖ [COEDU Graduate Degree Programs Index](#)
- ❖ [Graduate Support Office Homepage](#)
- ❖ [Graduate Support Office – Student Resources Index](#)

General USF Resources

- ❖ [2024-2025 Graduate Catalog](#)
- ❖ [Office of the Registrar Homepage](#)
- ❖ [Office of Graduate Studies – Current Students Homepage](#)
- ❖ [Office of Graduate Studies – Student Forms Index](#)
- ❖ [Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Resource Center](#)
- ❖ [USF Financial Aid Homepage](#)

Important Dates and Deadlines for 2024-2025

- ❖ [Registrar's Office – Important Dates and Deadlines](#)
- ❖ [College of Education – Internal Dates and Deadlines for Graduate Students](#)
- ❖ [Tuition Payment Deadlines \(and Re-add Process\)](#)