

# Planning Your Degree

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## Undergraduate

### Understanding Your Catalog Year

To graduate, a student must fulfill the specific course and degree requirements of the catalog in effect at the time of his or her admission, or of any subsequent catalog in effect during his or her enrollment with the approval of the academic dean, provided that the required courses are still being offered. A student must complete all requirements within seven (7) years or be subject to the degree requirements of a subsequent catalog. The seven-year period begins with the year the catalog was issued, regardless of the student's first semester of enrollment. Students entering the University for the first time during a summer session are subject to the requirements of the catalog for the next fall term, or of a later catalog.

A student transferring from a Texas two-year institution can select a catalog that was in effect prior to the first semester of enrollment at UTEP, as long as the student was following UTEP's degree plan while enrolled at the community college.

### Degree Plan

Students are advised to obtain and follow their major's degree plan when they first enroll at the University. Students are required to select a major and file a degree plan with the academic dean of that major by the time they complete 30 semester hours.

### Change of Major

A student who wishes to change majors must obtain permission of the dean of the college of the new major.

### Concentrations and Minors

Students interested in pursuing a concentration or minor in an area of study should refer to the college curriculum in the catalog or consult with their major advisor for further details.

### Completion of Freshman-Level Courses

All freshman-level courses that are required by specific course number should be completed before the student has completed 90 hours toward the degree.

### One-Hour Courses

No more than six (6) one-hour courses can be counted toward completion of the minimum total hours required for a degree (unless degree requirements specify otherwise), except with specific approval of the academic dean.

### Major Examinations

At the discretion of the department concerned, a comprehensive examination can be required in the major subject under the following conditions:

1. Four hours written, or three hours written and one hour oral.
2. The department fixes the time and place, and supervises the examination.
3. In case of failure, the student can take another examination on a date determined by the department.

## Graduate

Degree plans for graduate programs, approved by the College and Graduate Council, list the coursework a student is required to complete. The Goldmine Degree Evaluation will display the degree plan, listing the required courses; courses not listed in the Goldmine online degree evaluation are not financial aid eligible. Leveling courses may be required but are not part of the program's degree plan. Programs are advised to notify the Graduate School immediately regarding approved substitutions.

Nine semester hours of upper-division undergraduate courses approved for graduate credit are the maximum allowable in any master's program.

Undergraduate courses approved for graduate credit require additional work, the amount and nature of which are to be determined by the instructor. These courses must be approved by the Graduate Council. Undergraduate courses that are not approved for graduate credit cannot be used to satisfy graduate degree requirements. Students should consult with the Graduate School to ensure that a course is approved for graduate credit prior to enrolling in the course. Undergraduate courses approved for graduate credit cannot be used for fast-track purposes. Undergraduate courses taken as leveling pre-requisites do not count for graduate credit. Undergraduate courses approved for graduate credit appear on an undergraduate transcript and the earned grades accumulate towards the undergraduate grade point average. Doctoral students should consult program policies regarding enrollment in undergraduate courses approved for graduate credit.

The Graduate School discourages students from working toward more than one graduate degree at the same time, except for the case of dual degree programs. If eligible for financial aid, only one program of study will be funded. Courses that are not part of the student's official degree plan are not financial aid eligible.

## Time Limits and Catalog Changes

All requirements for a master's degree must be completed within one six-year period, including any transfer work or work completed prior to admission to the program; doctoral degree requirements must be completed within one eight-year period. Coursework exceeding these time limits is lost and can be reinstated only by special permission of the Dean of the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee.

General and specific requirements for degrees in the Graduate School may be altered in successive catalogs. Provided the requisite courses continue to be offered, the student is bound only by the course requirements of the catalog in force at the time of admission or re-admission within a six or eight-year limit, unless, with the approval of the program's graduate advisor, the student elects to be bound by the course requirements of a subsequent catalog. This regulation applies to course requirements only.

## Academic Integrity

### All Students

All graduate students must understand and abide by UTEP's academic integrity policies outlined in the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the Handbook for Operating Procedures (section 1.2.3(a)) (<https://www.utep.edu/hoop/section-2/student-conduct-and-discipline.html>). This policy accounts for the following:

- Cheating: copying or seeking help from another person during a test, assignment, or assessment; using unauthorized materials during test, assignment, or assessment; substituting for another person or permitting another person to substitute for oneself; or submitting work from one class that is the same or substantially similar to that used for another class without citation or acknowledgment.
- Plagiarism: presenting another person's work as one's own.
- Collusion: unauthorized collaboration with another person on an academic assignment.
- Misrepresentation of facts for academic advantage: providing false or misleading information for academic or financial benefit of oneself or another individual, or conversely, providing false or misleading information to undermine or damage another person academically or financially.

### Students Engaged in Research

Students doing research must also understand and abide by the UTEP's Research Integrity Policy (<https://www.utep.edu/hoop/section-4/research-integrity-policy.html>). This policy defines research misconduct, with particular emphasis on fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. The UTEP Research Integrity Policy (section 6.2) specifies the following actions as research misconduct:

- Fabrication: making up data or results and recording or reporting them. For example,
  - Generating data that are not based on any observations
  - Adding false observations to existing data
  - Reporting findings of studies that were not conducted
- Falsification: manipulating research materials, equipment or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
  - Misrepresenting or omitting procedures in a research study
  - Removing data from a study without reporting them to be removed and providing the reasons for removing them
  - Using false or misleading statements when describing the findings of a study
- Plagiarism: the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.
  - Paraphrasing and failing to acknowledge the source of information
  - Using images, graphs, or data generated by others without acknowledging them
  - Not acknowledging contributions of co-authors or research collaborators

### Consequences and Prevention

Academic honesty and research integrity are important in all academic work including but not limited to class assignments, exams, publications, presentations, grant or thesis/dissertation proposals, theses, and dissertations. A student may be found guilty of academic dishonesty or research misconduct even if they did not act with the intention to deceive.

Research misconduct can result in serious consequences such as receiving a failing grade on an assignment, revoking a thesis or dissertation, or expulsion from the University. It also damages the reputation of the person(s) involved and of the research/university community at large.

Research misconduct and academic dishonesty cases at UTEP follow a due process. Student cases are reported to the Dean of Students, but may also qualify for review by the Vice President for Research and the Provost who may then refer the cases to the appropriate deans or responsible parties.

Graduate students and their research mentors can prevent academic dishonesty and research misconduct by taking the following steps:

- Complete the Responsible Conduct in Research ([https://www.utep.edu/orsp/policies/responsible-conduct-in-research-policy.html#rcr\\_policy](https://www.utep.edu/orsp/policies/responsible-conduct-in-research-policy.html#rcr_policy)) (RCR) training relevant to their discipline. RCR training is required for sponsored research but useful for all researchers;
- Take a course or participate in a professional development activity that covers academic integrity;
- Communicate clearly and often about intellectual property, collaboration, and authorship, and carefully review the UTEP's Policy on Research Integrity (<https://www.utep.edu/hoop/section-4/research-integrity-policy.html>) in the Handbook of Operating Procedures;
- Be well-versed in discipline's reference and style guidelines—while conventions differ across disciplines, all rely on attribution and formal citation practices; and
- Review work for unattributed text (or images) that can mislead readers regarding the author's contributions. Free or university supported software that screens for plagiarism can be used to assist with review. Plagiarism detection software, however, does not detect everything (e.g., images, data, etc.) thus careful review by all authors is essential.

## Thesis Requirements

The candidate must be accepted into a graduate program prior to pursuing the thesis. The candidate for the master's degree writes a thesis under the direction of a supervising committee, consisting of at least two departmental representatives and one member from outside the department. All members of the supervising committee must be members of the graduate faculty. The thesis is subject to the approval of the committee and ultimately to the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. Researching and writing for the thesis involves successful completion of six (6) semester hours of credit: Thesis I and Thesis II. To earn the six (6) hours of thesis credit, the student must register in Thesis I when beginning work on the thesis. Thereafter, the student must register for Thesis II **during each semester or term in which work on the thesis is conducted**. Students cannot enroll in Thesis I and Thesis II simultaneously, nor can they enroll in more than three (3) hours of thesis at any one time. Thesis students must be enrolled in thesis hours during the semester the thesis is defended and during the semester of graduation.

A copy of the thesis, using any publication style appropriate to the given discipline, must be submitted to the Graduate School for format check prior to the scheduled defense date. The thesis must be prepared according to the Graduate School's thesis and dissertation manuscript guidelines, which are available on the Graduate School website. The student will receive email confirmation from the Graduate School upon approval of the thesis format.

A hard copy of the signature page and defense form signed by the thesis/dissertation committee must also be submitted to the Graduate School. The signature page must be included in the thesis/dissertation PDF file, but should not be signed. The Graduate School-approved thesis/dissertation must also be submitted at the ProQuest/University Microfilms International Web site for online publication (<http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=95>) (<http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school/?siteId=95>). Theses are regarded as publications and will be made public once they are approved and submitted to the Graduate School, unless the author formally requests otherwise.

If a student has not completed thesis work at the end of two years after the subject has been approved and recorded, the supervisor can require the student to choose another subject. Credit in thesis courses will not be granted until the thesis is completed and approved.

The following are required for final thesis/dissertation approval:

- Prior to their defense, students must run their thesis/dissertation through the plagiarism detection software approved by UTEP, and the report must be reviewed by their committee chair and members. By signing the defense form, committee members acknowledge that they have reviewed the plagiarism report.
- A copy of the plagiarism report must be submitted to the Graduate School with the thesis/dissertation. The report will be archived separately from the thesis/dissertation.

The chair of a thesis/dissertation committee may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an exception to this requirement; the petition must provide justifications for why an exception is necessary and the steps the committee will take to help ensure academic integrity of the thesis/dissertation.

## Non-Thesis Option

Some programs require internship reports, professional reports, or formal papers prepared in certain graduate seminar or conference-type courses in lieu of a thesis. The non-thesis should be comparable to a thesis in every respect except for the evidence of original research. The non-thesis is reviewed and accepted by the supervising committee and, if required, submitted to the academic graduate department rather than to the Graduate School. The Graduate School does not require the submission of the non-thesis but requires the submission of a Completion/Defense form from all students pursuing a non-thesis option. Students are responsible for adhering to the policies and procedures of their departments. All non-thesis students must be enrolled during the semester of graduation.

## Dissertation Requirements

A doctoral candidate must be accepted into a doctoral program prior to pursuing the dissertation. The candidate for the doctoral degree writes a dissertation under the direction of a supervising committee. For composition of the supervising committee, the student should refer to the section in this catalog that describes their respective doctoral program. Minimum Graduate School requirements consist of three (3) members; two (2) from the major program of study and one from outside the major program of study. All members of the supervising committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty.

The dissertation is subject to the approval of the committee and ultimately to the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. The student must register in Dissertation I when beginning work on the dissertation. Thereafter, the student must continually enroll in Dissertation II during each semester or term in which work on the dissertation is conducted. Students may not enroll in Dissertation I and Dissertation II simultaneously, nor may they enroll in more than three (3) hours of dissertation at any one time. Dissertation students must be enrolled in dissertation hours during the semester the dissertation is defended and during the semester of graduation.

A copy of the dissertation, using any publication style appropriate to the given discipline, must be submitted to the Graduate School for format check prior to the scheduled defense date. The dissertation must be prepared according to the Graduate School's thesis and dissertation manuscript guidelines, which are available at the Graduate School website. The student will receive email confirmation from the Graduate School upon approval of the dissertation format. The defense date must be scheduled at least two weeks before Dead Day of the intended term of graduation, and the final committee and Graduate School-approved dissertation submitted on or before Dead Day of the intended term of graduation if the doctoral candidate plans to participate in commencement activities. Summer candidates wishing to participate in spring commencement must defend by Dead Day of the spring semester. The Defense Form with original signatures must be submitted to the Graduate School after the scheduled defense date or two weeks before Dead Day, if the doctoral candidate plans to participate in commencement.

The candidate is required to submit a copy of the committee and Graduate School-approved dissertation as a PDF file by the deadline as published in the Class Schedule of the intended semester of graduation at the ProQuest/University Microfilms International Web site for on-line publication (<http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=95> (<http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school/?siteId=95>)). Information on submission procedures can be found on the Graduate School website. A hard copy of the signature page with original signatures of the members of the dissertation committee must also be submitted to the Graduate School. The signature page must be included in the PDF file, but it should not be signed. Dissertations are regarded as publications and will be made public once they are approved and submitted to the Graduate School unless the author formally requests otherwise.

The following are required for final thesis/dissertation approval:

- Prior to their defense, students must run their thesis/dissertation through the plagiarism detection software approved by UTEP, and the report must be reviewed by their committee chair and members. By signing the defense form, committee members acknowledge that they have reviewed the plagiarism report.
- A copy of the plagiarism report must be submitted to the Graduate School with the thesis/dissertation. The report will be archived separately from the thesis/dissertation.

The chair of a thesis/dissertation committee may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an exception to this requirement; the petition must provide justifications for why an exception is necessary and the steps the committee will take to help ensure academic integrity of the thesis/dissertation.

## Institutional Policy for Doctoral Dissertations in Languages other than English

The language in which doctoral dissertations are written and defended is assumed to be English. The Graduate School recognize that other languages may be deemed appropriate depending on the context of the research conducted by doctoral students. Programs may permit students to write and defend a dissertation in a language other than English, provided that criteria ensuring the integrity of scholarship are met and the process is properly documented. Additional requirements may be set by each doctoral program.

### Minimum Criteria

1. The candidate must exhibit the necessary proficiency in the proposed language to conduct in-depth, quality research as determined by the faculty of the doctoral program.
2. The dissertation committee members are fully able to advise and assist the student in preparing a dissertation on the proposed topic in this language as determined by the chair of the dissertation committee.
3. The dissertation research in the alternative language must be helpful to the candidate's professional and scholarly development.
4. The prospect of publication of dissertation research findings in the proposed language is important to the discipline.
5. For purposes of dissertation publishing and indexing, the abstract and title of the dissertation will be in English.
6. The process of research protocol must be conducted in English and will not be affected by this exception.

### Process

The doctoral candidate's dissertation committee has the responsibility of determining whether the dissertation meets writing standards in the alternative language. The doctoral student must notify the dissertation chair of the intent to write and defend the dissertation in an alternative language. Upon approval by the dissertation chair, the student will secure signatures from the graduate advisor and Graduate School Dean.

### Non-Dissertation

Professional doctoral programs may require the completion of an internship or professional report or formal paper in lieu of a dissertation. The Graduate School does not require the submission of the non-dissertation but requires the submission of a Completion/Defense form to verify successful completion. Students are responsible for adhering to the policies of their doctoral programs. All doctoral students must be enrolled during the semester of graduation.

## Final Examination

All graduate degree candidates are required to satisfactorily complete an oral or written examination or both. The examining committee, composed of at least three (3) members of the graduate faculty, will usually serve as the student's supervising committee. One member of the committee must be from outside the major area of study or from another department. Individual departments can elect to drop a student after a first or second failure of the examination, upon the recommendation of the examining committee; however, under no circumstances will a student be permitted to take the examination more than three (3) times. A student failing such an examination for the **third** time will be dropped from the program.

## Doctoral Milestones

The UT System requires that all newly admitted doctoral students meet with their doctoral program advisor and sign a *New Doctoral Student Milestones Agreement* during the first semester of enrollment in the program. The purpose of the *New Doctoral Student Milestones Agreement* is to ensure that doctoral students are aware of the academic milestones they are expected to reach in order to earn their doctoral degree. Milestones include successfully completing required coursework, presentation of the dissertation proposal and advancement to candidacy and successful defense and completion of the dissertation. Some programs may also require students to successfully pass qualifying or comprehensive examinations. Students are expected to reach each academic milestone within a specified time period in order to make satisfactory progress through the program. The program's Graduate Studies Committee will provide all students with annual, written evaluations and feedback on milestones that should have been met. Students who are not making satisfactory progress will be granted one full academic year to reach missed milestones. At the conclusion of the probationary period, the Graduate Studies Committee will assess progress made and recommend continuation or dismissal from the program.

## Graduation Requirements

Degrees are conferred at the end of each semester and at the end of the summer session. For summer graduates, regardless of the summer session of enrollment, the degree is conferred at the end of the last summer session. Formal commencement ceremonies are held in May for all candidates who complete degree requirements during the spring semester and in December for fall candidates and graduates of the previous summer.

Only summer degree candidates are allowed to walk early and participate in the May commencement ceremony if no more than six (6) hours are needed to complete the degree during the summer session. Summer doctoral degree candidates may participate in the May commencement ceremony only if the dissertation is defended by Dead Day of the spring semester. Summer candidates participating in May commencement must complete the application process by the published deadline for May graduation. Summer candidates' names will not appear in the May program but will appear in the December program.

Graduation requirements are as follows:

1. Completion of all required course work as listed in the Goldmine online degree evaluation.
2. When applicable, acceptance of the thesis or dissertation by the Graduate School.
3. Submission of a completion/defense form to verify satisfactory completion of coursework and/or an oral or written exam or both.
4. Filing of a departmental graduate advisor- and college dean-approved *Application for Graduate Degree* with the Graduate School.
5. Payment of all applicable fees.

## Degree Application Procedures

Graduate students must begin the application process with their program advisors. Graduate degree candidates must submit an Application for Graduate Degree and final degree plan during the semester they expect to graduate and by the deadline stated in the on-line Class Schedule (<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/graduation/graduation-information.html>). The forms must be completed by the student and approved by the graduate advisor and college dean. The student must submit the forms to the Graduate School before the published deadline to allow a complete review of the academic record. The diploma fee and if applicable, the thesis/dissertation University Microfilms on-line traditional publishing fee are billed to the student's Goldmine account upon approval of the Application for Graduate Degree. The Application for Graduate Degree is only valid for one semester.

The University of Texas at El Paso has three conferral dates as listed below:

- May, as published in the Class Schedule (<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/graduation/graduation-information.html>), (<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?alias=academics.utep.edu/registrar>) for all students who complete degree requirements after February 28 and prior to the May Commencement date.
- August 15, for all students who complete degree requirements after June 30 and prior to August 15.
- December, as published in the Schedule of Classes (<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/graduation/graduation-information.html>), for all students who complete degree requirements after October 31 and prior to the December Commencement date.

Students who wish to graduate must complete the application process and pay the fee described below:

- Master's and doctoral students – To be considered for graduation, students must submit the completed and signed graduation application for processing to the Graduate School and all applicable fees will be assessed by the Graduate School.

Graduation Application Fees:

- \$35 if paid by the scheduled deadline
- \$15 Graduation Application Late Fee

The graduation application fee is not refundable. A student who defers graduation to the following term must reapply for graduation. However, the student will not be required to repay the graduation application fee.

## Commencement

Formal commencement ceremonies are held in May for all candidates who complete degree requirements during the spring semester and in December for fall candidates. There is no summer commencement, nor are there commencement ceremonies for students whose degrees are conferred in February, June, or October.

- Students whose degrees are conferred in February are invited to participate in the May commencement ceremony.
- Students whose degrees are conferred in June or August (summer candidates) are invited to participate in the May commencement ceremony if no more than six (6) hours are needed to complete the degree prior to August 15. Summer candidates' names will not appear in the May program. Summer candidates who do not participate in May commencement can participate in December commencement. Summer candidates' names will appear only in the December program.
- Students whose degrees are conferred in October are invited to participate in the December commencement ceremony.

If a Nondisclosure of Directory Information (confidential) request on file, the University will not release the candidate's name for any commencement publications that are made available to the public. The candidate can request the removal of the nondisclosure request in Goldmine by clicking Answer a Survey or Complete a Form listed under the Personal Information tab. Select the survey entitled Student Request to Revoke Nondisclosure of Directory Information. The candidate can also email their request using their UTEP email account to registrar@utep.edu.

Degrees are conferred approximately two months following the end of each long semester (December and May) and at the end of the long summer session (August). The degree will be posted to the transcript with the commencement date for each long semester and the last day of finals for the long summer session.

## Diploma

The name appears on the diploma as it appears on the official university record. Only legal names can appear on the diploma. The rationale is that the diploma is a legal document, and it represents the degree earned. If a graduate displayed her/his diploma, and someone called our office to verify the degree and its authenticity, we would be unable to locate the graduate's record if the name appears differently on the diploma from the academic record.

The degree title will appear in the center of the diploma below the student's name. The student's major(s) will appear on the diploma only if it is not included in the official degree title. Institutional academic honors awarded will appear below the major(s).

Certificates, concentrations, endorsements, minors, and honors earned in the department or the University Honors Program will only appear on the student's academic transcript and not on the diploma.

Approximately two months following the end of each long semester (December and May) and at the end of the long summer session (August), the university awards a diploma to each student upon whom a degree is conferred provided a graduation application has been filed. Diplomas are mailed to the address provided by the student. A complimentary transcript showing the degree earned will be mailed separately. However, for mailing service outside the United States there is a service fee. Fees are listed on the Diplomas Mailing Request and are subject to change. The application is located in the Student Forms block (<http://utep.edu/register/>).

A graduating student who has an outstanding financial obligation with the university will not receive a diploma or transcript until such obligation is satisfied in full. To clear the financial debt, contact the Student Business Services Office at (915) 747-5105.

A graduating student who received a student loan or TEACH grant must complete the Stafford Exit Counseling session. Click Complete Online Student Loan Counseling (<http://mappingyourfuture.org/>). A diploma or transcript will not be released until the Exit Counseling session is completed.

## Replacement Diploma

If an original diploma is lost, stolen, destroyed, or requires a name change, the diploma can be replaced for a fee. To order a replacement diploma, you need to file a Diploma Replacement Request. The application is located in the Student Forms block (<http://utep.edu/register/>).

Anyone ordering a replacement diploma also needs to provide a clear copy of proof of identity containing a photo. Examples include a passport or current driver's license.

The replacement diploma fee is \$30.00 each.

For mailing service through express mail or outside the United States there is a service fee. Fees are listed on the Diplomas Replacement Request and subject to change.

It should be noted that a replacement diploma will reflect current diploma format and therefore may not be identical in all respects to the original. The word "This is a Replacement" will appear on the lower center of the diploma.

The completed Diploma Replacement Request, fee, and copy of proof of identity may be mailed to:

The University of Texas at El Paso  
Registration and Records Office  
500 W. University Ave.  
El Paso, Texas 79968

The request may also be sent by email attachment to [graduation@utep.edu](mailto:graduation@utep.edu), or faxed to (915) 747-8764.

### **Unclaimed Diplomas**

Unclaimed diplomas will be kept for five years from the date of award. They will then be destroyed. Graduates who request an unclaimed diploma after it has been destroyed will have to pay the replacement fee in effect at the time of their request. It should be noted that a replacement diploma may not be identical in all respects to the original.

### **Posthumous Degree**

Enrolled students whose untimely death prevents degree completion may be awarded a posthumous degree. A posthumous degree can be awarded only if the student was enrolled in courses that would have allowed the student to complete all work for the degree, and if the student had the appropriate grade point average in the required areas for graduation. If an Application for Graduation is not already on file, one may be completed by the deceased student's major/degree advisor or family member. The major/degree advisor can recommend to the Dean of the Graduate School that the remaining requirements be waived and the degree awarded. The Dean will need to endorse the recommendation and forward it to the Registrar. For further information, individuals should contact the appropriate dean's office and the Graduate School at 915.747.5491.