

Texas A&M International University
College of Arts & Sciences
2003-2004
Graduate Handbook

College of Arts and Sciences

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	<u>1</u>
OBJECTIVE OF GRADUATE STUDY	<u>2</u>
Admission Requirements and Procedures	<u>2</u>
GRADUATE COUNCIL	<u>3</u>
Membership	<u>3</u>
Functions of the Graduate Council	<u>3</u>
Petitions	<u>3</u>
Meetings	<u>4</u>
Application Deadline for Admissions and Council Action	<u>4</u>
Graduate Council Meetings.	<u>4</u>
Admission Process	<u>4</u>
STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES	<u>6</u>
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS	<u>7</u>
Requirement for Graduation	<u>7</u>
Eligibility to Take the Exam	<u>7</u>
Notification of Intent	<u>7</u>
Preparation for the Comprehensive Exam	<u>7</u>
Scheduling the Exam	<u>7</u>
Last Day to Take Examination	<u>8</u>
Format and Grading of the Exam	<u>8</u>
THESIS AND NON-THESIS OPTIONS	<u>11</u>
Thesis Option	<u>11</u>
Scholastic Credit Hour Requirements for Thesis Options	<u>12</u>
The Thesis Option	<u>12</u>
Non-Thesis Option	<u>13</u>
Scholastic Credit Hour Requirements for Non-Thesis Options	<u>14</u>

INTRODUCTION

MISCELLANEOUS	15
Class Attendance	15
Course Load	15
Leave of Absence	15
Leave of Absence Policy	16
Financial Aid	16
Graduate Assistantship	16
Language Requirement	17
Ethics	17
Checklist For Graduate Students And Faculty Advisors	18

The faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M International University are pleased to welcome you to our graduate program. We hope that your experience at the University will be both enjoyable and rewarding.

This handbook will introduce you to the procedures, schedules, and requirements of the graduate program. **This material is provided as a convenient guide to basic information; however, students should be aware that the authoritative, official policies of the University are definitively set forth in the current Texas A&M International University catalog and in the policy manuals of the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS).** When in doubt about any information in this handbook, students should consult the catalog or the Texas A&M University System manuals.

Two other texts containing essential information are the Texas A&M International University *Student Handbook* and the College of Arts and Sciences *Thesis Manual*. The *Student Handbook* is available in the Office of Student Development (Student Center 226), and the *Thesis Manual* is available in the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences - Killam Library (KL) 429. As a graduate student, it is your responsibility to be informed about policies and practices pertaining to your graduate studies.

Graduate degrees in the College of Arts and Sciences include Master of Arts, Master of Public Administration, and Master of Science in Criminal Justice. Area majors include Counseling Psychology, Criminal Justice, English, History, Political Science, Public Administration, Sociology, and Spanish.

OBJECTIVE OF GRADUATE STUDY

"The principal aim of graduate study is to develop in the student the power of independent work. Consequently, the character of work expected of graduate students is different from that of students seeking less-advanced degrees. A wide knowledge of the major subject and related subjects will be expected. To this end, the student will do assigned readings, attend lectures and conferences, and make use of the library in equipping himself/herself to do effective study" 2003-2004 Texas A&M International University Catalog, 181).

Admission Requirements and Procedures

All student (including transfer students) seeking admission to a graduate degree program in the College of Arts and Sciences must first file an application with the University's Office of Admissions (KL 155). All supporting material indicated in the Catalog must be submitted by the stated deadline.

In addition, a separate application is required by the College of Arts and Sciences. This second application initiates the student's specific degree plan, which is essential for effective advising. Students are not required to select the major professor at the time of application.¹

Students who do not meet the University's entrance requirements may petition the Graduate Council for special consideration. Those students requesting extensions to their degree plan term must petition the Graduate Council.

¹ By the second semester of graduate registration the names of the advisory committee members should be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies.

GRADUATE COUNCIL

Membership

The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences appoints the Graduate Council.

Functions of the Graduate Council

- Review graduate applications involving students who are:
 - requesting special consideration and/or a waiver of the University's regulations.
 - transferring from other institutions.
 - transferring from another college and/or Department at TAMU.
 - requesting deadline extensions.
- Submit admissions recommendations to the Dean.
- Establish the Council's own operating procedures.
- Consider and rule in degree program change requests from candidates.
- Serve as a consultative body to advise the Department Chairs on any matters concerning graduate studies.

Petitions

Although the faculty expect all graduate students to meet the requirements outlined in the catalog, exceptions will occasionally be made in cases in which a student can demonstrate a genuine emergency has interfered with the timely completion of these requirements.

When such a situation arises, the student should petition the Graduate Council for an exemption from the ordinary requirements. Relevant deadlines are listed below.

Meetings

The Graduate Council will meet at least twice a year to consider applications for graduate admission and to consider petitions. Applicants for admission, as well as students submitting petitions, should note the following deadlines:

Application Deadline for Admissions and Council Action

For Summer or Fall	-----	First working day in April
For Spring	-----	First working day in November

Graduate Council Meetings

For Summer or Fall	-----	Last week in April
For Spring	-----	Last week in November

Admission Process

1. Students apply to the Office of Admissions for entry into the University.
2. Students apply to the Office of Graduate Studies for entry into the College of Arts and Sciences. (KL 431)
3. The Director of Graduate Studies welcomes students who meet the University's requirements and initiates these students' applications for admission to the College of Arts and Sciences.
4. The Director of Graduate Studies submits the student's application to the appropriate Departmental Admissions Committee for consideration.

5. The Chair of the Departmental Admissions Committee calls a meeting to review petitions received by the appropriate deadlines. All relevant information will be considered, including a presentation by any student who wishes to give one.
6. The Chair of the Departmental Admissions Committee sends a memo to the Dean and the Director of Graduate Studies documenting the recommendations of the Departmental Admissions Committee .
7. The Dean considers the recommendations and makes a final decision, which is then communicated to:
 - i. the student.
 - ii. the Director of Graduate Studies.
 - iii. the appropriate Department Chair.
 - iv. the Office of Admissions.

Each student application will be carefully reviewed (in compliance with HB 1641), and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. The Director of Graduate Studies will notify students in writing about the status of their applications.

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Soon after enrolling for graduate course work, and no later than the end of the second semester of study, each student must request a faculty member to chair an advisory committee. The committee should include three tenured or tenure-track faculty members. The committee chair must be from the student's major field, and one member may be from a different field.

Selection of committee members should occur after discussion between the student and the committee chair. If the student wishes to include more than three faculty members on the committee, approval by the committee chair is required. Once the committee has been chosen and the designated faculty members have agreed to serve, the student must obtain their signatures on the form "Request for Service on a Graduate Advisory Committee" (available from the departmental secretary). The student takes this form to the office of the Department Chair, where it is kept as part of the student's academic records. Students must update their committee membership if any faculty members on the committee have left the university.

The student's advisory committee, in consultation with the student, will design a coherent and viable degree plan and a reasonable timetable for executing it. Upon advisement, each student will receive a copy of a checklist for graduate students and faculty advisors (see "Checklist for Graduate Students") which will clarify the various stages of the student's expected progress toward the degree.

Undergraduate stem-work or prerequisites will not be included in the degree plan. Students must complete all courses with a satisfactory grade (C or above) and must maintain at least a 3.00 (B) cumulative average to remain in good standing. Students may petition the Graduate Council to include no more than one course in

which the grade of C was received (except for the MACP Program, which allows no grades of C).

The advisory committee, under the direction of the Department Chair, will have the responsibility for the following:

- Counseling the student on academic matters.
- Evaluating the student's progress toward completion of the degree program.
- Preparing the comprehensive examination.
- Assisting with the thesis research proposal.
- Administering and attending the defense of the thesis.

All graduate students should schedule regular and convenient appointments with their committee chairs each semester. At the end of each semester, the committee chair must record that the student is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the degree. Any student who temporarily or permanently drops out of a graduate program must provide a written explanation to the chair of the advisory committee, who will file a report with the Department Chair. (See Leave of Absence section on page 13 of this Handbook).

Students wishing to change either the chair or any member of the advisory committee must petition the Department Chair for permission to make such a change, citing specific and substantial reasons. Such changes should only be made after serious reflection.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Requirement for Graduation

At the end of the degree program, master's students must pass a comprehensive examination in order to graduate. The comprehensive exam can be taken during the student's last semester of course work.

Eligibility to Take the Exam

In order to be eligible to take the comprehensive examination, a student must have at least a 3.00 GPA, with no outstanding grade of D, F, U, or I for any course listed on the student's degree plan. In order to change an unsatisfactory grade, a student must repeat the class and obtain a satisfactory final grade.

Notification of Intent

Master's degree candidates must register intent to take the comprehensive examinations with the Department Chair no later than the third Friday of the semester in which the exam will be taken.

Preparation for the Comprehensive Exam

At or near the beginning of the semester during which the exam will be taken, master's students are encouraged to make appointments with professors who will submit questions for the examination. These appointments will give students guidance about the materials most important to review. In order to study for the comprehensive exam, graduate students should keep notes, exams, and books from their courses.

Scheduling the Exam

Comprehensive exams are administered and scheduled by the

Office of Programs for Academic Support and Enrichment (PASE) during the student's last semester of course work. Before the exam takes place, the Department Chair and/or Advisory Committee Chair will ask faculty in the student's major and minor fields to submit questions.

Last Day to Take Examination

The last Friday of October (Fall Semester) or March (Spring Semester) is the last day to take the exam for graduation in that semester. Exams may be scheduled in the summer at the discretion of the Department Chair.

Format and Grading of the Exam

This exam will vary in format according to departmental requirements, but it should include written responses that covers the class work taken in the student's major and minor fields as well as questions covering basic general knowledge in these disciplines. An oral defense of the student's written answers may be required at the discretion of the advisory committee.

At the examination, each master's student will be given a number of questions selected by the student's committee chair that cover the courses taken by the student in the major and minor fields. *Topics for questions will not be announced prior to the examination.* Each student will ordinarily have one hour per question for a maximum of 4 hours. The department will supply writing materials or computer, which will be used for each question. Students should be prepared to show a picture identification when going for the exam.

Each faculty member who has submitted a question will judge whether the student has responded sufficiently well to that question to deserve a passing grade, and this judgment will be reported first to the chair of the Advisory Committee and finally to the Department Chair. It is also the prerogative of each faculty member

involved to request that the student undergo further written or oral examination on a particular question. The student's Advisory Committee makes a final recommendation to the Department Chair concerning the student's performance on the exam (i.e., pass or fail).

All grades for comprehensives will be sent to the office of the Department Chair no later than the second Friday of November (Fall Semester) or April (Spring Semester).

A student who does not complete all degree requirements within one year of passing the comprehensive exam will have to take and pass it again. A student who fails to pass one or more questions of the exam will be allowed two chances to repeat and pass the exam.

All degree requirements must be completed within five years of beginning the master's degree. The comprehensive exam must be taken before a student can sign up for Thesis classes 1 or 2.

THESIS AND NON-THESIS OPTIONS

Both thesis and non-thesis degree plans are available in the graduate programs in Counseling Psychology, Criminal Justice, English, History, Political Science, Sociology, and Spanish. Only a non-thesis plan is available in Public Administration and MAIS.

Thesis Option

The thesis option requires an original paper which demonstrates the ability of the candidate to organize and conduct a research study and to write a professionally competent report which makes a substantial contribution to ongoing work in the student's chosen discipline. Each student is guided in the thesis project by the advisory committee, under the direction of the committee chair. The format of the master's thesis should follow the guidelines set forth in the College of Arts and Sciences *Thesis Manual*, which provides clear information about relevant specifications. This manual is available in the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

While degree plans differ in the number of total scholastic credit hours (SCH) required, hours in a minor area of study are an obligatory part of most thesis plans, as are the six hours of thesis research. Students must maintain continuous registration during the Fall and Spring semesters until all degree requirements are fulfilled (see Leave of Absence, page 17).

The following chart summarizes the required number of SCH in each master's degree plan.

**Scholastic Credit Hour Requirements
for Thesis Options**

Field of Study	Scholastic Credit Hours Required			
	Major Curriculum	Minor Curriculum	Thesis	Total
MA/English	24	0	6	30
MA/History	18	6	6	30
MA/Political Sci.	18	6	6	30
MA/Sociology	18	6	6	30
MA/Spanish	24	0	6	30
MS/Criminal Justice	21	9	6	36

Field of Study	Scholastic Credit Hours Required				
	Major Curriculum	Electives	Clinical Supervision	Thesis	Total
MA/Coun.Psyc	33	3	9	3	48

The Thesis

Students preparing to write a master's thesis should consult carefully with their advisors and should familiarize themselves with the College of Arts and Sciences *Thesis Manual*. Since the thesis should demonstrate a student's capacity for independent research and formal writing, all work submitted to the advisor or to the committee should be presented in an acceptable format and should be free from fundamental technical or logical errors. Each student embarking upon a thesis project should read at least one M.A. or M.S. (whichever is

appropriate) thesis recommended by the advisor. Each thesis topic should be thoroughly researched so that no duplication of work will occur.

When the advisor is satisfied that the thesis is formally acceptable, an oral defense of the thesis will be scheduled.

Non-Thesis Option

In some instances, the requirements for the non-thesis option for a master's degree are satisfied by completing additional semester hours of course work in lieu of the thesis. Thirty-six credit hours are required for a non-thesis master's degree with required courses in a minor field of study.

The level of courses and the examination requirements are the same as for the thesis option. The comprehensive final examination must be completed satisfactorily.

The following chart summarizes the scholastic credit hour requirements for the non-thesis.

**Scholastic Credit Hour Requirements
for Non-Thesis Options**

Field of Study	Scholastic Credit Hours Required		
	Major Curriculum	Minor Curriculum (or electives)	Total
MA/English	27	9	36
MA/History	27	9	36
MA/Political Science	27	9	36
MA/Sociology	27	9	36
MA/Spanish	27	6 / 3 ²	36
MS/Criminal Justice	27	9	36
Master of Public Administration	33	9	42
MAIS ³	18	18	36

Field of Study	Scholastic Credit Hours Required			
	Major Curriculum	Electives	Clinical Supervision	Total
MA/Couns. Psyc	33	6	9	48

² Professional paper

³ Disciplines must be chosen from the approved list.

MISCELLANEOUS

Class Attendance

Although individual faculty members will set their own attendance policies, graduate students should be aware that, because their classes ordinarily meet once a week, missing one class is equivalent to missing one week of instruction. Consequently, absences must be kept to a minimum, and students should make certain that their professors understand the reasons for any absences from class. Although graduate work teaches students to develop skills in independent thinking, the classroom experience remains at the heart of this learning process; therefore, responsible and regular attendance and preparation are vital.

Course Load

The normal, full-time course load for Arts and Sciences graduate students is nine hours per regular semester and six hours per summer session. Students wishing to take more than nine hours in a regular semester or six hours in a summer session must request special permission from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. It is recommended that students with a full time job take no more than six hours per regular semester and no more than three hours per summer session.

Leave of Absence

Students should also be aware that they are required to maintain continuous registration during the Fall and Spring semesters including registration for thesis until all requirements for graduation have been met. **Interruptions or delays in the course of study which have not been approved in advance by the student's advisory committee chair will interfere with the degree time limits and may result in students having to re-take courses and/or apply for re-admission to the program.**

Leave of Absence Policy

- You must be in good standing (i.e., financial obligations met, no disciplinary action, good academic standing)
- Requests for Leave of Absence must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies before the second week of the first semester of absence.
- The maximum Leave of Absence is two semesters. Any Leave of Absence beyond two semesters must be adequately justified and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.
- The maximum number of Leaves of Absence requests is two.
- You must inform the Director of Graduate Studies when you return from your Leave of Absence.
- Unapproved Leaves of Absence may result in the student being required to re-apply to their respective programs.

Financial Aid

Graduate students interested in financial assistance should obtain a copy of the *Financial Aid Student Handbook* from the Texas A&M International University Office of Financial Aid.

Graduate Assistantships

Individual departments may provide a limited number of teaching and research assistantships for graduate students who demonstrate outstanding ability. Such assistantships will be awarded on a competitive basis, and students receiving such appointments will be subject to regular evaluation by their departments. These assistantships will constitute no more than 1/3 time employment, and graduate assistants will be expected to register for no more than six credit hours per semester and to maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0. Students interested in applying for such assistantships should contact the appropriate Department Chair.

Language Requirement

All graduate students should demonstrate fundamental skills in the reading, speaking, and writing of English. Any student who proves unable to function competently in English will be required to take remedial work in order to develop the proficiency necessary for successful graduate study. Decisions about individual students will be made by the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

Most graduate schools encourage or even require students to demonstrate reasonable proficiency in the reading of at least one language other than English. All Texas A&M International University graduate students are encouraged to improve their skills in Spanish and to study other languages as our course offerings expand. To ascertain whether a particular degree program requires demonstrable proficiency in a language other than English, students should consult the Department Chair in their major area.

Students who hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a university outside the United States may be required to pass a departmentally administered reading proficiency test of English.

Ethics

Texas A&M International University graduate students should recognize that they represent their intellectual community in a special way. Our institution's reputation depends upon what our graduates achieve and upon how they conduct themselves. The University expects graduate students to conduct themselves in accord with principles appropriate to mature and rational individuals. A detailed description of the Student Conduct Code is available on page 9 of the 2003-2004 Texas A&M International University *Student Handbook*.

Checklist For Graduate Students And Faculty Advisors

This checklist is provided to help you and your Advisory Committee track your progress through the various stages of graduate study.

Student's Name _____

Major _____

Chair of Advisory Committee _____

Advisory Committee Member _____

Advisory Committee Member _____

Activity	Expected Completion Date	Actual Completion Date
___ Univ., College & Dept. Applications	_____	_____
___ GRE & Transcripts in Admissions Office	_____	_____
___ Dean's Acceptance Letter	_____	_____
___ Advisory Committee formed	_____	_____
___ Approved Degree Plan	_____	_____
___ Completion of course work	_____	_____
___ Comprehensive Exam for Major	_____	_____
___ Comprehensive Exam for Minor	_____	_____
___ Thesis Proposal Submitted	_____	_____
___ Thesis Proposal Approved	_____	_____
___ Oral Defense	_____	_____
___ Final Thesis Cleared	_____	_____
___ Application for Graduation	_____	_____

Notes: