

# Glossary of Terms

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**Admission to degree status**—Admission to the College of Graduate Studies as a graduate student for the purpose of seeking a graduate degree. This status requires completing a graduate admission application; meeting all entrance and test requirements; transmittal of relevant official transcripts; payment of an application fee; approval by the graduate program/department; and approval by the College of Graduate Studies. In the case of international students or domestic students whose highest degree is from an institution outside the United States, an external evaluation of the relevant official transcripts from an evaluation source such as WES must occur for all non-English transcripts.

**NOTE:** *Some graduate programs allow applicants to begin taking classes prior to an admission decision whereas others prohibit such enrollment. An applicant should seek information from the relevant graduate program about its policy.*

**Admission to non-degree status**—Admission to the College of Graduate Studies as a post-baccalaureate student for the purpose of officially taking graduate courses but not seeking a graduate degree through MTSU. This status requires completing a graduate admission application; transmitting relevant official transcripts; payment of an application fee; and approval by the College of Graduate Studies. Not all graduate courses are open to non-degree students; thus the student should consult with the director of graduate study in the department.

**Advancement to candidacy**—Status of the student who has completed all or a substantial portion of the curriculum and has successfully passed either the culminating examination (comprehensive exams for master's students or preliminary exams for doctoral students). Advancement to candidacy is recognition that the student is prepared to commence the thesis or dissertation research. For non-thesis students it verifies that the student has completed all degree requirements and is eligible for graduation. Advancement form is submitted to the College of Graduate Studies by the director of graduate studies and identifies the members of the thesis or dissertation committee.

**Cognate**—Six semester hours of related coursework.

**Comprehensive examination**—An examination given to master's and specialist's students, generally during the last semester of coursework. The examination for all students may be oral, written, or a combination of both modes. It may be taken no more than twice. The purpose of this examination is to assess the candidate's knowledge of a broad academic field and to evaluate whether the candidate has attained certain standards and/or requirements necessary to successfully complete the program. If the examinations are written, they are to be kept on file in the department. The student has the right of access to his or her graded exam for a period of five (5) years.

**Concentration**—A curricular component of a graduate program representing a well-recognized subset or branch of the discipline. A concentration appears on the student's graduate transcript.

**Conditional admission**—The granting of temporary admission into a graduate program with certain stipulations being placed upon the student. Continuation in the program as a degree-seeking student is contingent upon fulfilling specific requirements described in the conditional admission letter. Conditional admission into the College of Graduate Studies may be granted if the applicant has less than the minimum requirements, i.e., either the required minimum grade point average for graduate study or the test scores (but not both) are not met. Such admission is at the discretion of the graduate dean.

**Continuous enrollment**—Enrollment during the regular academic year (Fall and Spring Semesters) unless the academic program requires year round enrollment. Continuous enrollment is expected of all students from initial enrollment until completion of dissertation for doctoral students and until completion of thesis for all specialist's and master's students. Students in non-thesis programs should maintain continuous enrollment through their culminating experience.

**Degree plan**—The degree plan specifies the courses which the student is required to take to complete the curricular requirements. This form must be filed and approved prior to completion of 21 hours at the master's and specialist's levels and 30 hours at the doctoral level (or earlier if required by the graduate program) by the pertinent graduate program personnel (e.g., graduate advisor, director of graduate studies, etc.), and the dean of the College of Graduate Studies (or designee). The form may be amended as needed by submitting an approved Change of Degree Plan Form.

**Director of graduate studies**—A faculty member appointed to serve as the principal officer of a graduate program with respect to curricular and other relevant matters.

**Full-time/part-time graduate status**—See student load, page 47.

**Graduate advisor**—A faculty member appointed by the department and approved by the College of Graduate Studies to advise graduate students and provide curricular planning counseling. Graduate students should consult with their graduate advisors prior to or immediately upon being admitted to a graduate program. A list of graduate advisors may be obtained from the graduate program or the relevant department.

**Graduate analyst**—A staff member within the College of Graduate Studies assigned to assist the individual graduate student with respect to all relevant administrative matters from the point of admission through graduation.

**Graduate status**—Status whereby a post-baccalaureate student is declared eligible to enroll in graduate courses at MTSU. The granting of graduate status does not necessarily mean that one has been admitted to a graduate program. (Also see hold and admission.)

**Graduation requirements**—Those academic and other requirements necessary for successful completion in order to be eligible for receipt of the degree. In general, the requirements in existence at the time of matriculation are those which must be fulfilled. These requirements are listed in the graduate catalog of that year. Changes in a graduate curriculum may occur while a student is enrolled. If so, the student will have the option of fulfilling the new requirements or following the original plan in existence at the time of matriculation. This is subject to “stop-out” limitations and course availability. (See stop-out.)

**Hold**—A block placed on registration (or transcripts). For example, a registration hold will be placed on all non-admitted, degree-seeking applicants having graduate status after their first semester.

**Intent to graduate**—Indication that the candidate is planning to complete all degree requirements during the current term. An Intent to Graduate Form must be filed by the candidate **by the date listed on the College of Graduate Studies Web site for the semester of planned graduation**. This authorizes release of the student’s file for final evaluation and authorizes information to be collected for issuance of the diploma.

**Major**—A field of study representing a well-recognized discipline in which a graduate program is offered. A major appears on the student’s graduate transcript.

**Major professor**—The faculty member providing the primary scholarly research mentorship to the graduate student. The major professor serves as the director or chair of the thesis or dissertation committee.

**Matriculation**—The first semester of enrollment after admission to a graduate program.

**Minor**—A freestanding curricular component of a graduate program representing an academic discipline. This designation verifies that scholarly expertise in the minor field has been achieved in addition to that attained in the major discipline.

**Plagiarism**—The use or reproduction of material from another person’s work (e.g., publications, productions, or intellectual property) without revealing the source and/or clearly acknowledging the degree of dependency. If materials are reproduced verbatim from another source, or even reproduced in large part with only minor modification, proper citation **must** occur. To avoid allegations of plagiarism, clearly cite the source and use quotations marks to identify the excerpts, or clearly acknowledge the source by indenting and single-spacing the reproduced selections.

**Preliminary examination**—The second of a set of doctoral examinations which are taken at the end of coursework and are preliminary to entering the dissertation phase. Preliminary examinations may be both written and oral and are inclusive of coursework and supplementary readings. Students should consult with their advisors as to the individual program policy on timing and content of examinations.

**Qualifying examination**—An examination given to doctoral students to assess the level of mastery of knowledge in the discipline and to determine if the student is qualified to continue as a candidate for the doctoral degree. Individual programs often require the successful completion of the qualifying examination after the first year of the doctoral program. Students should consult with their advisors as to the individual program policy on timing and content of examinations. Written portions of the examination are to be kept on file in the department for a period of five (5) years, and the student has the right of access. Passing the examination is a milestone in academic achievement by a doctoral student.

**Prerequisites**—Courses which are required for completion in order to provide the necessary academic background for subsequent graduate coursework. Prerequisites are determined and monitored by the individual graduate program.

**Readmission (reenrollment)**—Applications for readmission must be filed if a graduate student fails to maintain continuous graduate enrollment. If granted, the student may reenroll for the identified term. Readmission, if granted, is based on competitiveness with current applicants and is not guaranteed. The department or program should be consulted for its readmission policy.

**Repeat policy**—The number of graduate courses possible for repetition for the purpose of grade replacement is limited to two. These two courses may not exceed 8 credit hours.

**Satisfactory progress**—Successful advancement of a student toward his/her degree objective in the judgment of the faculty and dean of the College of Graduate Studies. To be deemed as making satisfactory progress, a graduate student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 (3.25 in doctoral programs) or greater and **must** successfully complete sufficient and appropriate graduate courses. These graduate courses must apply toward the graduate curriculum in a manner consistent with completion of the degree objective and within the established time limit.

**70/30 Rule**—A curricular stipulation for master’s degree candidates specifying that no more than 30 percent of the total degree hours may be dually listed as undergraduate/graduate hours. Candidates with more than 30 percent of the degree program dually listed as undergraduate/graduate hours cannot graduate until the balance is attained. Normally, no more than 3 credits of thesis research (course 6640) will be applied toward the minimum degree hour requirement. Careful curricular planning in consultation with the graduate advisor is essential.

**Specialization**—A curricular component of a graduate program representing a well-recognized subset or branch of the discipline. A specialization does not appear on the student's graduate transcript.

**Stop-out**—Events in life such as family leave, illness, or military duty may result in a student being unable to maintain continuous enrollment. In such a case, students may request permission to interrupt their studies on a temporary basis. A stop-out is the period of time during which a student fails to register for successive academic sessions. If the stop-out period exceeds one academic year (Fall and Spring Semesters), the student may be required to fulfill degree requirements in existence at the time of reenrollment, rather than those in place at the original matriculation. A formal request to stop-out must be filed by the student, endorsed by the director of graduate studies in their department, and approved by the dean of the College of Graduate Studies. A stop-out may be utilized no more than one time during the time limit for the degree program.

**Time limits**—The time elapsed from matriculation during which a student is required to complete all degree require-

ments. Master's and specialist's students have six years from matriculation to complete all degree requirements. Doctoral students have ten years from matriculation to complete all degree requirements. These time limits are subject to extension but only for compelling reasons. If an extension is to be granted, it must be supported by the graduate program and approved by the dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

**Transfer credit**—Student's coursework taken at other colleges and universities which is formally transferred to the MTSU graduate record. In general, only coursework taken while in graduate status **prior** to attending MTSU will be transferred and only if those courses were not used in partial satisfaction of degree requirements at the previous university. Transfer credit should demonstrate equivalency to existing MTSU courses acceptable for the graduate degree and requires the approval of the student's director of graduate studies and the dean of the College of Graduate Studies during the first semester of enrollment at MTSU. In general, credits completed seven (7) or more years prior to admission to a degree program at MTSU will not be considered for transfer.

