

Graduate Student Achievement Metrics

Nationally, a universal assessment of graduate student achievement is not uniformly endorsed, so the Graduate School uses its own internal assessment to evaluate graduate student achievement. Key indicators are retention and graduation rates for master's and professional or research doctorate students. These indicators are closely monitored to ensure programs can successfully achieve the productivity requirements of the UNC System. Retention and graduation data are updated annually and available to key stakeholders and the public via Tableau dashboards on the Institutional Research website. Additionally, the information is discussed at meetings of the Graduate Program Directors and University administrators via the Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) Workgroup, the Graduate Council, and Graduate Program Director meetings.

Master's One-Year Retention

The one-year retention rate for master's students ranged from 74.6% in 2010 to a high of 79.5% in 2015-16. The goal is for master's programs to achieve a 77% one-year retention rate, thus ensuring the viability and predictability of academic offerings, appropriate student support towards graduation, adequate time to degree, and sufficient time to ensure student fit with a program. As seen in the table 10, UNC Charlotte's one-year retention rate for master's students has been as high as 79% and has hovered around 77% to 78% for the past three years. The threshold of acceptability is 74% to ensure that 1) programs are responsive to the need to evaluate decreases in student retention, 2) encourage students to continue their education, 3) make necessary changes to the type of applicant offered admission, and 4) deploy support strategies to increase retention.

Table 10 Master's One-Year Retention

Entry Term	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Retained	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Actual	74.6%	76.1%	74.9%	75.0%	79.1%	79.5%	78.7%	78.7%	77.4%	78.1%
Goal	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%
Threshold of Acceptability	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%

Master's Two-Year Graduation

The two-year graduation rate for new master's students over the last nine years ranged from 48.6% to 67.3%; this was due in large part to the significant variability of hours required to earn master's degrees (from a minimum of 30 to a high of 69) and the significant increase of new international students in IT-related fields who graduate in three semesters. The goal for all new master's students is set at 65% because a decrease in new international students (as experienced in fall 2020 during the pandemic) who are legally required to enroll full time can swiftly change the mix of domestic to international students, and part-time students require longer to complete a degree. Nonetheless, the goal is sufficiently high given the centralized supports provided to students through the Center for Graduate Life and Learning. As seen in

the table 11, the two-year graduation goal was achieved with all cohorts. The threshold of acceptability is 50% to allow flexibility for program growth that primarily supports part time enrolled students, while also simultaneously supporting retention to graduation.

Table 11 Master’s Two-Year Graduation

Entry Term	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Two Year Graduation Rate	48.6%	51.2%	57.2%	63.5%	65.8%	64.0%	67.3%	64.4%	67.3%
Goal	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%
Threshold of Acceptability	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%

Master’s Four-Year Graduation

The four-year graduation rate for new master’s students ranged from 76% to 87%. The goal is to achieve an 83% graduation rate to ensure students graduate in a timely manner with as little debt as possible, and the program provides adequate supports for students to ensure timely progress to the degree. As seen in the table 12, the four-year graduation rate for new master’s students has been achieved since 2013. The threshold of acceptability is 80% given that some programs support students whose ability to continue is dictated by career constraints (job transfers), availability of funding or lack of it (tuition support and stipend compensation), employment, and economics (recessions, student debt loads, and industry/business/education hiring trends). Any rate under 80% should necessarily trigger a program to closely evaluate student attrition and make changes to increase retention to graduation.

Table 12 Master’s Four-Year Graduation

Entry Term	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
Four Year Graduation Rate	76.0%	80.1%	80.4%	85.0%	84.7%	85.5%	87.0%
Goal	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%
Threshold of Acceptability	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%

Research Doctoral One-Year Retention

The one-year retention rate for students in research doctoral programs ranged from 85.3% in 2010 to a high of 92% in 2011. The goal for all research doctoral programs is to achieve an 85% one-year retention

rate, thus ensuring viability for the academic program itself and predictability of academic offerings, funding packages, appropriate student supports to graduation, adequate time to degree, and sufficient resources to support faculty on research and teaching efforts. As seen in the table 13, UNC Charlotte's one-year retention rate for doctoral students has hovered between 85% to 90%. The threshold of acceptability is 83% to trigger programs to 1) evaluate reasons for a decrease in student retention, 2) encourage students to continue their study, 3) make necessary modifications to the type of applicant offered admission, and 4) deploy support strategies to increase student success and retention.

Table 13 Research Doctoral One-Year Retention

Entry Term	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
New Cohort	170	137	163	155	166	171	170	185	186	210
Retained	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Actual	85.3%	92.0%	86.5%	85.8%	88.0%	90.0%	85.9%	89.7%	90.9%	89.0%
Goal	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%
Threshold of Acceptability	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%

Research Doctoral Five-Year Graduation

The five-year graduation rate for doctoral students ranged from a low of 30% in 2010 to 51.2% in 2014. The goal for all research doctoral students is set at 42%, understanding that the number of hours required to earn a doctoral degree at UNC Charlotte varies based on whether students enroll as advanced standing having enrolled with an earned master's degree, competition from business and industry as exemplary students are recruited (back) to the workforce, and variations in time to degree given the nature of independent research and the time required to complete it and complete the dissertation. The overall graduation rate per year depends on students' ability to generate sufficient research to successfully defend their final paper, as well as the number of students enrolled across the 22 research programs. Programs like the Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instructure enroll a large number of students on a part-time basis, so higher numbers of part-time students extend the time to degree. As seen in the table 14, UNC Charlotte's five-year graduation rate for doctoral students rarely exceeds 40%. Even though students are only guaranteed funding for five years, faculty regularly support students on extramural dollars to continue their research. The threshold of acceptability is 39% to ensure programs pay close attention to student milestones, funding availability, student debt, and structural systems put in place to successfully mentor doctoral students through to graduation, particularly once students are complete except for the dissertation.

Table 14 Research Doctoral Five-Year Graduation

Entry Term	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
Five Year Graduation Rate	30.0%	40.1%	39.3%	38.1%	51.2%	39.8%
Goal	42%	42%	42%	42%	42%	42%
Threshold of Acceptability	39%	39%	39%	39%	39%	39%

Research Doctoral Nine-Year Graduation

As shown in table 15, the nine-year graduation rate for research doctoral students ranged from 62.9% to 69.3%. The goal is to achieve a 65% graduation rate for research doctoral students, an ambitious but reasonable goal given the amount of (funding) support provided to full-time enrolled doctoral students. The threshold of acceptability is 57% to ensure programs adequately and methodically evaluate program structures, support systems, and student feedback to eliminate barriers to completion and support and encourage students to graduate using intentional milestones and student success metrics.

Table 15 Research Doctoral Nine-Year Graduation

Entry Term	Fall 2010	Fall 2011
Nine Year Graduation Rate	62.9%	69.3%
Goal	65%	65%
Threshold of Acceptability	57%	57%

Professional Doctoral One-Year Retention

The one-year retention rate for students in research doctoral programs ranged from 80% in 2016 to a high of 100% in 2015. The goal for all professional doctoral programs is to achieve an 85% one-year retention rate, thus ensuring viability for the program itself and predictability of academic offerings, funding packages, student supports to graduation, adequate time to degree, and sufficient resources to support faculty on research efforts. As seen in the table 16, UNC Charlotte's one-year retention rate met the set goal. The threshold of acceptability is 80% so programs are triggered to 1) evaluate reasons for a decrease in student retention, 2) encourage students to continue their study if appropriate, 3) make necessary modifications to the type of students offered admission if needed, and 4) deploy support strategies to increase student success, satisfaction, and retention.

Note that information is not provided where the new cohort size was less than six students.

Table 16 Professional Doctoral One-Year Retention

Entry Term	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Retained	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Actual	100%	n/a	100%	80%	85.3%	87.2%	84.8%
Goal	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%
Threshold of Acceptability	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%

Professional Doctoral Three-Year Graduation

As shown in table 17, the three-year graduation rate for new professional doctoral students ranged from a low of 80% in 2016 to a high of 100% in 2015. The goal for all new professional doctoral students is set at 80%, understanding that both the DNP and the DBA are offered as professional doctorate programs and students are generally expected to complete the programs in three years. Students typically are working professionals who move through the academic programs as cohorts, which encourages them to make timely progress to graduation. The exception to this is the DNP: Nurse Anesthesia program where the students complete the program as a cohort but do not work outside of the program. The University met its set goal but provisions for a bit of leeway were given since some students took leave and extend their time to degree. The threshold of acceptability is 75% so that programs can quickly understand the need to evaluate barriers to graduation and institute student success measures to improve the time to degree.

Note that information is not provided where the new cohort size was less than six students.

Table 17 Professional Doctoral Three-Year Graduation

Entry Term	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017
Three Year Graduation Rate	83%	n/a	100%	80%	82.4%
Goal	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Threshold of Acceptability	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%

Professional Doctoral Nine-Year Graduation

The goal for professional doctoral students is 80%, and the rates shown in table 18 indicate that programs are poised to meet or exceed the goal. The 80% goal reflects the variability in professional doctoral programs offered at Charlotte, most of which cater to full time working professionals whose careers may either augment or occasionally prevent a timely graduation. The threshold of acceptability is 78% to reflect the need for programs to quickly evaluate program structures, support systems, and student feedback to eliminate barriers to completion, and both support and encourage students to graduate using intentional milestones and student success metrics. Given the shorter time to degree expected of students in

professional doctorates, as well as the cohort structures typically utilized, it's reasonable to expect higher graduation yields.

Note that information is not provided where the new cohort size was less than six students.

Table 18 Professional Doctoral Nine-Year Graduation

Entry Term	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017
Year to Date Graduation Rate	100%	n/a	100%	80%	82.4%
Goal	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%
Threshold of Acceptability	78%	78%	78%	78%	78%