



Doctoral Faculty Handbook

Last Updated: January 30, 2026

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Doctoral vs. Graduate Education

While both fall under the umbrella of "graduate education," doctoral education distinguishes itself from other graduate programs, primarily through its emphasis on advanced research. Doctoral programs demand a significantly longer commitment, culminating in a substantial dissertation that represents a unique and original contribution to the discipline, often requiring years of independent research, rigorous methodological training, and the development of advanced analytical and critical thinking skills to push the boundaries of current understanding. This fundamental difference in purpose shapes everything from curriculum design and faculty mentorship to the ultimate career trajectories of graduates.

This handbook will address categories that doctoral program directors, faculty, and advisors should consider in educating these students. This includes:

- Communication of Expectations
- Development of Advanced Skills and Subject Mastery
- Guidance on University, Graduate School, and Program Policies
- Successful Mentoring Relationships
- Challenges and Demands

Graduate Faculty Status

Graduate faculty are selected based on their demonstrated ability to teach graduate students effectively, complete high quality creative work and to conduct scholarly research and direct the research of graduate students. Members of the graduate faculty are appointed by departmental leadership and usually serve a five-year term. College Deans and department chairs nominate candidates for graduate faculty. For more information, visit [Graduate Faculty Nomination](#).

More detailed information is available on the [Faculty Appointment](#) site

Type	Requirements	Responsibilities
Regular	Tenured or tenure-track faculty on campus of UNC Charlotte.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teach graduate-level courses• Serve on theses and dissertation committees• Chair committees and serve as Graduate Faculty Representative (with appropriate experience)• May serve on Graduate Council, vote in their colleges and on amendments to Graduate Faculty Bylaws
Associate	All other faculty not eligible for tenure, also known as special faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teach graduate-level courses• Serve on theses and dissertation committees• Full-time special faculty with an Associate membership to the graduate faculty may serve on the Graduate Council• May be permitted to chair theses or dissertation committees (with prior permission by the Dean of the Graduate School)

Emeritus Members

Emeritus status is an honor and a mark of distinction granted to fully retired faculty members and some Senior Academic or Administrative Officers whose service has been characterized by high professional achievement and who have given sustained, outstanding service to the University. Emeritus members can participate on thesis and dissertation committees in the same capacity as allowed by their former membership.

Administrative Appointment to the Graduate Faculty

Any full-time Senior Academic and Administrative Officer holding the academic rank of Professor, or Associate Professor, who is actively engaged in the administration of graduate education, may be granted an administrative appointment (through the associate member role) to the Graduate Faculty by the Dean of the Graduate School. Recommendations for such an appointment may be made to the Dean of the Graduate School at any time. The recommendation should include a rationale for the appointment and a copy of the individual's current CV.

Faculty Affiliates

Interdisciplinary programs frequently engage faculty from other departments to teach and mentor students in a particular area of expertise. Departments or programs should have an internal process for determining the criteria faculty must meet in order to become affiliated with their program.

Faculty Affiliates must hold a current appointment as a regular member of the graduate faculty. And as such, Faculty Affiliates may serve as chair or co-chair for graduate student committees when requested by the program. Additionally, in order for the Graduate School to recognize faculty as Affiliates of a program, they must be listed on the program website or included as part of the program faculty in the catalog.

Outside affiliates with associate member status can serve as an additional committee member, but would need prior approval from the Dean of the Graduate School to be able to chair or co-chair a committee.

Recruiting Prospective Doctoral Students

Quick Guide for Graduate Program Directors and Faculty

Why It Matters

Strong doctoral recruitment sustains program quality, supports faculty research, and elevates our reputation. Students are most responsive when they hear directly from you.

Your Role in Recruitment

- **Online Presence Matters** → Keep department and personal websites current. Highlight publications, grants, student successes, and your research focus.
- **Make It Personal** → A short email, call, or meeting can make the difference. Personalized outreach shows fit. Arrange one-on-one meetings with faculty and current students during visits.
- **Respond Quickly** → Timely replies build trust and keep prospects engaged.
- **Promote Funding + Be Transparent** → Clearly outline assistantships, fellowships, and external opportunities. Clearly outline funding packages and set expectations for research, teaching, and time to degree.
- **Be Visible + Highlight Research Fit** → Share your expertise and connect students with potential advisors. A strong academic reputation is the best recruitment tool. Publish, present, and keep your professional profile active.
- **Leverage Networks** → Build connections with colleagues and pipeline programs. Invite promising undergraduates to research opportunities.

Graduate School Support + Resources

- **Prospect Data** → Lists, name exchanges (like NNE), inquiry reports, and the GPD Portal (GPDs only)
- **Events** → Graduate fairs, conferences, info sessions, open houses, virtual drop-ins
- **Marketing Tools** → Website features, newsletters, and social media promotion
- **Slate CRM** → Track, communicate, and schedule with prospects
- **Consortium Travel Bank** → Coordinate recruitment trips
- **Travel Bags** → Request materials for fairs and events

Bottom Line: Central outreach helps, but personal contact from GPDs and faculty is what convinces top doctoral talent to apply and enroll.

Contact:

- Graduate School Recruitment Team – gradcounselor@charlotte.edu
- Join the Recruitment Consortium Group - grad-recruitment-consortium-group@charlotte.edu

Funding Commitments

[Standard compensation packages](#) are offered to graduate students, by program, assistantship type and student experience. Please note: the availability of funding and compensation packages depends on the program. This information is available to you for guidance when offering or reviewing funding to students and planning grant budgets. This guide is just an overview of the available options with more information available in this [document](#), the [Graduate School website](#), and [Canvas course](#).

Categories of Support

Graduate students receiving compensation from the university may be paid for one of the following assignments: Teaching assistants (TA), Research assistants (RA), or student employees. TAs and RAs who are enrolled full-time that are funded by the Graduate School or through designated college-level assistantship accounts will work 20 hours per week for at least 15 weeks per semester. They will receive the following as long as they remain eligible:

- A multi-year funding commitment (up to five years unless a master's degree in a related discipline is already earned) through the Graduate Assistant Support Plan (GASP) - Fall and Spring only. Students in Advanced Standing programs have four years of GASP.
- Academic year compensation at a minimum of \$20,000
- Health insurance throughout academic year including summer

Graduate Assistant Scholarship Program (GASP)

This guide summarizes the key policies of the Graduate Assistant Scholarship Program (GASP) for doctoral students at UNC Charlotte. The program provides financial support for tuition and health insurance to eligible students who hold a teaching or research assistantship.

A doctoral student is eligible for GASP if they maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher, are enrolled full-time (9 credit hours), and hold an assistantship or qualifying fellowship with a minimum annual pay of \$20,000. Each student must hold an assistantship for the entire academic year, both fall and spring semesters, for 15 weeks each semester or more. Off-campus internships, paid or unpaid, do not satisfy the assistantship requirement.

GASP eligibility is based on the time elapsed since a student first enrolled in their graduate program. The clock starts running the first semester of GASP-eligible graduate enrollment at UNC Charlotte, regardless of whether a student qualified for or accepted GASP during that semester. Any semesters that a student did not accept GASP are not added to the 10 semesters allowed; GASP eligibility is based on time, and not on the number of semesters supported.

There is a maximum number of semesters a student can receive GASP support. This number is based on the student's status as listed below:

- 10 semesters for students without a related master's degree.

- 8 semesters for students in an accelerated program.
- 6 semesters for students who have a related master's degree; additional semesters (not to exceed four) are allowed if warranted.
- Students pursuing a master's in a second discipline are not given additional semesters of tuition eligibility.
- Students pursuing a co-major are not given additional semesters of tuition eligibility.

GASP pays full tuition for eligible in-state and out-of-state residents at the graduate student rate for 9+ credit hours. Students who can obtain North Carolina residency for tuition purposes must attempt to do so. After the first two semesters of full tuition support, GASP pays tuition at the in-state rate for domestic doctoral students who reside in North Carolina. In a student's final year (4th or 5th depending on whether Advanced Standing or not), students will be supported for 3 hours of GRAD 9800, rather than 9 hours. Additional tuition support may be requested and provided if needed for the program and if funding is available.

GASP does not cover most student fees, tuition for audited classes, and summer courses.

Grant-funded Research Assistants

It would be beneficial to add graduate student compensation (stipend, tuition, health insurance, and fee awards for E&T and Health Services fees) to research grant applications if possible.

The Graduate School provides the following guidance for these grant applications:

- The minimum requirement for tuition paid by a grant should include full in-state and out-of-state tuition starting July 1, 2024 for doctoral students
- The minimum academic year stipend requested must match the stipend listed for the student by program, shown in the [Compensation Package](#) documents
- Health Insurance should be requested at the rate current at the time of submission (for doctoral students)
- The E&T fee and the Health Services fee should be requested at the rate current at the time of submission (for doctoral students - differs by program and is included in the Compensation Package document)

See [Standard Graduate Student Compensation Packages](#) for more information and guidance by program.

Note: If you offer a grant-funded RA before the fund is set up to use, you must set up a departmentally funded RA for the student, so they have a stipend while the fund is being set up. Once you have the grant fund number, Supersede the RA to change the payments from the department fund to the grant fund. Payroll will reimburse the department fund and charge the entire stipend to the grant. For more information and assistance, contact gradfunding@charlotte.edu.

Program Funding Policies

Programs are advised to develop written policies that meet the basic requirements outlined in this section and on the [Graduate School's Funding](#) site.

Stipends can be adjusted to incentivize student progress (e.g., increased support for doctoral students admitted to candidacy), to recognize advanced status, or that reflect duties and responsibilities (TAs or RAs).

RAs can be established at higher compensation levels when the skills required are more advanced; however, compensation must be equivalent for students who are similarly situated, regardless of funding source.

RA and TA positions created from lapsed salary or other sources as described in 2.c. must meet the minimum standard for compensation.

Student Workload

Generally speaking, employment for students during the regular academic terms is limited to 20 hours per week. Several factors may impact the limitations on a student workload, including their role and visa status.

It is beneficial to regularly review the requirements provided by [Student Funding and Assistantships](#), the [International Student and Scholar Office](#), and the [Provost's Office](#) to ensure that you are following the most recent policy.

TAs are expected to support large classes, teach 2-3 labs/semester, serve as instructor of record, if qualified, or manage 3-4 recitation sections. Programs are expected to ensure that TAs are well-trained, have equitable workloads, and serve the instructional mission.

Summer Support

During the summer session, programs may pay students at the standard monthly rate for 20 hours per week. Enrollment is not required during the summer for continuing students, but enrollment is required for NEW students. New international students enrolled on F- or J-1 Visas must be full-time enrolled in the summer (e.g., six hours).

If not enrolled in courses, continuing GA's may be hired for up to 40 hours per week.

Academic Program Expectations

Consistent and clear communication of expectations is one of the most important components of student success. One of the best ways to highlight your program's requirements is through a program handbook. This can be provided to prospective students as they consider the program, or as part of an orientation for incoming students.

Program handbooks are just one of many sources of information about graduate education policies, procedures, and resources. Because this is a resource given to students directly by their program, they may reference it more than other sources. Think of the program handbook as a supplemental guide that communicates program expectations along with related policies and available university resources. This handbook should be made accessible and readily available to download from the program or department websites. Since these documents are often subject to change, you may want to provide students with a link to a document available online that can be edited accordingly. If providing a hard copy or pdf, make sure that students (this includes current and incoming students) are receiving the most recent version.

This will help both current and prospective students understand program expectations and requirements. Additionally, these expectations and policies should be considered in your interactions with students as a faculty member.

As a reminder, the program handbook must also highlight and consider Graduate School and University policies. These expectations set a baseline for all students and should be communicated as part of this process.

Program Handbook Elements

When developing your program's handbook, the following elements should be included:

- Introduction to the program:
 - This section should include a brief description of the program, the different tracks offered by the program, along with contact information for the program director and relevant personnel.
 - This is also a good place to highlight program goals, expected outcomes and potential career paths available for graduates
- Admissions Requirements (if publicly available):
 - This section should highlight the Graduate School application minimum requirements for admission or the specific requirements set for your program along with any deadlines for application review per term.
 - If students are only admitted during specific terms, this can be specified in these requirements
- Academic Calendar (note this should be included only if you are updating the handbook every year to avoid confusion)
- Student Expectations:

- This is where your program can highlight professional standards of behavior. You can highlight requirements related to the program's accrediting body. This can also include academic/grading standards
- In setting expectations for professional behavior, units are encouraged to set standards based upon current disciplinary standards as well as those mandated by external accrediting bodies that may govern the discipline. If appropriate include ethics or professional statements from main professional associations.
 - If you have a separate process for professional behavior set by your accrediting body, include information that any final decisions towards suspension or termination will be made as a recommendation to the Graduate School for the Associate Dean's review
 - Provide a link or description of the Graduate School suspension and termination appeals process for students
- Student rights and responsibilities
 - Provide students with information on related university and graduate school policies
 - This includes adherence to university policies governing research and academic conduct, non-discrimination and anti-harassment, and workplace violence
 - It would also be beneficial to include access to resources available to help students within the program handbook as well. These items are often included in syllabi language but the program can also highlight these areas.
- Timeline to Degree:
 - As part of the student expectations, it is beneficial to provide students with an anticipated timeline to degree completion. This will help with advising as well to ensure that a student is reaching appropriate milestones in a timely manner.
 - Beyond the general timeline to degree, a student and their advisor should work out an Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP is a personalized roadmap that helps graduate students plan and track their academic and professional growth.
 - The Graduate School provides an **IDP Template** for your benefit
 - A sample timeline is provided below.

Sample 5-Year Doctoral Time-to-Degree Plan (Full-Time)

The Graduate School developed a [chart](#) highlighting a potential timeline for a 72 credit hour doctoral program that corresponds to student eligibility for GASP funding which is only available for five years.

If a student wants to receive a masters' degree in connection with the doctoral program, encourage them to apply for the masters' program early to ensure that work for the second program does not delay their doctoral studies.

Graduate School Expectations for Graduate Student Progress

The Graduate School sets time limits for the completion of each degree at the graduate level. It is the responsibility of students and faculty in each program to ensure that students make adequate progress toward the completion of their degree.

Doctoral student coursework will expire nine years after the date the course is completed. See [Time Limit](#) for more details.

To aid in the effort of meeting these time limits, the Graduate School outlines expectations for graduate students and graduate program faculty. This [document](#) is available to all programs and is made available to graduate students through the new student orientation process. It lays out the expected timeline for each degree and the roles and responsibilities of students and faculty to meet those deadlines.

As graduate program faculty, you will need to consider and work towards the following:

- Work to make program expectations clear and transparent through written communication
- Align expectations between faculty and students using a compact or written agreement
- Abide by University and Graduate School policies
- Adhere to reasonable response time for the review of student work. For example, students should expect feedback on a dissertation chapter within three weeks. These expectations should be clear and consistent across the department.
- Provide annual feedback to graduate students about their progress in the program. No student should be surprised to find out that they are not progressing as expected.
- Respect students' requests for time off, when appropriate and within reason, according to [University policy](#). This includes advanced requests for parental leave.
- Ensure that a student receives due process and notice when they are not meeting expectations
- Discuss [authorship order and expectations](#) at the beginning of a project
- Ensure that faculty who chair a dissertation or thesis has first served on a committee as a member

For their part, Graduate students are expected to do the following:

- Work to identify an appropriate advisor early in their matriculation
- Commit to working hard and devoting energy to the assigned research
- Understand and commit to working 20 hours per week if in a full-time assistantship
- Understand and abide by the academic integrity expectations for all students
- Take initiative and ownership of their own learning
- Ask questions to clarify their understanding of processes and policies
- Communicate regularly with their advisor
- Meet agreed-upon deadlines in order to make adequate progress

- Be cognizant of the demands on faculty time. Come prepared for meetings in order to make the most of the time allotted.
- Seek out multiple mentors who can support their professional development

These lists are not comprehensive, but are the minimum expectations for students to succeed.

Addressing Conflicts between Student and Faculty

When conflicts occur between a student and an advisor or faculty member, consider these avenues for resolution. The Graduate School, as the administrative home for graduate education, provides the baseline to support the timely completion of graduate degrees. See [University and Graduate School Policies](#). Programs are always free to develop additional processes and support for students.

1. An informal resolution is in everyone's interest, so a discussion with the advisor and student should be the first attempt at resolution. If that does not resolve the conflict, the program director or department chair should be engaged to discuss the matter.
2. When a student is unsure or feels that there is a threat of retaliation, they may contact the [Graduate Student Ombudsman](#) and request a confidential meeting.
3. The Graduate School is also a resource for both students and faculty. Assistant and Associate Deans, as well as the Graduate Dean, may be appropriate contacts for discussing concerns when other informal efforts have not resolved an issue.
4. Formal complaints may be filed when a policy has been violated. There are different complaint processes for different scenarios. Consultation with the Graduate School can help to determine which process is most appropriate.

The University has policies that prohibit retaliation in research, or in other situations. If [research misconduct is alleged](#), the Research Integrity Officer should be notified. In other cases, the University's [Standards of Ethical Conduct](#) may guide students and faculty through the appropriate process.

University and Graduate School Policies

General Requirements

These general requirements apply to all doctoral students completing a dissertation (i.e., DBA, Ed.D and Ph.D students). Additionally, there may be program specific requirements that impact these guidelines. The University policies set a baseline for all students; however, programs may have more restrictive requirements that should also be reviewed. It is beneficial to stay up to date on these policies for you and your students to ensure their progress towards degree completion.

Grading and enrollment standards discussed below also apply to Doctorate of Nursing Practice students. For more information on DNP policies, see [DNP Degree Requirements](#)

Dissertation Committees

The dissertation committee consists of at least four Graduate Faculty members, including a member from outside the student's degree program. The student's advisor is typically the chair of the student's dissertation committee. When there is a compelling reason to do so, another faculty member may serve as "co-chair. Dissertations are chaired by graduate faculty and are selected by agreement between the student and the faculty member. It is expected that all dissertation committee members be present for the dissertation proposal defense and for the dissertation final defense.

A canvas training course for the best practices and expectations for chairs and members of dissertation committees is available through the Graduate School.

Committee Chair Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair is the director of the dissertation and of the committee. The Chair determines when a student's work is ready to share with the committee. The Chair is expected to mediate any dissent within the committee and to serve as an advocate for the student's project. That does not mean that the Chair can offer critiques of the work. In fact, such feedback should be provided in a timely manner.

Committees generally include a faculty member with expertise in the methods used in the student's research. Additional members can bring disciplinary expertise to the project.

Graduate Faculty Representative

The graduate faculty representative is a member of the doctoral student's advisory committee appointed by the Graduate School. The graduate faculty representative must assure that the doctoral student is treated fairly and impartially by their advisory committee, and assure that University standards and policies are upheld. For these reasons, faculty serving in this role should hold tenure and a Regular Graduate Faculty membership, have served on a dissertation or thesis committee prior to this appointment and come from a department different than the student and chair.

This faculty member's role is primarily but not totally procedural. The faculty member may also participate in the development and evaluation of the student's research to the extent appropriate for the faculty member's background. The Graduate Faculty Representative is a full voting member of the committee. This representative is appointed prior to the student's dissertation proposal defense and must participate in the formation of the student's topic and in the final dissertation examination.

Other Committee Members

Committee members are often chosen to provide topic or methodological expertise. Even without contributing their expertise, committee members may be chosen based on faculty with whom the student has a good professional relationship or who could offer a helpful outside perspective. Committee members are generally not as involved as the committee chair in the everyday progression of the dissertation. Typically, they read the dissertation only in its final form before the proposal and final defenses, although they should be available for consultation throughout the process and may be more closely involved in sections or chapters in which they have particular expertise.

Committee Changes

Sometimes a student's research changes in a way that requires different expertise from the committee. In those cases, an additional committee member can be added to the committee. If the student and advisor come to an impasse that cannot be resolved, the student may request a change in the committee composition. There may be repercussions for the student when making such a decision so every effort should be made to resolve the conflict. When a change is required, the following should be discussed:

- If the new chair is not already a member of the committee, a new proposal defense will be required.
- It is the student's responsibility to discuss this change with the committee, including the chair.
- A new committee form is required.
- While the chair does not have to agree to the change, he or she can determine that the existing research is no longer an option – particularly if it is funded by the Chair.
- The student may need to seek a new source of financial support. It is not the department's responsibility to find funding, but a GPD may be able to help.

Tracking Student Milestones

Several milestones are tracked as part of a doctoral student's degree progress and academic standing beyond the required program of study and credit requirements. These milestones are discussed in detail below. Due to the importance of these milestones, you should work with students to submit these forms within 24 to 48 hours of completing the milestone. Additionally, students must be enrolled during a term in which they complete a milestone including Summer term.

Qualifying Exam

Each student must complete a qualifying examination/assessment. Qualifying assessments are administered by graduate program faculty. When a student passes their qualifying exam, this would be a good time to encourage the student to complete the candidacy orientation.

Students who fail a qualifying assessment are subject to termination and should discuss options with their graduate program director. With program approval, a qualifying assessment may be retaken one time. If the student fails the exam a second time, the program may, in rare circumstances and with compelling evidence, allow a student to, within four months, retake the exam (or portion of the exam).

In such cases, the program must document the circumstances under which the student is allowed to retake portions of the exam and demonstrate that the student's committee unanimously supports the decision. Documentation must be submitted to the Graduate School for review prior to the exam date. In no instance will the student be allowed to take the exam (or portion of the exam) a fourth time.

Proposal Defense

The proposal defense functions as a "contractual" meeting where the student is pitching a plan and the committee is ensuring that the plan is viable, original, and valuable to the student. This defense occurs after the student has passed the qualifying examination. A written dissertation proposal must be submitted to the advisory/dissertation committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

As a committee, you can offer the three potential options to the student: pass, pass with revisions, or fail. While requesting revisions is an option, the student either passes or fails the defense. If the committee believes the proposal requires substantial work or a repeated proposal defense, then the student should fail that attempt.

A doctoral student advances to candidacy after the dissertation proposal has been approved by the student's advisory/dissertation committee and the Graduate School. Candidacy must be achieved at least one term prior to the term of graduation.

Final Defense

Each doctoral candidate must pass a final examination over the contents of the dissertation, also known as a final defense. This meeting is open to all members of the University community and must be announced to campus. The Graduate School maintains a general expectation that

this meeting should be held in-person and on campus. Exceptions can be made through a request to the Graduate School. These exceptions are granted based on student needs, not faculty availability. A virtual link can be provided if one member of a committee is unable to attend in-person on the specified date.

The announcement of the final defense must be submitted to the Graduate School for public announcement. See [Dissertation Defense Announcement](#) for more details.

The dissertation must be submitted for final review by the student's committee at least two weeks before the date of the final examination in which the dissertation is defended. Along with the dissertation, students must share their iThenticate similarity report with the committee. (It is highly recommended that students upload their work to iThenticate well in advance. More information on how to access and use iThenticate can be found on the [Graduate School's website](#))

The defense constitutes the final exam for a doctoral student. The decision of the faculty advisory committee is final. The committee must agree on whether the student passes or fails the final defense. The Graduate School does not permit a conditional pass on the final defense. Instead, the committee can request changes before final submission of the dissertation will be accepted. In the rare event of a split decision, it is the responsibility of the committee chair to work within their ability to resolve any impasse among committee members. If no resolution is feasible, then the chair should consult with the Graduate School. No student is permitted to take the final examination more than twice.

Final Submission

Following the successful completion of this defense, the doctoral candidate must submit one electronic copy of the approved error-free manuscript to the Graduate School (via ProQuest) no later than the filing date indicated in the University calendar for the term. Guidelines for the preparation of the dissertation are available online on the [Graduate School website under Current Students](#). Each doctoral student must submit the Defense Report for Doctoral Dissertation, the Submission and ETD Signature form, and the original dissertation title page to the Graduate School (with original signatures).

The student is responsible for paying the optional copyrighting fees. Any other arrangements for publications of the dissertation must not interfere with publication through ProQuest. It may be appropriate for some students to restrict access to their dissertation temporarily. Such restrictions may be requested when a:

- a) patent application is expected;
- b) publication has been submitted and the publisher's copyright excludes publication of the work in Proquest. In this case, a screen shot of the journal policy must be included.
- c) contract with an outside entity, such as a government agency, requires that the research be embargoed temporarily.

In these cases, the student and their committee must submit an embargo request to the Graduate School explaining why restricted access is needed. Embargoes may be requested for

up to one year, after which time the document will be made available through ProQuest. In extraordinary circumstances, an extension to the embargo may be requested.

DNP Degree Requirements

A Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) is a **professional doctorate** designed to prepare nurses for the highest level of clinical practice. Unlike a PhD, which is a research-focused degree intended for those who want to conduct original research and become academics or scientists, the DNP is a **practice-focused** degree.

Among the many unique requirements, DNP students complete a scholarly project instead of a dissertation. This scholarly project is completed through a four-course series spanning four semesters, culminating in a written and professional dissemination activity (defense). Defense of the Scholarly Project is conducted in a final oral examination to an audience, which can include a verbal or poster presentation to a professional meeting, a clinical organization, or to an audience of students and faculty.

Other DNP specific policies can be found in the Graduate Catalog and in DNP program handbooks.

Other Policies Impacting Doctoral Students

Transfer Credits

Students pursuing a Ph.D. who are not enrolled in advanced standing are eligible to [transfer](#) a maximum of 30 credit hours from another institution. In situations where a student is pursuing a master's degree and a Ph.D. simultaneously at UNC Charlotte, up to 30 credit hours may be shared between the two programs, provided that the student completes the master's degree before or concurrently with the Ph.D. Only those courses appropriate for the approved program and curriculum in which the student is enrolled may be transferred or shared. Appropriate courses should be determined by the student's supervisory committee and approved by the program director before the request is submitted to the Graduate School.

Advanced Standing

Doctoral students who enter with a relevant master's degree may be admitted to an Advanced Standing track in some doctoral programs. Advanced standing must be requested by the student and approved by the program via the [Academic Petition](#) system.

This accelerated track must consist of a minimum of 42 credit hours (including [GRAD 8302](#), [GRAD 8990](#), and 18 credit hours of research). In those programs offering this option, the Graduate Program Director must recommend admission to the Advanced Standing track for the

term in which the student begins their graduate study. No courses may be transferred into an advanced standing program.

Enrollment

The doctoral candidate must be continuously enrolled in dissertation credit hours beginning with the semester after the dissertation topic proposal is approved until the semester of graduation. This requirement excludes summer term, **unless** the student is planning to graduate, use university resources, or is completing a milestone during the summer term. Enrollment is required any time a student is completing a milestone even if they have not entered candidacy status (i.e. completing qualifying exams or a proposal defense).

Full-Time Status

Graduate students are considered full-time students in a term when enrolled in at least 9 credit hours for Fall or Spring, and at least 6 credits in the Summer. Students who hold an eligible graduate assistantship may hold the assistantship with 6 credit hours, but will not be considered full-time students. Participants in the Graduate Assistant Support Plan (GASP) must be full-time students.

GRAD 9800/9999 eligibility requirements

GRAD 9800 and GRAD 9999 are courses that can lower a student's tuition cost once they have completed their program credit requirements and need extra time to complete their research. Permission to register in these courses is granted via the [Academic Petition](#) system.

To be eligible for GRAD 9800, students must who have completed their coursework and and have submitted the required milestone paperwork to the Graduate School (Exam Report of Comprehensive Examination and Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation Committee) may request permission to enroll in GRAD 9800. These students will have full-time status. Please note that while GRAD 9800 is repeatable, students need to provide a detailed timeline for completion as part of the request for permission to enroll should they take the course more than two times.

GRAD 9999 is a one-time option available to students in their final semester of their program. To be eligible, a student must have applied to graduate and completed all requirements except for their final defense and submission. This residency credit does not push a student to full-time status.

Grade Requirements

Students are expected to satisfactorily complete all required coursework with a GPA of 3.0 or above in courses on the degree plan of study. Courses graded as C on the degree plan of study must be offset by an equal number of graduate-level credits graded as A. Some programs may have stricter requirements regarding the applicability of grades of C towards degree completion. The general Graduate School policy leads to suspension after the accumulation of 3 C grades or 1 Unsatisfactory (U) grade throughout the student's graduate studies. This requirement considers the student's entire graduate record. See [Academic Standing](#) for more details.

Research courses are graded on a Satisfactory Progress (SP) / Unsatisfactory Progress (UP) scale. These grades are not factored into the GPA but do count toward hours attempted. If a student earns a UP grade, the advisor/instructor must discuss the reasons for the grade as well as expectations for remediation and research continuance with the student; and summarize the outcome in writing. This information helps the student understand where they went wrong and provides a stated plan for improvement.

A UP grade does not automatically trigger suspension or dismissal. When a student receives a second or subsequent grade of UP, the advisor and the graduate program director will review and discuss the lack of progress with the student and document their findings which may include a recommendation to the Graduate School to terminate the course of study.

Time Limit

All requirements for the doctoral program must be completed within nine (9) calendar years, beginning with the student's first term in the program. The time limit cannot be paused, even if the student takes an approved leave of absence. No course older than nine years may be applied towards a research doctoral degree (including transfer credit). Any course that exceeds this limit must be retaken. Failure to adhere to the time limit may result in the termination of a student's enrollment.

The Graduate School may consider requests for a single extension of one (1) year in cases with rare, extenuating circumstances. In such cases, the student and graduate program must provide a signed timeline for program completion that does not exceed one year. Failure to adhere to the approved timeline for completion will result in automatic termination of the student's enrollment for a lack of satisfactory academic progress. Multiple extensions will not be approved.

Related forms

All doctoral student forms are available on the Graduate School website.

Academic Standing - Suspension and Termination

An accumulation of three marginal C grades in any graduate coursework will result in suspension of the student's enrollment. If a student makes a grade of U in any graduate course, enrollment will be suspended.

Some programs may have a stricter standard than the Graduate School. It would be beneficial to check your program's requirements to understand the impact of C grades for your students.

Academic termination of a degree/certificate graduate student's program of studies may occur in four ways.

1. Failure to Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress
2. Failure to Maintain Grading Standards of Academic Program
3. Failure to Maintain Grading Standards After Suspension Reinstatement

4. Failure of Suspension Appeal

Students who are reinstated after suspension who receive a C or U in any subsequent semester will be terminated from the program and the Graduate School.

While a UP grade in dissertation research will not lead to suspension or termination, it could be an indication of a student struggling to make satisfactory progress in their program. When a program determines that a student is making unsatisfactory progress, the program notifies the student in writing of the program's concern about the student's performance that specifies the source of the concern and the proposed action. Warnings should also specify when and on what basis a recommendation for academic termination will be considered by the program. A probationary period of one academic semester is normal.

If a student fails to meet the provisions of the warning and the program believes that termination is warranted, the graduate program director or coordinator communicates to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School in writing the specific reasons involved, all warnings communicated to the student, the program and/or advisory committee procedures and actions leading to the recommendation, and the mailing address of the student. After considering all of the information, the Associate Dean will make a decision. If the decision is to terminate, the Associate Dean will notify the student of their termination from the Graduate School.

Appeals Process - Suspension

A student who has been suspended from the Graduate School and/or a program of study may appeal their suspension and must be reinstated in order to continue their studies. After notification of suspension is received, the student initiates the appeal procedure by submitting a Suspension Appeal through the [Academic Petition](#) system. This petition should include justification for reinstatement. The Graduate Program Director will provide a recommendation regarding reinstatement to the Graduate School. The Associate Dean for Enrollment Management or other designated individual makes the final decision on the suspension appeal and notifies the student of the decision in writing.

Appeals Process - Termination

Terminated students may appeal their termination to the Graduate School Appeals Committee. The grounds for appeal vary based on the termination category. Category 1 Termination is grade-based - the student received a grade of C or U in a graduate course after being reinstated. Category 2 Termination is for students who are denied reinstatement from a suspension appeal or who fail to maintain satisfactory academic progress (i.e., failing a qualifying exam or a program initiated request for termination).

- **Category 1: Academic Termination Based on Failure to Maintain Commendable or Satisfactory Performance in Coursework**

To initiate a Category 1 Appeal of Academic Termination, the student must send a written letter to the Graduate School requesting consideration of their case which includes at least two letters of support for reinstatement from the student's academic program. As a faculty member or

student advisor, you may receive a request to send a letter of support. The letters from the program must specify what expectations must be met by the student if they are readmitted to the program.

The appeals committee will only review complete packets that are received within 60 days of the date on the letter of termination. This Committee will review all relevant materials and make a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School makes the final decision.

- **Category 2: Academic Termination Based on Programmatic Action**

To initiate a Category 2 Appeal of Academic Termination, the student must send a written letter to the Graduate School requesting consideration of their case due to a program procedural error or discrimination. If the student is alleging “procedural error,” the student must specify what procedures were utilized and how the program deviated from the specified procedures. If the basis of the appeal is “discrimination,” the student must show how their case was handled substantially different from those of other students in similar circumstances. A termination appeal request and the supporting documentation must be received by the Graduate School within 60 days of the date on the letter of termination.

Once the Graduate School receives a Category 2 Appeal of Termination packet, the Chair of the Appeals Committee will contact the program in question and request a response to allegations of “procedural error.” The program will have two weeks to respond to the request of the Appeals Committee Chair. Once all relevant information has been received, the Committee will review the materials and make a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School makes the decision on the Appeal of Termination case and their decision is final.

Discrimination cases will follow the same process but first the claim of discrimination must be investigated by the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. This office will provide a summary of their findings to the Appeals Committee that will be reviewed as part of their recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School. Final decisions may be delayed for category 2 appeals due to this investigation.

Availability of an Exit Strategy

Exit Strategies are available for students who are going to be terminated from the program for unsatisfactory academic performance. The program can recommend termination and work with the Graduate School and student to determine if an exit strategy would be appropriate. If approved, the student would graduate with the masters degree and be terminated from the doctoral program in the same semester.

Graduate Student Success

Faculty play a crucial, multi-faceted role in the success of graduate students, extending far beyond the traditional classroom setting. These responsibilities are deeply tied to advising, mentoring, and professional socialization. This engagement is vital for addressing the unique challenges graduate students face, such as **imposter syndrome**, **isolation**, and the demands of **research and professional development**.

Syllabus Policies and Notices

The university provides suggested standard policies and notices that faculty members may want to include in their course syllabi.

Effective January 15, 2026, [UNC System Regulation 400.1.6\[R\]](#) considers course syllabi to be public records. As a result, there are additional requirements and minimal elements that must be included in a syllabus effective the 2026-27 academic year. Details about these policies are available through the [Office of Legal Affairs](#).

Mentoring Relationships

Graduate studies often require a deep, long-term relationship between a student and a faculty advisor. For most students, their primary research mentor is also their dissertation chair. In addition to the requirements of the “chair” role, a mentor seeks to support the whole student. This comprehensive approach to guiding, coaching and developing the student is what distinguishes a good mentor from an advisor.

Students should select their mentor based on several factors: expertise in the discipline, available funding support, time and style. Successful mentoring happens when there is alignment between the mentor and mentee regarding expectations and communication style. The Graduate School's [Mentor Training](#) provides tools and guidance to help faculty develop successful mentoring relationships.

Graduate mentors are encouraged to implement the use of [Individual Development Plans](#) (IDP) for doctoral students. These plans provide a roadmap for research and professional development over the course of a student's matriculation. Some funding agencies require IDPs for graduate students and post-docs. These plans are reviewed annually and updated as a student's plans change. These plans allow a faculty member to establish clear expectations for the student, tailor guidance, and assist students in building professional relationships.

Resources for Research Success

The [Thomas L. Reynolds Center for Graduate Life and Learning](#) has many available resources for your students for research and writing success along with professional development opportunities.

- [Mentee Training Series](#): Expert facilitators cover the nuances of the mentor/mentee work dynamic, the value of research, and bridging the gap between research experience and the start of a career
- [STEM Communication Training](#): This program is designed to equip participants with the necessary skills to articulate STEM concepts clearly and engagingly.
- [Graduate and Postdoctoral Writing Center](#): Offers specialized writing support to graduate-level students and postdoctoral scholars at all stages of the academic writing process.

Addressing At-Risk Students

Additionally, faculty and mentors may be able to spot issues or concerns early, since they work closely with their mentees. Helping to address at-risk students promotes academic success, fosters a supporting learning environment, and increases student retention. A proactive approach helps prevent students from falling behind or dropping out, which benefits both the individual student and the institution. Furthermore, it reinforces the faculty-student relationship, showing that instructors are invested in their students' overall well-being and not just their academic performance.

Identifying and Responding to Students of Concern

If a student stops responding to communications or stops coming to the lab, there may be cause for concern. Likewise, students may give clues through their comments. Faculty should pay close attention to [characteristics that reflect concerning behaviors](#) or comments that might indicate a student is considering withdrawing or, most concerning, self-harm. If you are concerned about the health, safety, or well-being of any student, it is time to involve others. Reporting this information to your department head or supervisor may be helpful. The following chart includes other resources for helping students of concern.

Faculty can also submit a “[care and concern](#)” report through the Niner Care webpage if the student does not pose an immediate threat of harm to self or others. If the student is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others, contact UNC Charlotte Police at 704-687-2200 or 911 **IMMEDIATELY**.

Issue	Campus Resource
Sexual assault or harassment, domestic violence or abusive relationship	Title IX Office 704-687-6130
Expressions of suicidal thoughts or thoughts of hurting others, depression, or anxiety	Counseling Center 704-687-0311

Suspected eating disorder or distorted body image, signs of alcohol and/or drug abuse or dependency	Counseling Center 704-687-0311 Student Health Center 704-687-7400
Erratic and/or disturbing behavior, disruptive classroom behavior, depression, anxiety, academic issues, etc.	Student Assistance and Support Services 704-687-0289 Incident Report

Health and Wellness

Faculty members often play a crucial role in promoting student well-being by acting as a first point of contact and a trusted source of information. Faculty members are in a unique position to notice when a student is struggling. Your role is to offer support and, most importantly, connect them to the appropriate professional resources on campus. While you can listen with empathy, it's vital to remember that you are not a trained counselor or medical professional. By referring students to services like Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) or the Student Health Center, you are providing the most effective and responsible form of help.

Some ways that you can share these available health and wellness resources with students is by integrating the information into your course syllabi and posting information in your office or online. UNC Charlotte provides a variety of health and wellness resources for graduate students through its Health and Wellbeing Unit.

Below is a summary of some of the available resources. More detailed information is available on the [health and wellbeing site](#).

- The [Student Health Center \(SHC\)](#) offers primary medical care and a range of other services to all registered UNC Charlotte students, including graduate students. A mandatory Health Services Fee is included in tuition for students enrolled in six or more hours, which covers many services.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers a range of confidential mental health services to support students' academic success and overall well-being. All CAPS services are free of charge.
- The [Center for Wellness Promotion](#) focuses on public health and prevention strategies to empower students to make informed decisions about their health and safety.
- [University Recreation \(UREC\)](#) provides a variety of recreational and fitness opportunities to help students lead active and healthy lives.

Commencement

For doctoral students, commencement is not just a ceremony but a key academic rite of passage. During the hooding ceremony, the student's advisor, or dissertation chair, plays a central and highly visible role. The professor's primary responsibility is to formally "hood" their student on stage, symbolizing the culmination of the student's rigorous academic journey and their transition from student to scholar. The faculty's participation attests to the long-term mentorship and guidance provided throughout the doctoral program and serves as a public acknowledgment of the student's significant scholarly achievement.