

Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty

Revised: April 2024

Originally approved by vote of the graduate faculty of
Cornell University in 2001. This edition reflects
revisions incorporated by the General Committee of the
Graduate School since that time.

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a
recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and
Individuals with Disabilities.

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I. INTRODUCTION: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General Considerations

The purpose of the Graduate School is to enable students to undertake scholarly study and advanced research and to prepare for professional work. Graduate education helps students develop academic rigor and creativity, independent judgment, intellectual honesty, and the ability to communicate their knowledge. Fellowships and research and teaching assistantships contribute to these ends while providing financial support. Graduate students in turn enhance the intellectual life of the University through their performance as assistants as well as their more general participation in the academic activities and broader life of the campus and community.

Distinguished academic programs depend not only on the talent, background, and motivation of the participants but also on their shared commitment to relationships based on mutual respect, ethical conduct, and freedom of inquiry. It is the joint responsibility of faculty and graduate students to support the full range of goals proper to graduate education.

This *Code of Legislation* sets forth the rules governing graduate education as established by the graduate faculty of Cornell University. Faculty and staff in the graduate fields and the Graduate School are responsible for making these regulations available to students and prospective students. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the various regulations that apply to their programs.

The *Code of Legislation* may be amended by majority vote of the General Committee, according to the voting procedures described for the General Committee (See "[General Committee](#)" p. 8).

B. Right to Petition

Students may request exceptions to regulations in this *Code* but must submit convincing evidence that an exception is needed and warranted. Students submit [petitions](#) to the Graduate School for consideration by the General Committee, the faculty governing board of the Graduate School.

The General Committee has the power to grant exceptions to specific legislation if, in its judgment, such action accords with the fundamental educational principles of the Graduate School. The General Committee may delegate the handling of routine student petitions to the Dean. When the Dean acts negatively on a petition, the student will be informed by the Dean that the student has the right to have the case reviewed by the General Committee.

II. ADMINISTRATION

A. Graduate Faculty

1. General Considerations

According to Cornell University bylaws, the graduate faculty has jurisdiction “over all graduate work and any degree beyond the first degrees given by any college or school” except the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences. This jurisdiction extends both to research degrees (primarily the M.A., M.S., M.S./Ph.D., and Ph.D.) and to many professional degrees. It excludes the first degrees of the professional schools and colleges, such as the Law School (J.D.), the College of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and the Weill Cornell Medical Colleges, New York City and Qatar (M.D.). As allowed by the university bylaws, “the graduate faculty may delegate jurisdiction over designated professional master’s degrees to the particular college or school faculty in instances where the graduate faculty determines such programs to be academically aligned with the first degrees given by the college or school.”

The graduate faculty is not an administrative unit, but rather a group of individuals drawn together by a shared interest in graduate education. Graduate faculty membership carries with it recognition of the special responsibilities involved in the direction of graduate students. It also means that members have substantial opportunities for scholarly work and research in addition to their other academic activities.

A member of the graduate faculty usually is associated primarily with the graduate field from which the faculty member was initially nominated (often a field closely connected to the faculty member’s home department), but may be associated with more than one field. Often, primary field membership is arranged as part of the appointment process. Additional field memberships beyond this primary field membership are considered secondary field memberships.

For the convenient discussion of questions that chiefly concern those engaged in related fields of work and for the purpose of electing representatives to the General Committee, the members of the graduate faculty are grouped into four areas—the Humanities and Arts; Social Sciences; Life Sciences; and Physical Sciences and Engineering. Graduate faculty may be members of more than one area, based on their primary and secondary field memberships, but may serve as a representative on the General Committee only for their primary area.

2. Responsibilities

The graduate faculty has delegated responsibility for Graduate School administrative, legislative, and judicial matters to the General Committee. The graduate faculty, however, retains the following duties:

- The graduate faculty elects the twelve faculty members of the General Committee.
- The graduate faculty elects the eight faculty members of the Graduate School’s Academic Integrity Hearing Board.
- The graduate faculty provides comment on major policy issues, either directly to the Dean of the Graduate School or through the Director of Graduate Studies for the appropriate field.
- The graduate faculty votes on issues brought to it by the General Committee or submitted by a petition of fifty or more members of the graduate faculty.

3. Membership

Membership on the graduate faculty may be academic or *ex-officio*.

a. Academic

The academic membership consists of those who have been designated members of the graduate faculty by the Dean of the Graduate School, normally with the approval of the General Committee.

b. Ex-officio

The *ex-officio* membership consists of:

- the President of the University (who serves as presiding officer),
- the Provost,
- the Vice Provosts,
- the Deans of the several faculties of the University, and
- the Directors of the Experiment Stations.

4. Eligibility and Academic Purview

There are three forms of regular membership on the graduate faculty: general, division, and minor.

a. General Membership

General members typically are selected from the voting members of the University faculty—that is, primarily professors, associate professors, and assistant professors with unmodified titles who are resident on the Ithaca, Cornell Tech, or Geneva campus. To be eligible for general membership on the graduate faculty, a University faculty member must be actively engaged in University research and teaching or outreach in an established field of graduate education.

A general member of the graduate faculty who holds a research doctorate may serve as chair or minor subject member of any special committee in any subject which the faculty member represents. General members of the graduate faculty who do not hold a research doctorate (e.g., PhD, DMA, DPhil.) are limited to chairing special committees of masters-level students or serving as a minor subject member of any special committee in any subject which the faculty member represents, or they can go through an additional nomination review process as below to be considered for general membership with the ability to chair doctoral committees. (See “[Special Committee for Research Degrees](#)” p. 27.)

Individuals holding the following titles are also eligible for general membership on the graduate faculty if their responsibilities qualify them (See “[Nominations](#)” p. 4):

- visiting professor, visiting associate professor, and visiting assistant professor,
- research professor, research associate professor, and research assistant professor,
- adjunct professor, adjunct associate professor, and adjunct assistant professor,
- courtesy professor, courtesy associate professor, and courtesy assistant professor,
- graduate faculty member of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences,
- instructor holding a research doctorate on the resident staff at Ithaca or at Cornell Tech,
- senior scholar,
- senior scientist,
- principal research scientist and research scientist,

- senior research associate holding a research doctorate, and
- senior extension associate holding a research doctorate.

Individuals holding the following titles are not normally general members of the graduate faculty:

- clinical professor,
- professor of the practice,
- senior lecturer, and
- visiting critic

General membership may, however, be granted to individuals in these categories if the individual's research is comparable at least to that of tenured Cornell associate professors who are general members of the graduate faculty in the same field, and if the individual's supervision of graduate students is an explicit job responsibility, making membership on special committees appropriate.

b. Division Membership

Clinical professors, professors of the practice, senior lecturers, senior research associates without a research doctorate, senior extension associates without a research doctorate, and visiting critics may be routinely nominated to division membership on the graduate faculty (*See* "[Nominations](#)" *p. 4*). As division members, they are limited to administering and advising in professional degree programs (*See* "[Professional Degrees](#)" *p. 11*)—in their area, or serving as a minor member for research degrees as below.

c. Minor Membership

Academic staff members not normally eligible for general membership—including division faculty, clinical professors, professors of the practice, senior lecturers, and senior research or extension associates without a research doctorate—may be nominated to minor membership if their qualifications justify the designation. Graduate faculty members of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences and those faculty affiliated with the Tri-Institutional Research Program are eligible for minor membership on the graduate faculty, based on nomination to a field as below.

Minor members of the graduate faculty may serve as minor subject members on any special committee.

5. Nominations

a. General Membership

A member of the academic staff is nominated for general membership on the graduate faculty representing a particular graduate field by vote of the faculty in that field. The Director of Graduate Studies submits to the Graduate School a letter of nomination reflecting the vote of the graduate field faculty, the completed nomination card, and the nominee's curriculum vitae. For nomination, the field faculty follows the appropriate procedure on the following pages, depending on the title the nominee holds. For nomination to general membership in additional (secondary) fields the same procedures apply. However, membership in secondary fields may be designated as indefinite, or with a specific year term limit, renewable, as described below under Term of Appointment. Nomination submissions for secondary field membership should specify if the membership is indefinite, or for a specific year term, indicating the expiration date (if not renewed through a faculty vote).

The Dean brings nominations to the General Committee for final approval, except for those nominees in category “i” below.

- i. Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor with a research doctorate for general membership, Additionally,
 - a. Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor without a research doctorate for general membership limited to chairing masters-level special committees or serving as minor on any special committee.
 - b. Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professors serving as faculty at the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute. These faculty are members of the Cornell faculty, despite being tenured through the Technion.
 - c. Faculty who have been successfully hired into a tenure-track faculty position and have a Visiting Professor, Visiting Associate Professor, Visiting Assistant Professor or other title prior to their official start date as a faculty member.
 - d. Tenured faculty at Weill Cornell Medicine who are graduate faculty members of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences.

Note: Faculty members affiliated with Weill Cornell Medicine who are concerned with graduate education are members of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences’ graduate faculty but are not automatically general members of Cornell University’s graduate faculty. They may be appointed as general or minor members of the graduate faculty, following nomination procedures herein.

The Dean routinely approves the nomination as above when the individual has:

- an unmodified professorial title (e.g., not an acting, adjunct, or courtesy appointment),
 - at least 25 percent of his or her time available for research and graduate education, and
 - strong support from the field faculty. The General Committee considers the nomination when a nominee does not meet one or more of these criteria.
- ii. Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor without a research doctorate for general membership to chair doctoral and masters-level special committees.

To nominate an individual holding one of these appointments to general membership on the graduate faculty with the ability to chair doctoral and masters-level special committees, a field must submit the standard materials for nomination as above (letter of nomination reflecting the vote of the field faculty, completed nomination card, curriculum vitae), and:

- a personal statement from the nominee of research accomplishments and future plans, and

- two letters of support from general members of the graduate field's faculty, not including the letter of nomination from the DGS, summarizing the evidence that the individual is qualified to conduct research and to serve as chair of doctoral-level special committees.
- iii. Visiting Professor titles, Research Professor titles, Adjunct Professor titles, Courtesy Professor titles, Senior Scholar, Senior Scientist, Principal Research Scientist, Research Scientist, Senior Research Associate holding a research doctorate, Senior Extension Associate holding a research doctorate, and Instructor holding a research doctorate on the Resident Staff at Ithaca or Cornell Tech.

To nominate an individual holding one of these appointments to general membership on the graduate faculty, the Director of Graduate Studies should submit the standard materials submitted for nomination of a full, associate, or assistant professor (letter of nomination reflecting the vote of the field faculty, completed nomination card, curriculum vitae).

- iv. Clinical Professor, Professor of the Practice, Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Associate without a research doctorate, Senior Extension Associate without a research doctorate, Instructor without a research doctorate, and Visiting Critic

To nominate an individual holding one of these appointments to general membership on the graduate faculty with the ability to chair doctoral and masters special committees, a field must conduct the equivalent of the research component of a tenure review. In addition to providing the materials necessary to nominate a full, associate, or assistant professor to general membership (letter of nomination, completed nomination card, curriculum vitae), the Director of Graduate Studies submits:

- the outcome of the field's vote, with the vote stating explicitly that the faculty are evaluating whether the individuals' research is comparable at least to that of tenured Cornell associate professors who are general members of the graduate faculty in the same field,
- a statement explaining the recommendation for membership, including a summary of the evidence that the individual's research is comparable at least to that of tenured Cornell associate professors who are general members of the graduate faculty in the same field,
- a statement indicating that the individual's supervision of graduate students will be an explicit job responsibility, making membership on special committee appropriate, and suitable documentary support.

Documentary support should include, at the minimum:

- letters of evaluation from at least two students,
- a personal statement of research accomplishments and future plans,
- at least three sample publications, and
- at least five letters of evaluation—three from external referees selected by the field and two from current general members of the graduate field. External letters from other Cornell review processes may be used for this purpose if they address the qualifications of the nominee to supervise

graduate students and are dated within 5 years of the nomination for graduate faculty membership.

The Dean of the Graduate School appoints an ad hoc committee to review each nomination and produce a recommendation for consideration by the Dean and the General Committee.

b. Division Membership

A member of the academic staff is nominated for division membership on the graduate faculty representing a particular graduate field by vote of the faculty in that field. The Director of Graduate Studies submits to the Graduate School a letter of nomination, the completed nomination card, and the nominee's curriculum vitae. A Ph.D. degree is not routinely expected.

The Dean routinely approves the nomination but may bring a nomination to the General Committee for final approval if circumstances warrant broader discussion.

c. Minor Membership

A member of the academic staff is nominated for minor membership on the graduate faculty representing a particular graduate field by vote of the faculty in that field. The Director of Graduate Studies submits to the Graduate School a letter of nomination, the completed nomination card, and the nominee's curriculum vitae.

The Dean routinely approves the nomination but may bring a nomination to the General Committee for final approval if circumstances warrant broader discussion.

6. Term of Appointment

Graduate faculty membership (General, Division, Minor) in a primary field of graduate study continues indefinitely in most cases, so long as the member remains actively engaged in University research and teaching or outreach in the established fields of graduate instruction. If the member is no longer actively engaged in research and teaching or outreach or other activities relevant to the field, the graduate faculty of the field may vote by majority to rescind the individual's membership in the field, reporting the vote to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval. The field may establish procedures for intermediate steps prior to rescinding membership due to lack of engagement, such as a warning letter or conditions for a probationary period to encourage appropriate engagement in the field. The field may establish criteria for faculty's engagement in the field and with students, and may develop procedures for placing a graduate faculty member on probation in the field. Fields developing such criteria and procedures should specify the conditions for entering and leaving probation, and the limitations on faculty roles during the probationary period. The field will be responsible for implementing and monitoring probationary status.

Guidelines for initiation and termination of secondary field membership may be set by majority vote of the field. The minimum term that may be established for secondary field membership is three years. An individual whose term expires may apply for reappointment by following the nomination procedure. (See "[Nominations](#)" p. 4.) At the time of nomination, the term of appointment to the secondary field should be indicated as indefinite or with a specific year term limit. In the absence of field guidelines or term specification, secondary membership continues indefinitely in most cases, subject to the same considerations as primary membership.

When graduate faculty members retire or resign from the University, they resign their membership on the graduate faculty. Graduate faculty members who retire or resign from the University may automatically remain on committees on which they were serving at the time of

retirement/resignation for up to one year. A retired faculty member who remains in the Ithaca or Geneva area may continue beyond one year as a member or chair of those special committees on which the faculty member was serving at the time of retirement in that position. If the retired faculty member leaves the Ithaca or Geneva area and wishes to remain on a special committee beyond one year, the student must petition to have the former graduate faculty member appointed as co-chair or minor member. If a faculty member resigned from the university and wishes to remain on a special committee beyond one year, the student must petition to have the former graduate faculty member appointed as a co-chair or minor member.

7. Graduate School Professorship

A retired member of the graduate faculty may be nominated to a five-year, renewable term as a Graduate School Professor through a strong vote of support from the field membership. The Director of Graduate Studies submits to the Graduate School a letter of nomination stating the official retirement date, the voting results, and a list of the concentrations the faculty member will continue representing. The Dean of the Graduate School has final approval authority for the appointment. If the Graduate School Professor remains in the Ithaca or Geneva area, or the New York City area for Cornell Tech appointments, the individual may serve as a co-chair or a minor subject member of special committees formed during the five-year term; any restrictions that were in place during his or her membership on the graduate faculty apply as Graduate School Professor as well. Graduate School Professors who leave the Ithaca or Geneva area, or the New York City area for Cornell Tech appointments, may serve only as minor members of special committees formed during the five-year term.

8. Meetings

The Dean of the Graduate School announces all regular meetings of the graduate faculty by e-mail. A public announcement also will be made through the *Cornell Chronicle* or other similar mechanism.

The meetings of the graduate faculty are open under conditions specified by its members.

9. Voting Rights

General membership on the graduate faculty entitles the individual to vote on all graduate field matters in fields in which they are appointed. Voting rights of graduate faculty with minor membership, division membership, or Graduate School Professor status are determined as a matter of graduate field policy by the faculty with general membership in that field and should be documented by the graduate field. For Graduate School elections, all graduate faculty members (general, divisional, minor, and Graduate School Professors) are eligible to vote.

B. General Committee

1. General Considerations

The General Committee is the administrative, legislative, and judicial board of the Graduate School. Its members have continuing responsibility for the School.

Any member of the graduate faculty may request action by the General Committee on any matter related to the Graduate School by sending an email to the Dean. The General Committee considers matters that are referred to it by members of the graduate faculty. It may also, upon its own initiative, represent the faculty in questions relating to the interests and policies of the Graduate School.

2. Responsibilities

The General Committee's responsibilities are to:

- pass legislation,
- approve revisions to the *Code of Legislation*,
- provide general policy guidance,
- establish graduate admissions policies,
- establish fellowship policies and recommend stipend levels,
- approve appointments to the graduate faculty,
- recommend establishment of new research degrees and new advanced professional degrees,
- act on petitions from the colleges or schools requesting delegation of jurisdiction over a professional master's program from the Graduate School to the college or school, or act on reversal of delegation when appropriate,
- recommend the establishment of new graduate fields,
- approve major and minor subjects, as recommended by the graduate faculty of each graduate field,
- approve graduate field name changes,
- act on proposals to deactivate or discontinue degree programs,
- act on proposals to terminate graduate fields, and
- act upon petitions it receives.

By petition, any fifty members of the graduate faculty may require a vote of the graduate faculty as a whole on any legislation or amendment to the *Code of Legislation* passed by the General Committee or any other decision of the General Committee.

3. Membership

The General Committee has sixteen or more members:

- four members of the graduate faculty elected as representatives-at-large,
- two graduate faculty members each from the Humanities and Arts, the Life Sciences, the Physical Sciences and Engineering, and the Social Sciences elected by the faculty in their areas,
- the Dean of the Graduate School, as chair *ex-officio*,
- the Associate Dean or Deans of the Graduate School as *ex-officio* members, and
- two graduate students selected by the [Graduate and Professional Student Assembly \(GPSA\)](#).

4. Eligibility

All graduate faculty members and graduate students are eligible to serve on the General Committee, with the following limitation. In no instance shall a member of the General Committee serve a consecutive term as a representative of one of the four areas. However, a representative of one of these four areas may serve an immediately succeeding term as representative-at-large. The reverse is also permitted.

5. Nominations

The Dean of the Graduate School solicits nominations for the General Committee from a variety of sources during the spring semester every other year.

6. Term of Appointment

Elected graduate faculty members serve four years. The terms are staggered so that half of the representatives-at-large and half of the representatives of each of the four areas are chosen at each election. Graduate student members serve two-year terms ending alternate years.

New members take office at the beginning of the fall semester. When a temporary vacancy occurs, the Dean makes an interim appointment.

The Dean may remove a General Committee member who has missed at least three consecutive meetings without sufficient explanation.

7. Meetings and Quorum

The General Committee meets monthly except during January, June, July, and August. Additional meetings are held at the request of the Dean. The Dean may invite other individuals to any meeting of the General Committee as appropriate.

A simple majority of voting members constitutes a quorum. Once a quorum has been established, a simple majority of votes cast, ignoring blanks or abstentions, is sufficient for determining the outcome of a question.

C. Dean of the Graduate School

1. Selection

The Provost nominates a Dean and presents that nomination to the graduate faculty and gathers the faculty's opinion through the General Committee. The Dean shall be elected by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the Provost and the concurrence of the President, and shall hold office at the pleasure of the President in consultation with the Board. In recommending a candidate for the position of Dean, the Provost shall report to the Executive Committee the opinion of the graduate faculty as gathered through the General Committee.

2. Responsibilities

The Dean's primary responsibilities are:

- promoting the quality of graduate education and the well-being of graduate students,
- setting academic priorities and allocating resources appropriately,
- chairing the General Committee and carrying out tasks delegated by it,
- implementing and ensuring compliance with Graduate School and university policies, including the *Code of Legislation*,
- overseeing the administration of the Graduate School, including policies, processes, and procedures for admissions, enrollment, assessment, records, financial aid, and other components of graduate education,
- representing the graduate faculty in the University, and
- serving as the academic administrative officer and, when appropriate, conducting meetings of the graduate faculty.

At least annually, the Dean reports to the Provost on the state of the Graduate School.

3. Term of Appointment

The term of appointment of the Dean of the Graduate School is five years, with provision for possible reappointment.

D. Associate Dean of the Graduate School

1. Selection

The Dean appoints the Associate Dean or Deans of the Graduate School.

2. Responsibilities

Associate Deans of the Graduate School are academic administrative officers who assist the Dean in the fulfillment of responsibilities. They act as the principal administrative officers of the Graduate School in the absence of the Dean.

3. Term of Appointment

The typical term of office for an academic Associate Dean is three years, with provision for possible reappointment. Appointment of a staff Associate Dean may be indefinite.

III. DEGREES AND GRADUATE FIELDS

A. Degrees Offered

The advanced degrees administered by the Graduate School fall in two main categories: general research degrees and professional degrees, reflecting the [academic degrees recognized by the New York State Education Department](#).

1. General Research Degrees

a. Degrees with Research Project, Thesis, or Dissertation

The Master of Science (M.S.), Master of Arts (M.A.), joint Master's/Doctor of Philosophy (M.A./Ph.D. or M.S./Ph.D.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) are general research degrees.¹ M.A./Ph.D. and M.S./Ph.D. students matriculate first into the master's program and transition to the Ph.D. program when the master's degree is conferred.

Research-degree students are expected to give evidence of mature purpose by initiating and pursuing their own programs. The award of all research degrees except the non-thesis master's degrees for doctoral students (*See below and "Examination for Non-Thesis Master's Degree" p. 33*) is contingent upon the completion of a master's research project report, master's thesis, or doctoral dissertation constituting an original contribution to knowledge.

The M.S. and M.A. degree programs are designed for those who wish to obtain further education in a selected field and to develop their ability for critical inquiry, independent research, and teaching.

Ph.D. degree programs are designed for individuals who demonstrate the potential to perform original research under guidance, with a view to various careers, including, but not limited to, those in independent research and teaching.

b. Non-Thesis Master's Degrees

Non-thesis master's degrees may be awarded to doctoral students who have met the following requirements, in fields that have an approved master's degree registered with the New York State Education Department. Such degrees are not automatic and must be designated at the time of the exam as described below:

- i. completed at least four semesters of registration and successfully completed the A Exam, or
- ii. withdrawn from the program after failing the A Exam, but performed at the level of a passed Final Exam for the master's degree, or
- iii. withdrawn from the program after successfully completing a Final Examination for the Master's Degree (*See "Examination for Non-Thesis Master's Degree", p. 33*)

2. Professional Degrees

Professional degrees prepare students to practice their profession at an advanced level, to teach the subject matter of their profession, or to pursue original investigations into its functions,

¹ The Master of Science (M.S.) in Legal Studies is an exception and is administered as a professional degree delegated to Cornell Law School.

administration, history, and progress.² The award of a degree is contingent upon mastery of the chosen field and, where appropriate, upon completion of substantive independent project.

² At Cornell, the professional degrees administered by the Graduate School are the D.M.A., J.S.D., M.A.T., M.F.A., M.H.A., M.I.L.R., M.L.A., M.P.A., M.P.H., M.P.S., and M.R.P. Degrees of M.Arch., M.Eng., M.M.H., and M.P.S. in Management, and M.S. in Legal Studies have been delegated to the appropriate college.

B. Establishment of New Professional Degrees

Members of the graduate faculty may propose the establishment of advanced professional degrees to the General Committee. If approved by the General Committee, the proposal for the new degree is forwarded to the Faculty Senate. If the Faculty Senate approves the proposed degree, the proposal is then presented to the Board of Trustees and the State Education Department for approval. If the faculty proposing the degree represents one of Cornell's four contract colleges or schools³, the degree must also be approved by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York.

If the appropriate bodies approve, the participating faculty will administer the degree under rules approved by the General Committee.

The curricula, admissions, and requirements for advanced professional degrees are determined by the appropriate division of the graduate faculty in a graduate field (*See* "[Graduate Faculty](#)" p. 2) and are administered separately from the general research degrees of M.A., M.S., M.S./Ph.D., and Ph.D. The Dean of the Graduate School shall be invited to take part in the discussion of matters concerned with these rules.

C. Deactivation or Discontinuation of a Degree Program

Members of the graduate faculty may propose to deactivate or discontinue a degree program if there is sufficient evidence that the degree program no longer contributes to the strategic priorities of the graduate field or the university. Deactivation is appropriate when admissions to the program will no longer occur, but students are still enrolled in the program and need time to complete their degrees. Discontinuation is appropriate when admissions to the program will no longer occur, and no students remain enrolled in the program. The university process for proposing the deactivation or discontinuation of a degree program should be followed, beginning with approval of the proposal by the graduate field and the General Committee.

D. Delegation of a Professional Master's Degree Program to a College or School

Colleges or schools may have an interest in assuming jurisdiction for specific professional master's programs that have a strong connection to the faculty expertise in the unit, and for which the faculty involvement comes exclusively from within that college or school. A college or school may propose having the responsibility for a particular professional master's degree program delegated to it, from the Graduate School, by filing a proposal to the General Committee that addresses the criteria established by the Graduate School for such delegation to be considered and approved and demonstrates the college or school has appropriate capacity to take on such delegated responsibility. If the delegated college or school does not perform its responsibilities appropriately, the General Committee may act to withdraw delegation and return the professional master's program jurisdiction fully to the Graduate School.

E. Graduate Fields

1. Introduction

Graduate fields are voluntary groupings of members of the graduate faculty who have academic interests in common and who wish to exercise shared responsibility for an area of inquiry and for the admission, education, and, as appropriate, financial support of graduate students. Fields are independent of traditional college or department units, so they may draw

³ College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; College of Human Ecology; College of Veterinary Medicine; and School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

together faculty members from several colleges, departments, and related disciplines in accordance with scholarly interests.

2. Establishment of New Graduate Fields

Members of the graduate faculty may propose the establishment of new graduate fields and associated degrees (for major fields) to the General Committee. If the General Committee approves the major field, the proposal is then presented to the Provost Council for approval and then reported to the Board of Trustees. Proposals for minor fields (non-degree granting) require approval only from the General Committee.

3. Graduate Field Name Changes

Members of a graduate field may propose to change the name of the field. If the change indicates a substantive shift, the steps in approval are similar to those for establishing a new graduate field, as above. Otherwise, approval by the General Committee is sufficient.

4. Graduate Field Mergers

Members of two or more graduate fields may propose to merge the multiple units into one field. If the merger affects only the field name or operations, General Committee approval is required. If the merger affects the degree subject name or substance, the proposal is considered by the General Committee and if approved then presented to the Board of Trustees and the State Education Department for approval.

5. Dissolution of a Graduate Field

Members of the graduate faculty may propose to terminate a field if there is sufficient evidence the field is dormant, or too few faculty have common academic interests in the particular area, or faculty cannot be identified who will exercise shared responsibility for the area of inquiry and the corresponding admission, education, and financial support of graduate students. The General Committee may consider dissolution of a graduate field without vote of the field's faculty if a sufficient number of field faculty cannot be identified to conduct a meaningful vote. If the General Committee approves dissolution of the graduate field, the proposal is then presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. If the dissolution involves deactivation or discontinuation of a degree program, see above.

F. Director of Graduate Studies

1. Responsibilities

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) represents a field in matters such as:

- promoting the quality of graduate education within the field, including regular assessment of learning outcomes,
- promoting the well-being of graduate students within the field.
coordinating the establishment of academic priorities and allocation of resources for graduate education within the field,
- overseeing the field's admissions process, and
- serving as liaison between the field and the Graduate School.

The Director of Graduate Studies should:

- Communicate regularly with graduate students in the field (e.g., email, regular office hours, occasional town hall meetings).
- Be regularly accessible to graduate students in the field.
- Facilitate conversations between graduate faculty and students as needed.
- Convene the graduate faculty as needed to consider the quality of graduate education in the field, policy matters, and graduate student progress and outcomes.

- Be familiar with the *Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty*.

2. Eligibility

The Director of Graduate Studies for a field must be a member of that field. Graduate School Professors are ineligible. To be eligible for appointment or election as Director of Graduate Studies, a faculty member must have a tenured appointment and at least three years' membership on the graduate faculty, unless there is no such qualified candidate. If the field faculty determine there is no such qualified candidate, an explanation of the reasons must be provided to the Dean of the Graduate School.

3. Selection

Using whatever method they deem appropriate, the graduate faculty in the field to be represented nominate a Director of Graduate Studies to the Dean of the Graduate School for final approval. The nomination materials should explain the nomination method used by the graduate faculty.

4. Term of Appointment

The term of a Director of Graduate Studies is generally three years with the possibility of reappointment or re-election. If a DGS will be on leave or otherwise unable to conduct the duties of the position for one 12-month period or less, the field may designate an interim DGS and inform the Graduate School. If a DGS will be on leave or otherwise unable to conduct the duties of the position for more than one 12-month period, a new DGS should be selected and proposed to the Dean of the Graduate School for final approval following the procedures above.

IV. ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID

A. General Considerations

Every applicant to the Graduate School is either rejected or admitted into a specific graduate field for a particular semester. The graduate faculty of the relevant field recommends admission based on:

- the applicant's aptitude for graduate work in that field and for research degrees, the availability of faculty, funding, and facilities for the applicant's proposed research; or
- for professional degrees, the availability of faculty and courses for the applicant's proposed program of study.

To matriculate in the Graduate School, an applicant must have received a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent from a college or university of recognized standing.

Matriculates who are not citizens or permanent residents of the United States must certify financial support—from Cornell or elsewhere—for the required years of the program: three years for doctoral students and one to two years—according to the duration of the degree program—for master's students.

The field decides whether to admit someone who already holds a Ph.D.

Applicants who have been refused admission may reapply.

B. Student Status

Each applicant accepted by the Graduate School is offered a particular student status, either regular degree, provisional, or non-degree.

1. Regular Degree Student

An individual admitted for study leading to an advanced degree is a regular degree student.

2. Non-degree Student

Non-degree status provides an opportunity for an individual who wishes to receive advanced training but who has no intention of working toward an advanced degree. A non-degree student studies under the supervision of a faculty advisor. The Graduate School will admit a limited number of non-degree students if facilities warrant and proper faculty directors for the intended studies are found. A student may register in this status for a maximum of two semesters. A non-degree student whose status is changed to regular degree may transfer semesters of registration completed while in non-degree status. (See "[Prior Enrollment](#)" p. 22.)

Tuition is charged for non-degree students. The faculty sponsor of a non-degree student may request a full or partial tuition fellowship from the Dean of the college or school corresponding to the faculty sponsor's primary appointment.

C. Admission for Part-time Study

1. Employee Degree Program

a. Staff

A Cornell University staff member may be eligible to apply for graduate admission to research and professional degree programs as part of the [Employee Degree Program](#). The following employees may be considered for acceptance into this program after one year of regular, full-time service at Cornell:

- all regular full-time, non-academic employees,

- non-professorial academic staff members who do not hold voting status on any faculty (college, university, or graduate), and
- R.O.T.C. military personnel.

Non-professorial academic staff members with voting status on any faculty (university, college, or graduate) are ineligible for the Employee Degree Program.⁴

A staff member seeking admission through the Employee Degree Program must apply to and be accepted by a graduate field as a regular degree student.

Employee Degree participants are not required to spend any semesters as full-time students.

b. Faculty

Cornell University faculty members are ineligible for the Employee Degree Program. (See footnote, *this page*.) Members of the University Faculty may register with the Graduate School and be candidates for a degree.

2. Area Residents

Established Ithaca-area residents may be admitted on a part-time basis to both research master's and professional master's degree programs. Study for a doctorate, however, may not be conducted in this manner. Graduate fields must accept or reject applicants seeking admission for part-time study following the same admissions standards as are applied to applicants for full-time study. This program is not to be used for applicants who were refused admission to full-time study.

D. Admissions Options

1. Deferral of Admission

Accepted applicants are offered admission for a particular semester. When an accepted applicant wishes to defer admission, the individual must receive graduate field approval.

2. Change of Field, Degree Program, or Student Status

When a student wishes to change field, degree program, or student status (e.g. non-degree to regular degree status), the individual must be admitted into the new field, degree program, or status. A student changes field, degree program, or status by obtaining approval from the intended field of study and the Graduate School.

A special committee may recommend that a student's degree program be changed from a doctoral program to a master's program at any time.

3. Readmission after Withdrawal or Leave of Absence

See "[Returning after Non-registered Status](#)" p. 26.

E. Application Records

Credentials of rejected applicants and of accepted applicants who fail to register are purged two years after the beginning of the semester for which they sought admission. Credentials of accepted applicants who register form a part of their permanent record.

⁴ Employees in these categories and members of the University faculty may apply for student or non-degree student status but are charged per-credit tuition. Employees with non-degree status who pursue this option may not, under any circumstances, receive advanced standing for any time during which they were registered as non-degree students.

Letters of recommendation are strictly confidential and may not be used for any purpose—other than official admissions procedures and application for financial support—without the written consent of the author. In accordance with the [Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 \(FERPA\)](#), an applicant may waive the right to inspect a recommendation. An applicant who decides not to waive the right will have access to the recommendation if the individual registers in the Graduate School.

F. Funding for Ph.D. Students

To attract, retain, and support timely degree completion of the highest quality Ph.D. students, graduate fields must offer financial support to the student for a significant portion of the expected Ph.D. program at the time of admission, subject to the student making satisfactory academic progress, to include stipend, tuition, and health insurance. Financial support may come from a variety of sources, including Graduate School, college, department, and faculty resources (including external awards), and external fellowships or scholarships secured by the student. Fields may indicate in the award letter that support is contingent upon continued availability of funds in the unit; fields that encounter difficulties in meeting the provisions of the funding offer are encouraged to contact the Graduate School to discuss ways that the funding offer can be honored. Individual exceptions to admit self-pay Ph.D. students may be approved by the Graduate School Dean in certain circumstances; a field must secure such approval from the Dean prior to extending an offer of admission to the student.

G. Holiday and Vacation Time for Funded Graduate Students

1. General Principles

Graduate students can benefit from time devoted to rest, relaxation, and renewal away from the pressures of research, scholarly endeavors, service responsibilities, and academic study. Graduate fields, special committees (academic advisors), graduate faculty, and assistantship supervisors should encourage graduate students to take time away via university holidays and planned vacation.

2. Holiday and Vacation Time Duration

Graduate students funded on assistantships (see University Policy 1.3 for details) or fellowships for spring, summer, and fall terms are entitled to two weeks (10 weekdays) of annual vacation each calendar year in addition to [Cornell University holidays](#) (when the university is officially closed); vacation time will be pro-rated for students funded for shorter periods of time. [University holidays](#) generally include 12 days: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the following day, and Winter Break (generally six working days from December 25 through January 1). Assistantship and fellowship stipend, tuition, and health plan packages are financial support for graduate study and are not reduced for holiday or approved vacation time away.

If a graduate student holds an external fellowship whose terms may conflict with this policy, the student should consult with their Director of Graduate Studies or the Graduate School Associate Dean for Administration to determine if the external fellowship policy supersedes Cornell policy.

3. University Holidays vs. Academic Calendar

Days on which classes are not in session but the university is open (e.g., “spring break”) are not automatic vacation time nor holidays for funded graduate students. Graduate students are expected to continue with their research, scholarly endeavors, service responsibilities, and academic progress during those periods, but may request in advance to take vacation during such periods.

4. Handling Disagreements

If a graduate student and special committee chair and supervisor (if any) of the funded position are unable to reach agreement on appropriate scheduling of requested vacation time, use of university holidays, or requests for additional time away for personal reasons, the Director of Graduate Studies should be consulted to help mediate a resolution. The Graduate School associate dean for academic and student affairs may be consulted as well.

H. Fellowships

1. General Considerations

Departments, colleges, centers, other programs, and the Graduate School award fellowships.

A major purpose of graduate fellowships is to attract the most talented students to Cornell. Accordingly, fellowships are available primarily to applicants holding the baccalaureate degree or equivalent who have been admitted to a program leading to a degree administered by the Graduate School. Some fellowships are reserved for regular degree students already registered for a degree administered by the Graduate School.

Fellowships may be awarded for a semester, an academic year, or a calendar year. Some run for more than a year. With approval of the Dean, graduate fields may divide fellowship funds to be used for single-semester fellowships, summer research awards, academic-year assistantship stipend supplements, or other academic purposes. Graduate fellowships may bear a memorial name.

In accordance with a resolution of the [Council of Graduate Schools in the United States](#), an applicant to Cornell University who receives an offer of funding has until April 15 to decide whether or not to accept the award.

Students who hold University-funded or external fellowships ordinarily pursue a full-time course of study under the supervision of the special committee chair. (See "[Full-time Study](#)" p. 22.) A fellowship stipend is an outright scholarship to the recipient. A fellowship is not salary for services rendered to the individuals or organizations that have contributed to that fund.

No student may enter into a fellowship agreement with any individual or firm when its terms stipulate a delay in the publication of research results. Such terms are incompatible with Graduate School requirements. (See "[Theses, Research Project Reports, and Dissertations](#)", p. 36.)

2. Grants from External Sources

Nothing stated above is to be construed as in opposition to the acceptance by the University of grants by an industry for the investigation of technical problems of that industry. Such grants, however, shall not be classified as fellowship support or fall under the jurisdiction of the Graduate School.

I. Assistantships

Assistantships are crucial to the intellectual life of undergraduates, graduates, and faculty alike, as well as to the financial support of graduate students in furtherance of their academic studies. Departments, programs, and colleges normally award teaching assistantships. Faculty members, through departments, normally award research assistantships.

[Cornell University Policy 1.3: Graduate Student Assistantships](#) is part of the University's commitment to an equitable, supportive, and professional environment for graduate education. Topics addressed include such matters as the nature, quantity, and timing of the expected responsibilities; appropriate notification of duties; teaching requirements; rights to authorship; the

difference between a graduate research assistantship and a research assistantship; and apprenticeship, supervision, training, and evaluation.

J Termination of Awards

Continuation of University-funded financial aid is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress and satisfactory performance in any teaching or research-related responsibilities. Unsatisfactory performance in any of these areas may lead to withdrawal of further financial aid.

Students who take a personal leave of absence or withdraw from the Graduate School are not guaranteed continuation of the financial aid package offered at the time of original admission, upon re-registration in the Graduate School.

Students who withdraw prior to the end of the semester may be asked to repay a prorated amount of the stipend.

K. Loans

The Office of [Financial Aid and Student Employment](#) administers both federal and private educational loans. Information on eligibility and terms is available from the Office of Financial Aid and Student Employment.

V. REGISTRATION

A. General Considerations

At the beginning of each semester, all students must register with the University. Registration establishes student status and confers access to the range of University resources available to students. Registration is not, however, synonymous with course enrollment. (See "[Course Enrollment](#)" p. 31.) Registration is required every semester until either withdrawal or completion of degree, unless a leave of absence is granted. Each regular degree student is expected to complete the registration requirement with reasonable continuity. (See "[Time-to-degree](#)" p. 37.)

A student registered with the Graduate School may not register in a degree-granting program with any other school or college, at Cornell or elsewhere, except in a University-recognized exchange program, or approved dual degree program, or during the summer with [Cornell's School of Continuing Education and Summer Sessions](#). A student may have official status at other universities, colleges, or schools for purposes of conducting research or taking specialized courses, with approval of the graduate field.

B. Evaluation of Progress

1. Research Degree Programs

A PhD, JSD, DMA, MA or MS student's progress toward an advanced degree is determined not only by the quality of work completed (gauged through faculty evaluations, Student Progress Reviews, and formal exams) but also by the length of time spent in pursuit of the degree. For research degrees and some professional degrees, the Graduate School measures this progress in terms of registered semesters. (See "[Registration Requirements](#)" p. 21.) Registration requirements are intended to insure that all students for the degrees of the Graduate School have satisfactory opportunity for concentrated study, in most cases on the Ithaca campus, and for participation in the cultural life of the University.

The special committee chair shall provide qualitative feedback on student progress for each year of study, from the second year through the completion of the degree, using the Student Progress Review form. Students, in consultation with the committee chair, are required to complete a self-assessment, reflect on progress towards established academic goals, report on professional development activities, and identify future plans and timeline.

All work done by a student in fulfillment of an advanced degree shall be freely available for inspection and evaluation by any interested member of the graduate faculty.

2. Professional Degree Programs

A professional master's degree student's progress is determined by performance in courses and by academic requirements defined by the graduate field. Minimum grade point average (GPA) may be defined.

C. Registration Requirements

1. Introduction

Registration requirements are measured by semesters of full-time study. Half-time registration status fulfills requirements at 50% of the full-time rate. Half-time registration is the smallest fraction that may be counted towards degree requirements.

Two semesters of registration are the minimum requirement for an M.A. or M.S. degree. Six semesters of registration, two of them after the A Exam, are the minimum requirement for the Ph.D. degree. At least four semesters of registration are required for a non-thesis master's degree awarded to a doctoral student (See "[Degrees Offered](#)" p. 11 and "[Examination for Non-Thesis](#)

[Master's Degree](#)" p. 33). M.A./Ph.D. and M.S./Ph.D. students matriculate first into the master's program and transition to the Ph.D. program when the master's degree is conferred.

At least one-half of required registered semesters must be earned from full-time, academic-year study on the Ithaca campus or a satellite location, except for students in the Employee Degree Program. (See "[Employee Degree Program](#)" p. 16 and "[Area Residents](#)" p. 17 and "[Area Residents](#)" Area Residents p. 22)

2. Full-time Study

An individual is considered a full-time student if registered (including in absentia—[see page 24](#)), enrolled in courses or engaged in thesis or dissertation work, and in conformity with limitations on assistantships, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment specified in this *Code*. (See "[Assistantships, Hourly Student Appointments, Outside Employment and Registration Requirements](#)" p. 23.)

3. Summer Registration

Graduate students must register with the Graduate School for the summer if (1) they are receiving financial aid during the summer—e.g. fellowships, summer loans, assistantships, travel grants, or tuition awards, (2) they wish to use campus facilities, or (3) they are off campus but need to be registered for summer study. Employment limitations specified in this *Code* also apply to summer registration. (See "[Assistantships, Hourly Student Appointments, Outside Employment and Registration Requirements](#)" p. 23.)

The summer term does not count towards minimum registration requirements, except by petition.

4. Area Residents

Part-time master's students are required to make progress at one-half the rate of full-time students. Students wishing to go at a slower rate may do so through the Extramural Program, but at least one semester of registration must be obtained in at least half-time study. (See "[Admission for Part-time Study](#)" p. 16.) Half-time registration status fulfills requirements at 50% of the full-time rate. Half-time registration is the smallest fraction that may be counted towards degree requirements.

5. Prior Enrollment

Doctoral students may be eligible for advanced standing based on academic work completed in a prior graduate program at Cornell, prior to registering at Cornell, in non-degree status at Cornell, at another university after registering at Cornell, and in a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program, as described below.

Master's degree students may not count study in other graduate schools toward the registration requirements of their program. They are, however, eligible for advanced standing based on work completed at Cornell in non-degree status, as described below.

a. Work Done in a Prior Graduate Program at Cornell or Prior to Registering in a Degree Program at Cornell

A Ph.D. student may petition to have study in another graduate degree program at Cornell or study in other graduate schools counted toward the registration requirement. Upon recommendation of the special committee and approval of the Dean, a maximum of two semesters of advanced standing towards the Ph.D. requirements may be awarded for a master's degree completed at Cornell or at another university. Requests will not be formally considered until the student is registered as a Ph.D. student in the Graduate School.

Advanced work in undergraduate colleges will not be considered for advanced standing, unless the work was part of a program previously approved by the graduate faculty.

b. Work Done in Non-degree Status

With the approval of the special committee, a non-degree student whose status changes to regular degree may be granted two semesters of advanced standing for time completed in non-degree status.

c. Work Done at another University after Registering at Cornell

If the Dean of the Graduate School and the special committee support the petition, a doctoral candidate (a student who has passed the A Exam) can be awarded up to four semesters of advanced standing for work done at another university after having registered at Cornell. No more than three semesters of registration earned in this way can be counted toward the minimum requirement.

A doctoral candidate pursuing this option should:

- secure a leave of absence prior to commencing study at the other university,
- petition for advanced standing upon return to Cornell, and
- supply documentary evidence of the satisfactory progress of work while in attendance at the other university.

d. Work Completed in a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program

A student who has been awarded the D.V.M. degree by Cornell may receive up to two semesters of advanced standing toward the Ph.D. degree, provided his or her special committee certifies that the work done in the D.V.M. program formed an integral part of the work required for the Ph.D. and that it was of equivalent quality. Approval of advanced standing is made by the Dean of the Graduate School.

A person holding a D.V.M. comparable to Cornell's may also be awarded transfer of up to two semesters of advanced standing upon the recommendation of his or her special committee and approval of the Dean.

6. Assistantships, Hourly Student Appointments, Outside Employment and Registration Requirements

The time devoted to assistantships, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment affects registration status, as follows:

- Up to 20 hours of combined assistantship, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment per week. A student may register in full-time status. (A student who holds a University-funded fellowship, external fellowship, or graduate research assistantship may accept additional assistantships, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment of no more than eight hours per week, provided that the terms established by the funding entity allow for such arrangements.) For certification to outside agencies consenting to this interpretation, students on a single graduate assistantship are regarded as full-time students.
- 21 to 40 hours of combined assistantship, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment per week. A student may register in half-time status. Master's students may complete the equivalent of one semester of registration in this way. Ph.D. students may earn a maximum of two registered semesters this way. Students who wish to register in a half-time status must obtain the prior approval of their special committee chair, Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Dean. International students are subject to

immigration regulations relating to full-time student status and employment and should consult with the [Office of Global Learning](#) before accepting any combination of assistantships, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment that exceed 20 hours per week.

A student with more than one graduate assistantship in a single semester may petition to register in half-time status based on the academic benefit to the student of the proposed arrangements. Such requests must be submitted with the endorsement of the student's special committee chair and Director of Graduate Studies through the Graduate School petition process; prior written approval from the dean of the Graduate School is required. International students should consult with ISSO on the implications of such arrangements, as such arrangements may be prohibited by visa requirements.

The time limits for assistantships, hourly student appointments, and/or outside employment apply to summer registration as well.

With the exception of Employee Degree Program participants, a regular, non-student, non-faculty employee at the University may not register with the Graduate School. Members of the University Faculty may register with the Graduate School and be candidates for a degree.

7. [In Absentia Registration](#)

In absentia status provides an opportunity for graduate students to engage in approved study during the academic year while continuing to work under the guidance of the special committee but in a location at least 100 miles away from the University's campus location for the program in which the student has been registered (e.g., Ithaca, Geneva, Cornell Tech). Any regular degree or provisional student registered with the Graduate School may [petition for in absentia status](#). When approved by his or her special committee and the Graduate School, in absentia status allows the student to engage in study away from the University during the academic year. While in approved in absentia status, students may not take classes or engage in research or scholarship at another Cornell Graduate School campus location. Provided such an arrangement enhances the student's program of study, registering in absentia allows a master's or doctoral student to meet registration requirements toward degree requirements. Students studying in absentia are eligible for fellowships, assistantships, student health plan, and education loans.

An in absentia student continues to work under the general direction of his or her special committee. If appropriate to the conditions of the in absentia location, the work may be under the immediate supervision of a qualified director designated by the committee and acting for it.

The following eligibility requirements and limitations apply to study in absentia:

- A Ph.D. student shall have completed two semesters of registration in the Graduate School, in full-time study either on the Ithaca, Geneva, or Cornell Tech campus or at a satellite location, to be eligible for in absentia registration. (For M.A./Ph.D. or M.S./Ph.D. students, the two registered semesters must have been earned while pursuing the Ph.D. degree program.)
- A Ph.D. student may not complete more than two of the required semesters of registration while approved for in absentia study.
- A master's degree student shall have completed one semester of registration, while registered for that degree program in the Graduate School, in full-time study either on the Ithaca, Geneva, or Cornell Tech campus or at a satellite location, to be eligible for in absentia registration.
- A master's student may not complete more than one of the required semesters of registration in fulfillment of the degree's requirement while approved for in absentia study.

- A student may register in absentia with the Graduate School for no more than a total of eight semesters.
- The same limitations on employment apply for in absentia students as for on-campus students; in absentia students are not typically eligible for on-campus employment. (See [“Assistantships, Hourly Student Appointments, Outside Employment and Registration Status” p. 23.](#))

D. Non-registered Status

1. Leave of Absence

A leave of absence can be granted for [personal](#) or [health](#) reasons. Leaves run for a period of up to 12 months, depending on when the request is made, and may be renewed annually to a maximum of four calendar years. Leave renewal requests must be received by the Graduate School by August 1st of each academic year. Time spent on leave of absence does not count toward time-to-degree limits. (See [“Time to Degree”](#), p. 37.) The field and the Graduate School jointly determine whether a personal Leave of Absence will be granted and determines eligibility to return. If a Health Leave of Absence is approved for a student by [Cornell Health](#), the Graduate School will coordinate with the special committee and field to provide an updated academic timeline and plan outlining academic steps (if any) that the student must perform or complete before being considered for readmission to registered student status. The academic plan shall be provided to the student within three months of the approval of the Health Leave of Absence.

To renew a Health Leave of Absence, the student must submit a request by email to the Graduate School Registrar before the expiration of the approved leave of absence period. Health Leaves of Absence are automatically renewed upon request of the student, to a maximum of four years. Personal Leaves of Absence are renewed at the discretion of the field and must be requested by submitting a Leave of Absence form no later than August 1st. If a student does not renew the Health Leave of Absence, the student must either be cleared as below for return or will be withdrawn from the university. If a Health Leave of Absence expires due to non-renewal by the student and the student seeks to enroll, the student must meet the conditions below for enrollment following a Health Leave of Absence, including clearance from University Health Services. If a student does not renew the personal Leave of Absence and does not enroll as below, the student will be withdrawn from the university.

A student who takes a leave of absence relinquishes access to campus facilities and services that normally accompany student status, however, students on a personal leave may still schedule and complete their M, A, or B exams. Students on a Health Leave of Absence may not complete these exams while on leave. Upon returning after a personal Leave of Absence, a student is not guaranteed continuation of the financial aid package offered at the time of original admission to the Graduate School. Students returning from approved Health Leave of Absence within the four-year window are guaranteed any financial support remaining from their original offer of admission modified by any written changes to the financial commitment made prior to the Health Leave of Absence, although the specific duties associated with that support may be adjusted and the return shall be timed to coincide with normal funding cycles.

U.S. government regulations require that a student holding a non-immigrant visa who takes a leave of absence must either (1) leave the United States while not enrolled or (2) receive approval for another visa status. Students on the Health Leave of Absence may have options for remaining in the United States for a limited, specified duration of up to 12 months. It is crucial that an international student taking a leave of absence contacts the Graduate School and discusses his or her plans with the [Office of Global Learning](#) before leaving Cornell.

2. Withdrawal

Students may withdraw voluntarily at any time. Withdrawal is appropriate for students who do not intend to resume studies or to complete an advanced degree at Cornell University. Any interruption of registration is considered a withdrawal unless the student has been granted a leave of absence. A student holding a non-immigrant visa who withdraws is subject to the same U.S. government regulations as when applying for a leave of absence. (See "[Leave of Absence](#)" p. 25.)

E. Returning after Non-registered Status

1. Registering after a Leave of Absence

A student who wishes to register following a personal Leave of Absence of no more than four calendar years may register upon written request and without reapplying, as long as a renewal of the personal Leave of Absence was granted by the field each year without interruption (See "[Leave of Absence](#)" p. 25) and the field approves the return to registration status. When the leave of absence has been for a period of more than four years, the student must reapply by completing a readmission form. In this case, the field to which the student is applying may request any additional materials it deems necessary as part of the reapplication process.

Registration following a Health Leave of Absence requires approval of University Health Services as well as the graduate field and the Graduate School. The student must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the field that the academic plan for the period on Health Leave of Absence has been completed. If the student is cleared by University Health Services to return but the academic plan has not been completed, the student has the option of applying for a personal Leave of Absence (as above) until the academic plan is completed or withdrawing from the university. To register after the four-year limit for leaves has passed, an individual first must apply for readmission to the Graduate School using [form R3](#) "Application for Readmission."

A student who returns to the University from a personal Leave of Absence or a Health Leave of Absence (as above) to take a Final Examination and not continue with courses or prolonged study is not required to register. A student on a Health Leave of Absence may not schedule or attempt an exam until cleared for return by University Health Services and the Graduate School, and must be either approved for a personal Leave of Absence or returned to registered status.

2. Resuming Studies after Withdrawal

When an individual wishes to return to the University following a withdrawal, the individual must reapply by completing an application for readmission ([Form R3](#)). The graduate field to which the individual is applying may request any additional materials it deems necessary as part of the reapplication process.

VI. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

A. Introduction

The intellectual accomplishments required for the degrees granted by the graduate faculty are not measured solely through the satisfaction of routine requirements. Standards in fields are to be defined and maintained voluntarily, rather than through legislation by formally constituted departments of the faculty. All students are expected to adhere to the provisions of Cornell's [Code of Academic Integrity](#) and all other university policies. Regarding their academic programs, students should particularly review [University Policy 1.2 on Academic Misconduct](#) and [University Policy 4.6 on Standards of Ethical Conduct](#).

Except as specified by division faculty or noted below, the balance of this Code of Legislation does not apply to professional degrees.

B. Special Committee for Research Degrees

1. Rules and Responsibilities

In research master's programs (M.A., M.S.) and research doctoral programs (M.A./Ph.D., M.S./Ph.D., Ph.D.), the special committee, under the leadership of the committee chair, has primary responsibility for developing the student's independence in scholarship. Special committees and students are urged to meet at least twice a year.

There are no regulations of the graduate faculty governing the number of courses, grades, or specific content of instruction to which special committees must subscribe. Graduate field requirements should be stated in terms of range and thoroughness of knowledge rather than in the form of a list of prescribed courses. Special committees may impose any requirements over and above the requirements of the Graduate School that they deem educationally sound.

Special committee members may avail themselves of assistance from a larger group—most obviously the field—to the extent they consider it helpful.

2. Selection

A student selects the members of the special committee, with their consent, from the current graduate faculty. Any member of the graduate faculty may serve on a special committee, subject to the limitations imposed on different categories of that faculty. (See "[Eligibility and Academic Purview](#)" p. 3.) The Director of Graduate Studies must endorse the proposed special committee membership prior to Graduate School approval or must convey objections to the Dean of the Graduate School.

A master's student must have at least two members of the graduate faculty on the special committee—one in the major subject (the chair) and one in the minor subject. (See "Special Committee" *above*.) When M.A./Ph.D. and M.S./Ph.D. students complete the master's portion of their programs, the student is responsible for constituting a valid full Ph.D. committee by the deadlines established in the *Code of Legislation* and must file the online special committee change form.

A doctoral student must have at least three members of the graduate faculty on the special committee—one in the major subject (the chair) and two in the minor subjects. At least two members of the committee must be general members of the graduate faculty. Some fields have secured permission from the General Committee to require only one minor subject. When a student in one of those fields exercises this option, the third member of the special committee shall represent an additional concentration in the student's major subject. (See "[Major/Minor Subjects and Concentrations](#)" p. 30.); if, however, the subject has only one associated concentration, then the requirement for an additional concentration is waived.

Students who are unable to constitute a committee with the required number of members cannot continue in the Graduate School.

The Dean of the Graduate School may approve an individual as a minor subject member on a special committee without conferring graduate faculty membership. The following individuals may be considered for such *ad hoc* appointments:

- senior research associates,
- senior lecturers,
- senior extension associates,
- tenured and tenure-track professors without the highest degree for the field,
- other staff members of Cornell University, the Federal Nutrition Laboratory, or Boyce Thompson Institute, and
- other qualified individuals, whether or not associated with Cornell University.

To be nominated, the individual must be recommended for *ad hoc* membership by the field's Director of Graduate Studies. The individual's curriculum vitae along with the student's petition requesting the ad hoc member, must be submitted by the Director of Graduate Studies to the Dean of the Graduate School for final approval.

Ad hoc special committee members serve in addition to the two required graduate faculty members on a master's committee and the three on a doctoral committee. Ad Hoc members of a special committee have the right to participate in all special committee meetings, in the discussion of requirements, and in all examinations. They are not required to sign or otherwise approve the thesis or dissertation.

3. Field-appointed Member

A field may require a student to have a field-appointed member on the special committee to help administer exams. The graduate field, rather than the student, selects this member. A field-appointed member may serve either in addition to student-selected members or, if the student requests and the field-appointed member agrees, may be counted as one of the student-selected members and serve on the committee throughout the program.

4. Special Committee Chair

The representative of the major subject shall be the special committee chair. The chair supervises the thesis or dissertation. Exceptions for a minor committee member to supervise the thesis or dissertation are rare and must be endorsed by the Director of Graduate Studies and approved in advance by the Dean of the Graduate School. Together with the appropriate unit or units—department, college, center, University—the chair also assumes responsibility for providing facilities necessary for the student to pursue the student's thesis or dissertation research. For a student whose research involves human subjects and/or vertebrate animals, the chair of the special committee is responsible for ensuring that the student is informed of federal, state, local, and University regulations governing such research, including the need for approval by the [Institutional Review Board](#) for research involving human participants, and/or the [Cornell University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) for research involving live vertebrates and that the student receives such approval as relevant for that student's research (*See* "[Research](#)" p. 32.)

If a senior lecturer, senior extension associate, or visiting critic who is a general member of the graduate faculty chairs a special committee, the committee must include a tenured or tenure-track general member of the graduate faculty in the field of the student's major subject.

If a Graduate School Professor co-chairs a special committee, the committee must include a tenured or tenure-track general member of the graduate faculty in the field of the student's major subject.

If a student's special committee chair leaves Cornell, the individual may continue to serve as chair for a period of up to one year with special approval from the Dean of the Graduate School. Thereafter, the student may petition to have that individual retained as co-chair. (See "[Term of Appointment](#)" p. 7.)

5. Special Committee Co-Chair

A co-chair has the same rights, responsibilities, and obligations as a single special committee chair; both co-chairs must fulfill all chair requirements. Doctoral committees with two co-chairs require only one additional minor member.

6. Deadlines

Not later than three weeks after first registration in the Graduate School, a student must submit the name of the special committee chair or temporary advisor to the Graduate School. The Director of Graduate Studies must endorse the proposed chair prior to Graduate School approval or must convey objections to the Dean of the Graduate School. A Director of Graduate Studies may be appointed as temporary advisor.

The graduate faculty requires that all students have a full special committee no later than the end of the second semester for master's degree programs and no later than the end of the third semester for doctoral programs. In the field of Economics, all students must have a special committee chair, not a temporary advisor, no later than the end of the fourth semester of registration. The Economics field requires a full special committee no later than the beginning of the sixth semester of registration. Because courses are not offered in the summer term, summer registration is not counted for the purposes of this exception. In the field of Physics, all students must have a full special committee before the start of their fifth semester of registration.

7. Changes to Membership

A student may propose a change to the membership of the special committee with the approval of all the members of the newly constituted committee. The Director of Graduate Studies must endorse the proposed change prior to Graduate School approval or must convey objections to the Dean of the Graduate School.

For master's students, no change may be made during the three months prior to the Final Examination, except with the approval of the Dean.

For doctoral students, no change may be made after passing the A Exam, except with the Dean's approval. In addition, no doctoral student may schedule a B Exam within three months of a change of committee, except with the Dean's approval. A petition to change the chair of a special committee after the A Exam will be approved only after the Director of Graduate Studies confers, at a minimum, with the student, the chair (or other member supervising the candidate's dissertation), and the prospective new chair. The Director of Graduate Studies must endorse the request or must report any conflict to the Dean of the Graduate School.

When new committee members do not accept a prior vote passing the student on an A Exam, a new exam must be held.

8. Resignations

Any member may resign at any time from a special committee, except when a student is in approved Health Leave of Absence status. The rationale for resigning should be explained in writing at the time of the decision. The decision to resign cannot be based on the student's

legally-protected status as listed in University Policy 6.4 definitions of Equal Education and Employment Opportunity Protected Status (i.e., race, ethnic or national origin, color, gender (including pregnancy), age, creed, religion, actual or perceived disability, ex-offender status, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, or an individual's genetic information; consult Policy 6.4 for current list of protected status).

When a chair resigns, in order for the student to have the opportunity to reconstitute the committee, the student may be registered without a chair:

- a. through the end of the semester in which the resignation occurs if the resignation occurs before the end of the fifth week of the semester; or
- b. through the end of the semester following the semester of the resignation if the resignation occurs after the end of the fifth week of the semester.

Summer does not count as a semester for these purposes. Appropriate tuition must be paid according to the registration status.

Failure to reconstitute a committee precludes a student's further registration in the Graduate School; if the student is unable to find a new chair within the timeframe noted above, the student will be withdrawn from the Graduate School. Leave of Absence (personal or health) does not extend the timeframe above.

Upon resignation of the chair, all members of the special committee must send an email to the Dean of the Graduate School explaining the circumstances. The Director of Graduate Studies must be copied on these emails. Financial support while the student is without a special committee chair is not guaranteed; it is the Director of Graduate Studies' responsibility to review the financial impact of the resignation with the student.

C. Subjects and Concentrations

1. General Considerations

Each graduate field is composed of one or more subjects of study, which are broad categories that may even be the same as the field itself. Each subject may be sub-divided into specialized areas, which are called concentrations. Subjects and concentrations need have no necessary relationship to departmental lines. A committee member represents a subject and may also represent one or more concentrations within that subject.

2. Establishment of New Subjects and Concentrations

The General Committee, on recommendation from graduate faculty in the field of study, approves subjects and concentrations in each graduate field. Subjects and concentrations that overlap several fields are appropriate. In recommending subjects and concentrations to the General Committee, the members of the field consider:

- the adequacy of the proposed program for the purpose of graduate training and
- the availability of appropriate staff, facilities, and financial resources.

In principle, the General Committee does not approve subjects that lead to an over-specialization or a narrow view of science and scholarship.

The steps in approval are similar to those for establishing a new graduate field.

3. Major/Minor Subjects and Concentrations

A master's student must choose two subjects of study, one major and one minor. A doctoral student must choose three subjects of study, one major and two minor, except in those fields that

have secured permission from the General Committee to require only two, one major and one minor. For each major and minor subject, students also choose a concentration, a specialized area within the subject. (See "[Special Committee for Research Degrees](#)" p. 27.) The special committee member who represents an approved subject or concentration on a special committee determines the specific requirements for the student.

D. Coursework

1. General Considerations

The Graduate School does not offer regular courses. Graduate School students enroll in courses as appropriate to their academic program.

- A regular degree student's special committee, or the advisor for a provisional student, is the sole judge of whether the student can efficiently prepare to fulfill degree requirements through formal or informal participation in courses.
- In principle, graduate students may enroll for any course offered by Cornell University. Undergraduate courses may not be required for graduate degree completion but may be required for establishing basic competencies.

2. Course Enrollment

Course enrollment is the act of signing up for specific courses offered by Cornell's colleges and schools. It is distinct from registration with the University. (See "[Registration](#)" p. 21.)

Students must enroll in courses and select credit options within 15 calendar days of the start of the semester. Students not enrolling in sufficient courses must be enrolled for research using either Graduate School or, if available, departmental course numbers assigned for that purpose. Students are required to enroll in a minimum of 12 credits each semester.

Students may enroll in courses either for credit or audit. Auditing (which appears as "V" on transcripts) means that the student pledges regular class attendance but not necessarily participation in all aspects of the course.

Through the 57th calendar day of the semester, courses may be dropped and grading options may be changed, without penalty. After the 57th calendar day of the semester, courses may be added and changes to credit hours and grading options may be made only in exceptional circumstances. A petition signed by the instructor and the student's special committee chair is required.

A course dropped after the 57th calendar day appears on transcripts with a "W," signifying Withdrawn. Exceptions may be approved when a student submits a petition approved by both the instructor and the special committee chair.

After the last day of classes for the semester, no course may be dropped and no changes may be made to credit hours and grading options.

3. Transcripts

The [University Registrar](#) maintains the permanent record of course enrollment and grades, and issues official transcripts of such records.

Course grades of Incomplete and No Grade Reported (which appear on transcripts as "INC" and "NGR," respectively) can be removed only within one year from the date of the end of the course in which the grade was given. After that time they become a permanent part of the transcript. A student can retake a course for a grade, which would then appear on the transcript along with the INC or NGR.

E. Research

1. Compliance

Students in all programs, especially research-degree programs, must be aware of federal, state, and local regulations and guidelines applying to student research. Regulations and guidelines apply to student research, including research not supported by federal funds or any outside sponsor. Cornell University has agreements (administered by the [Office of Sponsored Programs](#)) with the federal government to assure compliance with federal and state regulations.

2. Responsible Conduct of Research

a. General Requirements

Every graduate student pursuing a research degree (master's or doctoral) is [required to complete appropriate training](#) in the responsible conduct of research. Each student must complete online training through [Cornell Office of Research Integrity and Assurance \(ORIA\)](#) in authorship, peer review, and avoidance of research misconduct. Required training must be completed prior to the end of the student's second registered semester. Graduate fields and/or special committees may require additional training beyond these minimum requirements.

b. Research with Human Participants

Graduate students whose research involves human participants must seek review and receive a notice of approval or exemption from the [Institutional Review Board](#) before beginning their research. Human participant research means research involving a living individual about whom an investigator obtains, through either primary or secondary sources: (1) information or data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information.

c. Research with Live Vertebrates

Graduate students whose research involves live vertebrates must seek and received a notice of approval, through the sponsoring faculty member, of the [Cornell University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) prior to ordering, acquiring, or handling animals for their research.

3. Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID)

Every graduate student pursuing a research degree (master's or doctoral) is required to register for an Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID), as a tool for linking scholars with their publications, grants, and professional affiliations. Students must provide the Graduate School with their unique ORCID prior to the end of their second registered semester.

F. Examinations

1. Required Examinations

For the M.A. and M.S. degrees, the graduate faculty requires the Final Examination for the Master's Degree. The graduate faculty requires the Examination for Admission to Candidacy (the "A Exam") and the Final Examination for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (the "B Exam").

a. Final Examination for the Master's Degree with a Thesis

A master's student for a degree with thesis takes the final exam upon completion of all requirements for the degree but no earlier than one month before completion of the minimum registration requirement (*See* "[Registration Requirements](#)" *p. 21*). This oral exam covers the topic of the master's thesis.

If the M.A. or M.S. degree is a prerequisite for a Ph.D. program, the Final Examination for the Master's Degree may be combined with the Examination for Admission to Candidacy, subject to special committee approval.

b. Final Examination for the Master's Degree with a Research Project Report

A master's student for a degree with research project report takes the final exam at an appropriate time as determined by the degree program. The exam may be oral or written to assess individual accomplishment of degree objectives.

c. Examination for Admission to Candidacy

A student is admitted to doctoral candidacy after passing a comprehensive examination administered by the student's special committee. This examination is either oral or written and oral, as determined by the special committee. The passing of this examination certifies that the student is eligible to present a dissertation to the graduate faculty.

The A Exam may be taken after two semesters of registration have been completed in a Ph.D. degree program or in a master's program leading to an M.A./Ph.D. or M.S./Ph.D. degree in the same field. Unless special permission is obtained from the Dean, all doctoral students must attempt the Examination for Admission to Candidacy before beginning their seventh semester of registration in the Ph.D. program.

On the recommendation of the special committee, in fields that so desire and that have a master's degree registered with the New York State Education Department, a non-thesis master's degree without a written thesis may be awarded to a doctoral student who has passed the A exam and has completed four semesters of registration. (See "[Non-Thesis Master's Degrees](#)" p. 11 and "[Examination for Non-Thesis Master's Degree](#)" p. 33.)

d. Final Examination for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

A doctoral candidate takes the Final Examination upon completion of all requirements for the degree but no earlier than one month before completion of the minimum registration requirement. A minimum of two semesters of registration must be completed between passing the A exam and scheduling the B exam. This oral exam covers the general subject of the dissertation.

2. Examination for Non-Thesis Master's Degree

In fields that so desire and have a master's degree registered with the New York State Education Department, the special committee may nominate a doctoral student for a terminal M.A. or M.S. degree without completion of a thesis; such non-thesis master's degrees are not automatically awarded but must be designated at the time of the appropriate exam as below.

A doctoral student who has completed at least four semesters of registration may be awarded a Non-Thesis Master's degree under the following circumstances:

- a. The student successfully completes the A Exam; or
- b. the student fails the A Exam, but performs at a level considered equivalent to a passed Final Examination for the Master's Degree and withdraws from the Ph.D. program; or
- c. the student successfully completes a Final Examination for the Master's Degree and withdraws from the Ph.D. program.

3. Additional Examinations

A special committee may require any additional examinations that it deems necessary to judge the student's progress.

In Ph.D. programs, in addition to the exams required by the graduate faculty, individual fields may require a Qualifying Examination (a "Q" Exam). When required, Q Exams shall be administered with consistent standards within the graduate field. The purposes of such an exam are:

- to determine the ability of the student to pursue doctoral studies and, if the student is permitted to continue doctoral work,
- to assist the special committee in developing a program of study.

Students who fail a Q Exam may be determined to no longer be in good academic standing, special committee members may resign (See “[Resignations](#)” p. 29), or future funding may be withdrawn (See “[Termination of Awards](#)” p. 20). Exam results must be communicated to students in a timely manner.

4. Faculty Participation in Examinations

All members of the special committee are expected to participate in all examinations. At the discretion of the field demonstrated by permission from the DGS and with the agreement of all members of the committee, exams may be held either in person or online via appropriate, high-quality electronic audio and video conferencing. When exams are held online, provisions must be made to allow other members of the graduate faculty to participate. Instructions for access to online exams must be provided.

In exceptional cases, when a faculty member is unable to participate in an exam, they may designate another member of the graduate faculty to serve as their proxy. A special committee chair may not designate a proxy; the chair must participate in the exam. If a proxy is selected, the proxy must represent the same concentration as the regular committee member. On a committee with only the minimum required number of members, a member may not proxy for participation of another member. When an individual agrees to serve as a proxy, the regular committee member must inform the student, the Director of Graduate Studies of the student’s field, and the Graduate School of the agreement. If a committee has more than the required number of minor subject members, one minor member may designate another as their proxy.

When a field-appointed member serves only for an examination and not as a regular member, at least two other committee members for a master’s exam and three for a Ph.D. exam must participate in the exam.

Members of the graduate faculty other than members of the special committee are welcome at all examinations required by the graduate faculty. The special committee chair provides an opportunity for them to question the student.

5. Location of Examinations

In-person exams may be held either on the main University campus (Ithaca) or at a satellite location (including Geneva, the I.L.R. program in New York City, the Cornell Tech campus in New York City, or the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences in New York City), so long as the exam schedule is communicated to faculty at the Ithaca campus as well as in the satellite location, and an opportunity is provided for members of the graduate faculty other than members of the special committee to participate in the exam.

6. Scheduling of Examinations

Students must schedule exams with the Graduate School at least seven calendar days in advance by filing the proper examination scheduling form. The Director of Graduate Studies in the student’s field announces exams to members of the graduate faculty so that they may attend.

7. Examination Results

The determination of pass or fail rests exclusively with the members of the special committee, including any field-appointed member or members. For a student to pass an examination, all regular, proxy, and field-appointed members of the examining committee must approve. The

examining committee reports its decision to the Graduate School within three business days of the exam.

If a student passes an examination conditionally, the conditions must be provided to the student and the Graduate School in writing. If the student fails an examination, re-examination is allowed only with the special committee's approval and, then, not until at least three months have elapsed since the failed exam.

If a special committee unanimously fails a student on an examination and refuses to allow re-examination, the student may not continue in the Graduate School. The student can continue only if the General Committee approves the student's petition to do so.

If the student fails the examination and the minor subject members of the special committee, but not the chair, oppose re-examination, the student can continue in the Graduate School only if the General Committee approves the student's petition to do so.

If the chair, but not all the minor subject members, fails the student on an examination and opposes re-examination, the student can continue in the Graduate School only if the General Committee approves the students' petition to do so.

Graduate faculty visitors at an examination are at liberty to inform the Dean by email if they disagree with the judgment of the examining committee and wish to request a review of the case by the General Committee.

G. Master's Degree Awarded by Minor Field

1. General Considerations

In certain circumstances, a PhD candidate may earn a master's degree in the minor field instead of the major field. These degrees are not part of a special dual-degree program but are considered independent master's degrees. Such degrees are awarded for a level of work commensurate with that required for a non-thesis master's degree awarded by the minor field to its own PhD candidates upon admission to candidacy. They are awarded by the minor field by agreement with and in cooperation with the major field.

Cornell will award at most one master's degree to any student. Thus a student enrolled in a PhD or MS/PhD program who is awarded a master's degree in the minor field is not eligible for a master's degree in the major field.

2. Field Participation and Responsibilities

Only pairs of major/minor graduate fields approved in advance by the General Committee of the Graduate School may participate in this program. New pairs of fields wishing to participate should apply jointly to the Graduate School for approval. The Graduate School maintains a list of approved major/minor pairs.

The member of the student's special committee representing the minor field awarding the master's degree is primarily responsible for ensuring that all requirements for the degree are met. Participating fields are expected to advertise the availability of this degree to eligible students.

3. Student Eligibility

A PhD candidate wishing to receive a master's degree from the minor field must apply formally to the Graduate School. The student must have obtained approval from all members of the special committee. The application must be submitted by the time of admission to candidacy (A-exam). It is not necessary for all requirements for the master's degree to have been met at the time of A-exam, but the degree will not be awarded until all requirements are satisfied.

H. Theses, Research Project Reports, and Dissertations

1. General Considerations

M.A. and M.S. students (except those doctoral students receiving a non-thesis master's—[see p. 33](#)) must submit a thesis or research project report as appropriate to their program—including an abstract not to exceed 600 words—acceptable in scholarship and literary quality. Ph.D. degree students must submit a dissertation—including an abstract not to exceed 350 words, acceptable in scholarship and literary quality. Acceptance of the thesis or dissertation requires the approval of all the special committee members.

Ordinarily, the thesis or dissertation is written in the student's major subject of study and under the direction of the chair of the special committee. With the approval of the committee, a student may elect to write the thesis or dissertation under the direction of the representative of a minor subject. The special committee for an M.A. or M.S. student may consider the thesis a major or minor part of the degree requirements.

2. Papers Option

In fields that have so authorized, the special committee may permit a student to submit a thesis or dissertation consisting of publishable papers that are not necessarily related. In such cases, it is important that the special committee and the student determine, early in the student's program, if the papers option is acceptable to the committee. Papers may include multiple authors, but the work of the student must be substantive. A special committee decision to allow this option must be unanimous.

3. Partnership Option

Theses and dissertations written in partnership for the overall document may be accepted only when authorized by the General Committee at the request of the special committee. Such requests are to be made before work is undertaken.

4. Deadlines

A student for the degree of M.A. or, M.S. with a thesis, or Ph.D. must submit a complete draft of the thesis or dissertation to all members of the special committee at least six weeks before the Final Examination, unless the special committee modifies this requirement.

At least five business days before a Final Examination, a student must give each member of the special committee the thesis or dissertation, complete in all respects and editorially acceptable for final approval. Neither the Final Examination for the Master's Degree nor the Final Examination for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree may be scheduled until this requirement has been met. This version of the thesis or dissertation may require modification following the Final Examination.

The thesis or dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School within 60 days of a Final Examination. Students who miss this deadline will be charged a [fee](#).

5. Access, Distribution, and Publication

To ensure broad public access to doctoral dissertations, each doctoral candidate must submit the approved dissertation through [ProQuest](#) and pay the [required fee](#). This fee covers costs of submitting a master copy of the entire dissertation to ProQuest, publishing the abstract in the monthly periodical Dissertation Abstracts International, and printing and binding of a copy for Cornell University Library.

No thesis or dissertation may be classified or otherwise restricted in circulation except in time of national emergency on specific authorization of the General Committee.

With the approval of the special committee, a student may publish part of the thesis or dissertation before the degree is awarded. After the degree is awarded, rights to publication of the thesis, dissertation, or related material belong to the author. The graduate is expected to acknowledge in the publication that the thesis or dissertation on which the publication was based was accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

A digital file of each thesis and each dissertation becomes an official record of the University, held by the University Library.

I. Time-to-degree

The limits below may be extended by [petition](#). Petitions should include a plan for completion.

1. M.A. and M.S. Degrees

No more than eight semesters are to intervene between first registration in a master's degree program and completion of all requirements. Students enrolled in the [Employee Degree Program](#) are exempt from this requirement. Part-time matriculates are to complete degree requirements no later than twelve semesters from the date of first registration in a program.

2. Ph.D. Degree

Except for those enrolled in the [Employee Degree Program](#), a student in a Ph.D. program is to complete all degree requirements in no more than 14 registered semesters from the first registration in that particular degree program. For M.A./Ph.D. or M.S./Ph.D. students, time to degree commences with the start of the Ph.D. program.

J. Termination of a Student's Participation in a Degree Program

A student's participation in a degree program may be terminated before completion of the program in a variety of ways:

- A student may withdraw from a program. (See "[Withdrawal](#)" p. 26.)
- A student may fail to register without having obtained a leave of absence. In such a case the student is considered to have withdrawn. (See "[Leave of Absence](#)" p. 25.)
- The chair of a student's special committee may resign. The student may continue to be registered without a special committee chair for no more than one semester beyond the semester of resignation; summer does not count as a semester for these purposes. (See "[Resignations](#)" p. 29.)
- A student may be unable to find graduate faculty members willing to serve on the student's special committee. (See "[Selection](#)" p. 27)
- A student may be awarded a non-thesis master's degree. (See "[Non-Thesis Master's Degrees](#)" p. 11.)
- A student's special committee may agree unanimously to fail a student on an examination and to deny re-examination. The student can continue only if the General Committee approves the student's petition to do so. (See "[Examination Results](#)" p. 34.)
- A student may fail an A, B or Master's Exam and have the special committee minor subject members, but not the chair, oppose re-examination. The student can continue in the Graduate School only if the General Committee approves the student's petition to do

so. (See "[Examination Results](#)" p. 34.)

- A student may fail an A, B or Master's Exam and have the special committee chair, but not all the minor subject members, oppose re-examination. This is tantamount to having the chair resign. (See "[Resignations](#)" p. 29.) The student can continue in the Graduate School only if the General Committee approves the student's petition to do so.
- A student may exhaust the number of registered semesters allowed for completion of a degree and fail to obtain an extension by petition. (See "[Time-to-degree](#)" p. 37.)

K. Granting of Degrees

1. Survey of Earned Doctorates

All Ph.D. students seeking to graduate must complete the [Survey of Earned Doctorates](#) by the deadline announced by the Graduate School.

2. Academic Requirements and Degree Deadlines

The Graduate School, in communication with the graduate field, clears students for graduation who have fulfilled the academic requirements for the degree.

The last day for completion of all academic requirements in each degree period (roughly three weeks before the date for conferring degrees) is set and announced by the Graduate School. The name of any student who completes requirements after this deadline but before the next degree period deadline will be eligible to receive a degree at the next conferral date. Upon request, however, the Graduate School will issue a certificate stating completion of requirements.

Students who have completed degree requirements during the preceding year are invited to participate in [Commencement Exercises](#) in May. A student expected to complete degree requirements in August may participate in the Commencement Exercises the May before the degree is expected.

VII. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A. Academic Integrity Hearing Board

The [University's Code of Academic Integrity](#) defines the standards of academic behavior expected of students both in and out of class. The University has established procedures for addressing alleged violations of these standards. As part of the process, each college and school of the University, including the Graduate School, establishes its own Academic Integrity Hearing Board.

The Graduate School's Academic Integrity Hearing Board consists of 20 members, five of whom serve on any given case, as follows:

- Twelve faculty members elected by the graduate faculty for staggered three-year terms. The Dean chooses three of them to hear each case on the basis of relative proximity to the academic area, while avoiding potential conflicts of interest due to professional or academic relationships. One of the three will chair the committee.
- Eight graduate students nominated by the [Graduate and Professional Student Assembly \(GPSA\)](#) and approved by the Dean, for at least one-year and preferably for two-year terms. When possible, student terms will be staggered. The Dean chooses two student members to hear each case. If the GPSA fails to nominate students within a reasonable period of time, the Dean will appoint them directly.

In addition, the Board includes a non-voting record keeper, responsible for keeping clear and complete records of the proceedings, appointed by the Dean.

The [Code of Academic Integrity](#) provides a detailed account of procedures for handling alleged violations.

B. Sexual Harassment

In interactions involving a disparity of power, there can be a fine line between friendly attentiveness and sexual harassment, and it is sometimes difficult to discern where that line should be drawn. All members of the Cornell community [have the right to make a report](#) to the Cornell University Police Department, local law enforcement, and/or state police or choose not to report; to report the incident to Cornell; to be protected by Cornell from retaliation for reporting an incident; and to receive assistance and resources from Cornell. The University's detailed [Policy 6.4](#) addresses Prohibited Bias, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual and Related Misconduct. [Cornell's Sexual Harassment and Assault – Response and Education website](#) provides information about sexual harassment, assault, gender discrimination and other related forms of violence and offers information about services and support.

C. Grievance Procedure

The "[Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students](#)" outlines provisions and procedural steps for handling grievances involving serious disagreements between graduate students and faculty members. Examples of such complaints include alleged violations of the terms of written agreements and guidelines, alleged inequitable enforcement of graduate program requirements or unfair treatment, disagreements over the handling of unsatisfactory assistantship performance, and disputes over order of authorship in joint publications. All conflict should be dealt with in a patient and sensitive manner that respects the dignity of the participants.

The Dean of the Graduate School, the Provost, or the Dean of the Graduate School and the Provost together may work with the college dean of the faculty member involved in the grievance to find an appropriate resolution.