3.1.1 Registration, Enrollment and Academic Progress: Policy

Last updated on:

Summary

Describes university requirements for: registration and enrollment by graduate students during the academic year; minimum academic progress; changes in enrollment during the quarter; certification of enrollment; and Summer quarter enrollment. Quarterly registration deadlines were changed in the 2009-10 Academic Year.

COVID-19 POLICY UPDATE: The enrollment policies for graduate students have not been changed in 2020-21 in response to COVID-19 (see Stanford Bulletin [1]). Graduate students are required to enroll full-time in Autumn, Winter and Spring, unless they are on an approved leave of absence or have an accommodation through the Office of Accessible Education or a childbirth accommodation. Graduate students are generally not required to be enrolled in Summer quarter, though some programs and funding sources may require enrollment. Read more under General Enrollment Requirements below.

Rationale

Graduate students at Stanford University are expected to pursue their studies on a full-time basis. For each Stanford graduate degree, there is an approved course of study that meets university and department requirements.

Authority:

- Committee on Graduate Studies (policy)

Applicability:

To all matriculated graduate students and the programs in which they are enrolled, unless otherwise noted.

Jump To:

1. General Enrollment Requirements
2. Minimum Progress Requirements
3. Changing Enrollment or Grading Options Within a Quarter
4. Summer Quarter Registration
5. TGR, Graduation Quarter, and Other Categories of Reduced Enrollment
6. Certification of Enrollment
1. General Enrollment Requirements

Graduate education at Stanford is a full-time commitment requiring full-time enrollment, typically at least eight units. Unless permission is granted by the department (for example, for field work) enrolled graduate students must maintain a significant physical presence on campus throughout each quarter a student is enrolled.

Graduate students must enroll in courses for all terms of the regular academic year (Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters) from the admission term until conferral of the degree. The only exception to this requirement occurs when the student is granted an official leave of absence (see GAP 5.3, Leaves of Absence [3], and GAP 5.4, Program Discontinuation and Reinstatement [4]).

Matriculated graduate students are expected to enroll for at least eight units during the academic year; schools and departments may set a higher minimum. Petitions for programs of fewer than 8 must be signed by the student’s department and submitted for consideration to the Office of the Registrar. Graduate students are normally expected to enroll in no more than 24 units. (Students in programs in the schools of Humanities & Sciences, Engineering, Earth Sciences and Education will pay tuition for each unit over 18. The schools of Medicine, Law and Business do not charge for units above 18.) Registration for more than 24 units must be approved by the department.

Requests to enroll for fewer than eight units during the academic year are approved only in specific circumstances, including enrollment in the Master of Liberal Arts (M.L.A.) program, or the Honors Cooperative Program (HCP) through the Stanford Center for Professional Development (the Honors Cooperative Program). See GAP 5.2, Part-Time Enrollment [5].

Failure to enroll in courses for a term during the academic year without taking an approved leave of absence results in denial of further enrollment privileges unless and until reinstatement to the degree program is granted and the reinstatement fee paid.

Registration in Summer quarter is not required and does not substitute for registration during the academic year. Students possessing an F-1 or J-1 student visa may be subject to additional course enrollment requirements in order to retain their legal status in the United States.

In addition to the above requirement for continuous registration during the academic year, graduate students are required by Stanford to be registered:

1. in each term during which any official department or University requirement is fulfilled, including qualifying exams or the university oral exam. The period between the last day of final exams of one term and the day prior to the first day of the following term is considered an extension of the earlier term, with the option of considering the two weeks preceding the start of Autumn Quarter as part of Autumn Quarter (rather than as part of Summer Quarter).
2. in any term in which a dissertation/thesis is submitted or at the end of which a graduate degree is conferred.
3. normally, in any term in which the student receives financial support.
4. in any term for which the student needs to use university facilities.
5. for international students, in any term of the academic year (summer may be excluded) for which they have non-immigrant status (i.e., a J-1 or F-1 visa).
Individual students may also find themselves subject to the registration requirements of other agencies (for example, external funding sources such as federal financial aid). Most course work and research are expected to be done on campus unless the department gives prior approval.

**Completing requirements in the two weeks before Autumn Quarter**

Degree programs have the option to include the two weeks before the start of Autumn Quarter as part of Autumn Quarter for the purposes of completing milestones and departmental requirements. The following considerations apply to this exception:

1. The student must enroll in the subsequent Autumn Quarter in the applicable standard enrollment category prior to the completion of the milestone; a leave of absence is not permitted for that Autumn Quarter.
2. A student exercising this option will not be eligible for Graduation Quarter status until the following Winter Quarter at the earliest.
3. This exception is permitted only for milestones administered by the department, such as qualifying examinations or University oral examinations.
4. This exception does not apply to deadlines administered through Stanford University, such as filing the Application to Graduate, or Dissertation/Thesis submission.
5. Degree programs are not obligated to exercise this option solely because a student requests it.

**Back to top**

**2. Minimum Progress Requirements**

The academic requirements for graduate students include timely completion of university, department, and program requirements, such as admission to candidacy, successful completion of qualifying exams, and so on within the established time limits. Graduate students must also meet the following standards of minimum progress as indicated by units and grades. (These standards apply to all advanced degree programs except the School of Business Ph.D., and the M.B.A., J.D., L.L.M., J.S.M., J.S.D., M.D., and M.L.A., which follow guidelines issued by the respective schools and are described in their school bulletins.)

Graduate students enrolled for 11 or more units must pass at least 8 units per term by the end of each term. Those registered for fewer than 11 units must pass at least 6 units per term by the end of each term, unless other requirements are specified in a particular case or for a particular program.

In addition, graduate students must maintain a 3.0 (B) grade point average overall in courses applicable to the degree.

Department requirements for minimum progress that set a higher standard for units to be completed, or a higher or lower standard for grade point average to be maintained, take precedence over the university policy; any such different standards must be published in the Stanford Bulletin.

Students identified as not meeting the requirements for minimum progress are reviewed by their departments to determine whether the problem lies with administrative matters such as reporting of grades or with academic performance. Students have the opportunity to explain any special circumstances. Approval for continuation in the degree program is contingent on agreement by the student and department to a suitable plan to maintain appropriate progress in subsequent quarters. Dismissal of graduate students is addressed in separate guidelines (see GAP 5.6, Dismissal For Academic and Professional Reasons [6]).

Graduate students who have been granted Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status must enroll each term in
the TGR course (801 for master’s and Engineer programs or 802 for doctoral programs) in their department in the section appropriate for the advisor. An ‘N’ grade signifying satisfactory progress must be received each quarter to maintain registration privileges. An ‘N-’ grade indicates unsatisfactory progress. The first ‘N-’ grade constitutes a warning. A second consecutive ‘N-’ grade normally causes the department to deny the student further registration until a written plan for completion of degree requirements has been approved by the department. Subsequent ‘N-’ grades are grounds for dismissal from the program.

Students receiving federal student aid funds, including student loans, must maintain satisfactory academic progress standards that may be stricter than departmental standards. See the Financial Aid Office web site [7] for details.

Back to top

3. Changing Enrollment or Grading Options Within a Quarter

The Preliminary Study List deadline is the first day of classes of each quarter during the academic year. As early as possible, but no later than this deadline, students (including those with TGR status) must submit to the Office of the Registrar, via Axess, a study list to enroll officially in classes for the quarter. Students are expected to be enrolled “at status” by the Preliminary Study List deadline; meaning that students must be enrolled in sufficient units to meet requirements for their status, whether full-time, 8-9-10 units, or approved special registration status. Students may not enroll in more units than their tuition charge covers, nor enroll in courses for zero units unless those courses, like TGR, are defined as zero-unit courses. Zero-unit courses, excluding TGR courses, require concurrent enrollment with unit-bearing courses in all quarters. Students will be charged a late study list fee for submitting their study lists after the Preliminary Study List deadline.

Stanford University reserves the right to withhold registration from, and to cancel the advance registration or registration of, any student having unmet obligations to the university (see GAP 5.5, Enrollment Holds [8]).

The Final Study List deadline is the end of the third week of classes (second week in Summer quarter). Students may add courses or units to their study lists prior to this deadline. (Individual faculty may choose to close their classes to new enrollments at an earlier date.) Students who wish to add courses or adjust units (on variable-unit courses only) after the Final Study List deadline may submit the Enrollment Change Petition [9]. This petition requires the Instructor’s approval, a typed statement from the student about why they missed the academic deadline, and the approval of the Bechtel International Center in the case of F-1 or J-1 visa holders. Students who wish to change sections of a course in which they are enrolled, or who wish to change from the undergraduate to the graduate section of a course, may file the Section Change Petition for Graduate Students [10]. Courses or units may be added only if the revised program remains within the normal load limits. Enrollment petitions may be found on the Registrar’s website [11].

Courses or units may be dropped by students through the end of the third week of classes, without any record of the course remaining on the student's transcript. No drops are permitted after this point. Courses or units may be dropped only if the revised program remains within the normal load limits.

The Course Withdrawal and Grading Basis deadline is the end of the eighth week of the quarter (sixth week in Summer quarter). A student may withdraw from a course after the Final Study List deadline and before this Course Withdrawal deadline. In this case, a grade notation of ‘W’ (withdraw) is automatically recorded on the student's transcript for that course. Students who do not officially withdraw from a class by the end of the eighth week are
assigned the appropriate grade or notation by the instructor to reflect the work completed.

Through the end of the eighth week of classes, students may choose the grading option of their choice in courses where an option is offered. If the instructor allows a student to take an 'I' (incomplete) in the course, the student must make the appropriate arrangements for that with the instructor by the last day of classes.

The deadlines described above follow the same pattern each quarter but, due to the varying lengths of Stanford’s quarters, they may not always fall in exactly the week specified. Students should consult the Time Schedule or the academic calendar for the deadline dates each term. Other deadlines may apply in the schools of Law, Business, Medicine, and in Summer Session.

The following is a brief discussion of the ramifications of some of these actions:

**Dropping/Adding a Class**

When the action is taken before the Final Study List deadline, dropped courses are not reflected on the student’s transcript and the student earns no academic credit. Unless other units are also added by this deadline, dropping classes could affect the student’s enrollment status and affect academic progress. Where the action results in a net change in the student’s tuition bill, the student will either be billed for the extra units, or, if the student paid his or her own tuition, will receive a refund. (In the event that a department or program has paid the student’s tuition, dropping courses may result in “unapplied aid.”) Graduate students who are receiving financial support that requires minimum enrollment should be vigilant not to fall out of status.

**Withdrawing from a Class**

When a student drops a course after the Final Study List deadline and prior to the Course Withdrawal deadline, the action is treated as a withdrawal from the course. The course remains on the student’s transcript, with a grade of “W” (not calculated into the student’s cumulative grade point average). The units for a withdrawn course are counted in the student’s enrollment status, but do not count toward minimum academic progress. Tuition is not refunded for course withdrawals. Note that if a student who has withdrawn from a course also adds another course, the added course will be shown as added units, and may cause a tuition increase for the quarter.

**No-Credit (Failing) a Class**

When a student completes a course but does not do enough satisfactory work to earn a passing grade, the course remains on the student’s transcript with a grade of NC/NP, and the student earns no credit. The course units are counted in the student’s enrollment status, but do not count toward minimum academic progress.

**Incompletes**
Students may make arrangements with the instructor to receive an “Incomplete” grade in a course, as long as the instructor permits this and the action is taken by the last class meeting. Incomplete courses remain on the student’s transcript with a grade of “I” until the necessary work is done and a grade is submitted. ‘I’ grades must be changed to a permanent notation or grade within a maximum of one year. Faculty are free to determine the conditions under which the incomplete is made up, including setting a deadline of less than one year. When the instructor submits the final grade, the grade on the transcript is changed. The units for an incomplete course are counted in the student’s enrollment status, but do not count toward minimum academic progress until a grade is submitted. At the end of one year “I” grades are changed to NC or NP by the Office of the Registrar. A leave of absence does not stop the clock on the time limit for resolving incompletes. Graduate students with extenuating circumstances, that may warrant an exception to academic policy, should discuss the need for an extension to the time limit with their advisor and the course instructor. Students may request an extension of the deadline for resolving an incomplete by submitting the Enrollment Change Petition [9].

**Withdrawing from a Quarter During the Academic Year**

Students may request to withdraw from active student status during any quarter, but withdrawal in the academic year has particular consequences. During the academic year (Autumn, Winter, Spring quarters), withdrawal during the quarter is accomplished by filing a request to permanently withdraw from the graduate program or by filing a request for a leave of absence (see GAP 5.3, Leaves of Absence and Reinstatement [3]). In both cases, a departmental signature is required, and tuition will be pro-rated based on the last day on which the student attended class. It is expected that the student will not remain involved with courses or research after the date of withdrawal. If a student is receiving funding, withdrawing is likely to affect the ability to receive future funding. The student will lose access to all university services, including health and housing.

**4. Summer Quarter Registration**

Stanford University does not require graduate student enrollment during Summer quarter. Individual degree programs, however, may require year-round enrollment. Some sources of funding, such as fellowships, may require year-round enrollment. In addition, any Summer quarter assistantship appointment requires that the student be enrolled in that quarter.

International students on an F-1 visa may be required to maintain full-time enrollment during Summer quarter (see Bechtel International Center [12] for international student enrollment requirements).

For students who are registered and enrolled in Summer quarter, the minimum units requirement is one unit, or TGR status and enrollment.

Because Summer quarter is treated differently by university administrative systems, students and their departments should be aware of the following, particularly when students initially enroll in Summer quarter and then change their enrollment status:

**Tuition Charges**
Stanford charges tuition for all graduate students on a per-unit basis during Summer quarter. Students may enroll for fewer than 8 units in the summer. Adding or dropping courses in the summer may have an effect on the tuition charged. Courses may only be added until the Final Study List deadline. If the student drops courses before this deadline, tuition will be assessed on a per diem basis until the last day of attendance.

Financial Support

Students holding research or teaching assistantships must be enrolled in each quarter in which they hold this appointment. In addition, students receiving fellowship support are expected to be enrolled during any quarters in which they are funded (this may also be a requirement of the particular source of fellowship funds). Students receiving financial support, therefore, should not withdraw from Summer quarter without making the necessary arrangements to change their financial support. While Summer quarter assistantship appointments (teaching or research) may be made for up to 90% FTE, any assistantship appointment requires that the student also be enrolled in the quarter in which they hold the appointment. When enrollment is required during Summer quarter, the student must be enrolled for a minimum of one unit.

Dropping All Courses during Summer Quarter

During the academic year (Autumn, Winter, Spring), a withdrawal from an academic quarter requires a discontinuance of the student’s academic program. In this case, the student would need to petition to return to active registration. (Returning from a leave of absence does not require a petition to return. The Office of the Registrar will term activate them in PeopleSoft for the term indicated on their leave form.)

With the exception of Summer Term Admits (those admitted to start in the Summer quarter), students may drop their enrollment from all classes during Summer quarter without discontinuing their academic program, as long as the expectation is that they will return to enrolled status in the following fall quarter. This is accomplished by filing an Annulment of Summer Registration form. However, students choosing to withdraw from all courses during summer quarter should coordinate this action with their departments, as this action might affect eligibility for Cardinal Care insurance, financial support, or minimum academic progress.

5. TGR, Graduation Quarter, and Other Categories of Reduced Enrollment

Under the following circumstances graduate students may receive approval to reduce their enrollment below the 8-unit level. Students in these tuition categories pay special, lower rates. See also GAP 6.1, Graduate Tuition Categories.

- **Doctoral students** who have been admitted to candidacy, completed all required courses and degree requirements other than the University oral exam and dissertation, completed 135 units of residency, and submitted a Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee form may request Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status to complete their dissertations. (In the School of Medicine, a similar tuition category for M.D. students, Terminal Medical Registration or TMR, may be available upon completion of specified requirements. Refer to the School of Medicine for further information.)

- **Students pursuing Engineer degrees** may apply for TGR status after admission to candidacy, completion of all required courses, and completion of 90 units. Students enrolled in master’s programs with a required project or thesis may apply for Final Registration Status on the TGR form, at the TGR rate, upon completion of all required
The TGR Final Registration Status may also be granted for one quarter only to a graduate student who is returning after reinstatement, or to graduate students who register for one final term after all requirements are completed when Graduation Quarter is not available. All other TGR requirements apply.

In the quarter in which the student expects a degree to be conferred, when all other course work, degree requirements and residency requirements have been met with the exception of defense and/or submission of the dissertation, project, or master’s thesis, a student may petition to be enrolled in a Graduation Quarter. Only one Graduation Quarter may be requested. A student who is returning after reinstatement in which all degree requirements are complete with the exception of defense and/or submission of the dissertation, project, or master’s thesis, is eligible to reinstate into a Graduation Quarter status.

Students in Graduation Quarter status and enrolled in a course numbered 801 or 802 are certified as enrolled full time.

Graduate students who need only a few remaining units to complete degree requirements or to qualify for TGR status may submit the Graduate Petition for Part-time Enrollment to register for one quarter on a unit basis (3 to 7 units) to cover the deficiency. This status may be used only once during a degree program. International students should confer with Bechtel International Center staff before reducing their enrollment in any quarter.

Students in these approved categories of reduced enrollment are registered at Stanford and, therefore, have the rights and privileges of registered students. See GAP 6.1, Graduate Tuition Categories, for further explanation of these categories.

Units Enrollment While in TGR Status

Each quarter, all TGR students must enroll in the 801 (for master’s and Engineer students) or 802 (for doctoral students) course in their department for zero units, in the appropriate section for their advisor. TGR students register at a reduced tuition rate set each year. Effective in the 2010-11 academic year, TGR tuition will be equal to the standard graduate tuition rate for 1 - 3 units (the 3-unit rate). Students in TGR status enrolled in a course numbered 801 or 802 are certified as enrolled full time.

When enrolled in TGR status, students may also enroll for up to three additional units. The additional units cannot be applied toward degree requirements since all degree requirements must be complete in order to earn TGR status. If a TGR student enrolls in four or more units, the student will be charged the per-unit tuition applicable for their degree program, rather than the TGR rate.

6. Certification of Enrollment

The Office of the Registrar at the Student Services Center can provide oral or written confirmation of registration, enrollment, or degree status. The printed certification can be used whenever enrollment or degree verification is required for car insurance, loan deferments, medical coverage, scholarship purposes, and so on. Using Axess, students are able to print an official certification at no charge. Certification of full- or part-time enrollment cannot be provided until after the study list is filed.

Stanford uses the following definitions (in units) to certify the enrollment status of graduate and professional students each quarter of the academic year.
TGR students enrolled in a course numbered 801 or 802 are certified as full time. Graduate students on an approved Graduation Quarter status are certified as full time. During Summer quarter, all graduate students who hold appointments as research or teaching assistants, and who are enrolled for fewer than 8 units, are considered to be enrolled on a half-time basis.

7. Repeated Courses

Students may not enroll in courses for credit for which they received any transfer credit.

Some Stanford courses may be repeated for credit; they are specially noted in the Bulletin (examples include directed research, and thesis/dissertation). Most courses may not be repeated for credit. Under the general University grading system, when a course which may not be repeated for credit is retaken by a student, the following special rules apply:

1. A student may retake any course on his or her transcript, regardless of grade earned, and have the original grade, for completed courses only, replaced by the notation ‘RP’ (repeated course) and zero units completed. When retaking a course, the student must enroll in it for the same number of units originally taken. When the grade for the second enrollment in the course has been reported, the units and grade points for the second course count in the cumulative grade point average in place of the grade and units for the first enrollment in the course. Because the notation ‘RP’ can only replace grades for completed courses, the notation ‘W’ cannot be replaced by the notation ‘RP’ in any case.

2. A student may not retake the same course for a third time unless he or she received a ‘NC’ (no credit) or ‘NP’ (not passed) when it was taken and completed the second time. A student must file a petition for approval to take the course for a third time with the Office of the Registrar at the Student Services Center. When a student completes a course for the third time, grades and units for both the second and third completions count in the cumulative grade point average. The notation ‘W’ is not counted toward the three-retake maximum.
- GAP 5.6, *Dismissal For Academic and Professional Reasons* [6]
- GAP 6.1, *Graduate Tuition Categories* [16]

**Related Bulletin Sections**
- *Enrollment Requirements* [18]
- *Minimum Progress Requirements* [19]
- *Certification of Enrollment or Degrees* [20]
- *Study List Changes* [21]
- *Terminal Graduate Registration and Other Categories of Reduced Enrollment* [22]

**Related Information and Forms**
- *Annulment of Summer Registration form* [13]
- *Leave of Absence form* [23]
- *Permanent Withdraw From Degree Program form* [24]
- *Request for Terminal Graduate Registration Status form* [25]
- *Graduate Petition for Part-time Enrollment* [15] (pdf)
- *Petition to Change Course Enrollment (Graduate Students)* [26] (pdf)
- *Petition to Withdraw from a Course after the Deadline* [27] (pdf)
- *Graduate Student and Coterm Section Change Form* [28] (pdf)
- *Enrollment Certification* [29]
- *Financial Aid Office* [30]
- *Bechtel International Center* [31]

---

**Source URL:** https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-3/subchapter-1/page-3-1-1

**Links**
[1] https://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees/
[14] https://gap.stanford.edu/6-1.html