2.3.1 Nonmatriculated Graduate Students: Policy

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Summary

In specified circumstances, individuals may apply for non-matriculated graduate student status. In other circumstances, qualified individuals may be invited to accept positions as nonmatriculated graduate students.


Rationale

The norm for graduate study at Stanford University is full-time matriculation in a degree program. In some circumstances, it may benefit both the individual and the university to permit qualified individuals to participate in graduate-level courses and/or research as nonmatriculated students. Individuals may apply to non-degree-granting programs or to enroll in specific courses on a nonmatriculated basis. In addition, with the sponsorship of a Stanford faculty member, graduate students who are currently enrolled at another university may be appointed to “Visiting Student Researcher” status, a category of nonmatriculated graduate student who will be involved in graduate-level research and will not enroll in classes.

Authority:
- Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education [2]
- Graduate Admissions Office [3]

Applicability:
Applicable to all nonmatriculated graduate student appointments and enrollments at Stanford University, with the exception of:

1. Summer Session enrollments
2. Continuing Studies Program enrollments
3. Students of New Faculty (GAP 2.4)
4. Postdoctoral Scholar appointments
5. Non-Degree Option (NDO) students (through the Stanford Center for Professional Development)

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Eligibility for consideration for nonmatriculated enrollment is restricted to two groups of applicants:

1. Stanford alumni who wish to return to Stanford to take courses that are prerequisites for Medical School admission, such as undergraduate Biology or Chemistry courses, are eligible to apply for nonmatriculated status. An application form, application fee, statement of purpose, and three letters of recommendation are required. The decision to admit or deny is made by the Director of Graduate Admissions on the basis of relevant factors, including (but not limited to) a GPA of at least 3.0 and positive letters of recommendation.

   Applicants who graduated from other universities are not eligible to take the prerequisites for Medical School at Stanford.

2. Individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree or equivalent and wish to take courses in a specific department that allows non-degree students are eligible to apply for nonmatriculated status. An application form, application fee, statement of purpose, original transcripts, and three letters of recommendation are required. The decision to admit or deny is made by the chair of the department in which the applicant wishes to take courses and must be conveyed in writing to the Graduate Admissions Office. Applicants are notified of the decision by the Graduate Admissions Office.

Students who are granted nonmatriculated status in the above categories are charged the 8-10 unit tuition rate (or the appropriate higher rate if enrolled in 11 units or more) for each quarter in which they are enrolled. They may enroll for a maximum of one academic year.

Nonmatriculated student status is a privilege and not a right; the nonmatriculated status may be revoked at the University’s discretion (and after consideration of such factors as the University considers relevant in the particular case) at the end of any quarter of enrollment.

Nonmatriculated students are not permitted to enroll in certain courses, such as those in the following departments or programs: film and broadcasting courses in Art; all courses in Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and International Policy. Nonmatriculated students in the School of Medicine may enroll in courses only with written approval by either the Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Education & Postdoctoral Affairs or the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. Nonmatriculated students are expected to limit their enrollment to classes in the departments in which they have been admitted.

Nonmatriculated students receive grades and academic credit for courses satisfactorily completed and may obtain an official transcript. They may use university facilities and services. In classes of limited enrollment, students in degree programs have priority.

Nonmatriculated students may apply for subsidized on or off campus housing but will have a low priority for assignment. No departmental or university fellowships (named awards), assistantships, or Stanford loans or awards administered by the Financial Aid Office are available for nonmatriculated students. Nonmatriculated students are not eligible for a leave of absence.
Nonmatriculated students who later apply for admission to a degree program must meet standard admission requirements and should not anticipate special priority because of work completed as a nonmatriculated student. Students who are admitted to a degree program may apply a maximum of 15 units of nonmatriculated study toward the master’s degree and 30 units for the Engineer or Ph.D. degree, subject to the approval of the degree granting department.

2. Non-Degree-Granting Programs

Stanford University has established a limited number of formal non-degree-granting programs within individual departments. These include the Knight Fellowship Program for mid-career journalists (Communication Department), the Stegner Fellows Program for selected authors (Creative Writing Program, within the English Department), and the Distinguished Career Institute within the School of Medicine.

Individuals may apply to these programs directly. Application requirements, admissions decisions, tuition requirements and financial support are all handled by the specific program. Individuals who are admitted to these programs will be registered at Stanford as nonmatriculated graduate students in the appropriate program. Upon completion of their program, they will receive a transcript and certificate of program completion.

3. Visiting Student Researchers

There are a limited number of instances when it would be to the benefit of Stanford faculty to permit graduate students currently enrolled at other universities to engage in research at Stanford using Stanford research facilities. These might include students at other universities who are engaged in research in a field of interest to a Stanford faculty member or a student who is doing a laboratory rotation as part of a larger research study or grant. Such students are known as Visiting Student Researchers (VSRs) and are appointed as nonmatriculated graduate students.

When agreeing to sponsor a VSR, faculty must be mindful of the need to place primary emphasis on providing research opportunities to regularly matriculated Stanford students. In addition, students sponsored as VSRs must be qualified to conduct research at a level comparable to that of other Stanford graduate students and the research must be of benefit to Stanford as well as the visitor.

The Research Policy Handbook includes the complete VSR policy (RPH10.7 Visiting Student Researchers [10]) including department and VSR responsibilities. Graduate Admissions outlines the VSR application and appointment procedures [11].

Note that this category of nonmatriculated student is different from that of a Visiting Scholar, a non-student category of individuals holding a doctoral degree or recognized as an expert in their field. The Research Policy Handbook also describes the Visiting Scholars policy (RPH 10.5 Visiting Scholars [12]).
Visiting Student Researcher, Research Policy Handbook
Visiting Scholars, Research Policy Handbook
GAP 2.2, Requirements for New International Students
GAP 2.4, Students of New Faculty

Related Bulletin Sections
Nonmatriculated study (graduate students)

Related Information and Forms
Visiting Student Researcher registration procedures
Visiting Student Researchers in GFS [Job Aid, pdf]
Fees for Visiting Student Researchers
Health Care Information for Visiting Student Researchers [Vaden web site]
Provost Memo, Visiting Student Researchers
Bechtel International Center
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA)
Non-Degree Option (NDO) Student Handbook
Summer Session
Continuing Studies Program

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