Academic Standards and Regulations

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Grading Systems

The semester hour is the basic unit of work, in which each course offered has credit value in terms of a certain number of semester hours normally conforming to the number of contact class hours per week. For example, courses meeting three hours a week carry three hours credit. A typical exception occurs in laboratory work, in which two or three hours of class contact time would have a one-credit-hour value.

Grades and quality points represent the instructor’s final estimate of the student’s performance in a course. All grades assigned remain on the student’s permanent record and transcript. The following letters denote grades that are included in the computation of the grade point average:

- **A = Excellent:** 4 per hour
- **B = Good:** 3 per hour
- **C = Satisfactory:** 2 per hour
- **D = Passing:** 1 per hour
- **F = Failing:** 0
- **WF = Withdrew failing:** 0

Graduate students may calculate their graduate grade point average by dividing the number of graduate semester credit hours taken into the total number of quality points earned.

The following letters denote cases in which the grade is not included in the computation of the grade point average:

I = Incomplete

IP = In progress (course scheduled for more than one semester)

K = Credit by examination

NR = Not reported by instructor or course ending date is after the scheduled end of the semester

S = Satisfactory

U = Unsatisfactory

V = Audit

W = Withdrew without penalty

Total institutional grade point averages are calculated at the close of every semester in which course work is taken. This calculation appears on the permanent record of each student. Students may review this grade record and grade point average by viewing their transcript located inside BannerWeb. To view their transcripts, students should log in and follow prompts to “Student Services and Financial Aid.” Matters requiring interpretation of a graduate record should normally be referred to the student’s advisor or the Graduate School. Undergraduate grades will not be calculated as part of the graduate student’s semester or cumulative average.

A report of “I” (incomplete) indicates that a student was doing satisfactory work at the end of the term but, for non-academic reasons, was unable to complete all requirements for the course. A report of “I” requires the subsequent completion of all course requirements within a time limit specified by the instructor, not to exceed one calendar year from the end of the term in which a grade of incomplete is assigned, regardless of the student’s enrollment status during the period specified for completion. It is the student’s responsibility to request that a grade of “I” be assigned for a class. To request a grade of incomplete, students should go to the website (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/registrar/documents/incomplete-form-updated.pdf) to download the Request for Assigning a Grade of Incomplete form. Students should remember that they should keep attending class, if possible, until the paperwork for the “I” is submitted. Additionally, their graduation dates will be adjusted if their incompletes are not resolved by their projected graduation date.

A grade of “IP” indicates that credit has not been given in courses that require a continuation of work beyond the semester for which the students signed up for the course. The use of the symbol is approved for dissertation and thesis hours and project courses. It cannot be substituted for an “I.”

The computation of the overall grade point average treats “WF” and “F” grades identically: both are failing grades. Grades of “W” do not enter into the computation.

Good Academic Standing
Graduate students are considered in good academic standing when they maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher and meet all program-specific academic requirements.

Note: Certain programs (e.g., EdD, Nursing, etc.) maintain more stringent academic standards. Students in those programs must follow program requirements where they supersede Graduate School policy.

Academic Warning

A graduate student will be placed on Academic Warning if, at the end of any semester, the student earns a grade of C or below in any graduate course, regardless of term or cumulative GPA. Academic Warning serves as an early alert and provides an opportunity for advising and corrective action. Academic Warning does not appear
on the transcript and does not affect financial aid eligibility.

Academic Probation
A student will be placed on academic probation if, at the end of any semester, the total institution GPA falls below 3.00. Students on Academic Probation will be advised to:

- Consult with their academic advisor
- Utilize the Graduate School's two-course repeat policy within the next two semesters to improve GPA, if eligible
- Submit an appeal, if warranted Students should understand that failure to demonstrate immediate academic improvement may
result in suspension.

Academic Suspension and Academic Dismissal
A graduate student will be suspended if, at the end of any term, while on academic probation, the total institution GPA remains below 3.00. Determination of dismissal:

- Upon the first occurrence of an academic suspension, the Graduate School, in consultation with the advisor and department head, I will determine whether the student will be dismissed
from the program.

- If the programs elects to dismiss the student, the Graduate School will inform the Registrar's Office.
- If the program elects to retain the student, the program will advise the student to utilize any remaining course repeats or submit an appeal.
- Upon the second occurrence of an academic suspension, the student will be dismissed from the program and has the option to submit an appeal (see Appeal of Dismissal from Graduate School).

Return from Academic Dismissal
Students approved to return from Academic Dismissal from their graduate program will:

- Be placed on Academic Probation for one semester, and
- Be subject to any additional academic conditions imposed by the program or Graduate School

Grade Changes and Academic Standing Updates
In the event that a student's final course grade is officially changed and processed by the Registrar's Office, the student's academic standing will be automatically reevaluated in accordance with
Graduate School academic progress policies.

Reevaluation may result in:

- Removal from Academic Probation or Academic Dismissal, or
- Placement on Academic Probation or Academic Dismissal depending on the updated cumulative and/or semester GPA.

Any change in academic standing resulting from a grade change will supersede the student's prior status and will be applied for the applicable term in which the revised grade is recorded.

For additional policies related to retention, dismissals, and readmission, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/withdrawal-policy.php).

Students should work with their advisors and professors to avoid earning deficiency points (e.g., withdrawing from school before receiving failing grades). To view withdrawal polices, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Appeal of Dismissal from Graduate School
For the appeal form for dismissal from the Graduate School, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Graduate students who wish to appeal a dismissal must first discuss the issue with their advisor. Further appeals are then directed, in order, to their professor’s Department Head, College Dean, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research..

Expectations for Satisfactory Graduate-Level Student Performance
For the appeal form for dismissal from the Graduate School, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Graduate students are expected to earn grades of at least “B” in most of their course work for their degree. For graduation, a graduate student must have earned a total institutional grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 in all graduate course work at Valdosta State University. Throughout their program, students’ performance must be acceptable on a continuing basis. If their GPA falls below a 3.0, students must maintain an overall GPA of not less than 2.5. No grade below “C” will be credited toward a graduate degree. All grades received for graduate courses taken at or transferred to VSU, after admission to the Graduate School, will be used to calculate the graduate total institutional grade point average. Courses may be retaken, if desired or required, but all graduate grades received will affect this average..

Grade Appeals
Grade appeals are handled at the departmental and college levels. Students should contact their advisor or department head for information about the appeals process and forms..

Course Repeat Policy
Under the Graduate Course Repeat Policy, graduate students may repeat a course for grade replacement in a maximum of two courses with posted letter grades of “C,” “D,” or “F”. A course can be repeated for grade replacement only once.

When a graduate course is taken at VSU and repeated at VSU with a higher grade, the highest grade received will be counted in the institutional GPA calculations. If a student repeats a course at VSU but receives a lower grade, the higher grade from a previous attempt will be used in the calculation

of the institutional GPA. The courses must be taken and repeated at VSU. For more information about the Course Repeat Policy, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/new-graduate-student-online-orientation.php).

Absence Regulations
For students, success in class, whether face-to-face or online, begins with regular attendance/participation. Instructors must clearly outline their absence/participation expectations in their course syllabus, including any penalties for absence or non-participation and any procedures for missed work. All students are responsible for knowing the specific attendance/participation requirements as prescribed by their instructors and for the satisfactory make-up of missed work. When students are compelled for any reason to be absent from or unable to participate in class, they should immediately contact the instructor.

Attendance Verification:

During a designated period each term, instructors are required to verify student attendance for disbursement of Financial Aid. If a faculty member reports that a student has not attended a class, the Registrar's Office will assign "W" for that student.

For Online Classes:

To comply with Federal Financial Aid regulations for considering "attendance" in an online class, instructors:

- Must not count students' logging into a course's learning management system (e.g., BlazeVIEW, Google Apps Sites) as participation in that course.
- Must not count any student activity in a given course as participation in that course. For online classes, the activities in the following categories are considered academically relevant:
  - Contributing to a class discussion, participating in a synchronous (live) conference or video conference class session, submitting assignments, engaging in an assigned study group, providing a self-introduction to the class in a discussion forum designated for this purpose
  - Completing interactive tutorials, or interactive, computer-assisted instruction, or
  - Discussing the course's subject matter (e.g., online with other students, by email with the instructor)

Whether online or face-to-face, a student who misses or does not participate in more than 20% of the scheduled course or course activities could be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course.

The University does not issue an excuse to students for class absences. In case of absences as a result of illness or special situations, instructors may be informed of reasons for absences, but these are not excuses.

Students participating in authorized activities as an official representative of the University (i.e., athletic events, delegate to regional or national meetings or conferences, participation in university-sponsored performances) **are automatically excused by the university**: These students will not receive academic penalties and, in consultation with the instructor of record, will be given reasonable opportunities to complete assignments and exams or given compensatory assignment(s) if needed. The student must provide written confirmation from a faculty or staff advisor to the course instructor(s) not fewer than 10 days prior to the date for which the student will be absent from the class, except in the case of short notice events. Written confirmation and explanation of short notice events must be provided to the instructor as soon as possible. The student is responsible for all material presented in class and for all announcements and assignments. When possible, students are expected to complete these assignments before their absences. In the event of a disagreement regarding this policy, an appeal may be made by either the student or the instructor of record to the department head.

Students with Military Obligations that require their absence from class may seek an exemption from the class attendance policy. Students requesting an exemption should provide their military orders to the college Associate Dean, along with a request for an exemption prior to the start of the first week of classes. Working with the appropriate college Associate Dean, the student's instructors are contacted and made aware of the request for an exemption. Instructors will carefully consider all such requests and base their decision upon the course attendance policies and the student's ability to catch up on missed course materials upon his or her return.

Religious Observances:

The University permits students, faculty, and staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith. The faculty should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who choose to observe these holidays are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors.

Appeals for Attendance Disputes:

Attendance issues which cannot be resolved between the instructor and student should be referred immediately to the department head responsible for the course. Students who stop attending or participating in a course without officially withdrawing from a course will receive the penalties indicated in the instructor's syllabus.

Withdrawals:

If students wish to withdraw, they should consult with their instructors. Students officially withdrawing from a course prior to the designated withdrawal date will receive a "W" for the course (unless the withdrawal exceeds the number allowed under the limited withdrawal policy). After the designated withdrawal date, students experiencing a documentable medical or hardship situation may complete a Petition for Withdrawal form, which is available in office of the Dean of Students. If the petition is approved, the grade awarded is "W" (withdrew passing).

Auditing Classes

Students may be permitted to audit selected courses, provided regular enrollment in the course is permitted and provided such arrangement is agreeable to the instructor. Fees for auditing are the same as for regular registration. Students are not permitted to change from audit to credit or from credit to audit after the last day for course changes as specified in the official calendar.

Withdrawal from Courses Policies
These policies apply to all students (undergraduate and graduate) at Valdosta State University for all classes offered by VSU, whether delivered face-to-face or online. However, some VSU students may be enrolled in classes offered through collaborative partnerships with other institutions or eCore (eMajor, GOML, WebMBA, etc.). In these programs, some policies and process may differ slightly. Students taking classes in those programs should visit the appropriate program links for further information.

Before the Designated Withdrawal Date

Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until approximately one week after midterm by completing the online withdrawal process on BANNER. A grade of "W" will appear in the student's official records.

However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for academic dishonesty (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php). Instructors may assign a “W” on the proof roll for students not attending class. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the withdrawal process. A withdrawal is official when it is received and processed by the Office of the Registrar.

After the Designated Withdrawal Date

Students will not be allowed to withdraw after the designated withdrawal date as published in the school calendar as required by Board of Regents’ policy; however, students may petition an exception to the Board of Regents’ withdrawal deadline for cases of hardship by completing a petition for withdrawal form available in the Office of Centralized Advising. The petition will become a permanent part of the student’s file. If the petition is approved, the instructor may assign a grade of “W” or “WF” after mid-term. Note that “WF” is calculated in the grade point average the same as “F.” Any student who discontinues class attendance after midterm and does not officially withdraw may be assigned a grade of “F.” No fee adjustment will be made for withdrawals except as outlined in the Tuition, Fees, and Costs section of this catalog. The Office of Student Financial Services will receive a copy of the withdrawal form for refunding if applicable. Students receiving financial aid or graduate assistantships should be aware that withdrawal from courses may affect continued financial aid and assistantship eligibility.

To petition for withdrawal after the designated date, students must document either a medical or hardship situation and follow the process below:

Medical Withdrawals from the University

A student who has an injury or illness that prevents the completion of all classes for that term may request a Medical Withdrawal through the Office of Centralized Advising. The Medical Withdrawal process is outlined below. It should be noted that a Medical Withdrawal can be requested only after the designated withdrawal date. A student wanting to withdraw before the designated withdrawal date must follow the Withdrawal from Course Policy outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. If a student has to withdraw from a class before the designated withdrawal date for a documented medical reason, that student may use this process to appeal to change a regular withdrawal to a medical withdrawal. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Registrar (229-333-5727). **Questions regarding the late withdrawal process should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students(229-333-5941)**. It is the student’s responsibility to withdraw officially in accordance with university regulations. Only in very rare instances will a partial withdrawal be considered, such as in cases in which a student may not be able to complete a specific class because of a medical condition or injury that prohibits class participation. For more detailed information on the Medical Withdrawal policy and procedures, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/medical-withdrawal-process.php).

Hardship Withdrawals from the University

A student who has an emergency that prevents the completion of all classes for that term may request a Hardship Withdrawal through the Office of Centralized Advising. The Hardship Withdrawal process is outlined below. It should be noted that a Hardship Withdrawal can be requested only after the designated withdrawal date. A student wanting to withdraw before the designated withdrawal date must follow the Withdrawal from Course Policy outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. If a student has to withdraw from a class before the designated withdrawal date for a documented hardship reason, that student may use this process to appeal to change a regular withdrawal to a hardship withdrawal. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Registrar (229-333-5727). **Questions regarding the late withdrawal process should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students(229-333-5941)**. It is the student’s responsibility to withdraw officially in accordance with university regulations. Only in very rare instances will a partial withdrawal be considered, such as in cases in which a student may not be able to complete a specific class because of a hardship that prohibits class participation. For more detailed information on the Hardship Withdrawal policy and procedures, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/hardship-withdrawals.php).

Mental Health Withdrawals from the University

To ensure that its students receive due process rights, Valdosta State University has initiated the following Mental Health Withdrawal Procedure. Before a student may be withdrawn for mental health reasons, there must first be the following chain of events:

1. The student displays behavioral indicators, which are determined by a mental health professional to be of danger to the student or others.
2. When a mental health professional determines that a student needs to be withdrawn from school for mental health reasons, an informal hearing
3. Within the set used to determine whether or not the student should be withdrawn.
4. Prints informal hearing conducted by the Office of the Dean of Students, the student or his or her representative may present any pertinent information that he or she believes will have a bearing on the particular case.

This procedure is enacted to ensure that the student's legal rights are not violated and that the University has the right to remove any student who it feels, based on professional evaluation, may present a danger to himself or herself or to others. No fee adjustment will be made for withdrawals except as outlined in the Tuition, Fees, and Costs section of this catalog. The Office of Student Financial Services will receive a copy of the withdrawal form for refunding if applicable.

Graduate Course Numbering
At Valdosta State University, courses numbered 1000-4999 are for undergraduate students only. Some courses numbered 3000-3999 are open to graduate students; such courses carry dual numbers, with the graduate version of the course numbered between 5000 and 5999. Similarly, courses numbered 4000-4999 are dual numbered 6000-6999 for graduate credit.

Courses numbered 7000-8999 are open to graduate students only. Courses numbered 9000-9999 are open to doctoral students only.

Graduate students should be sure that they are registered for graduate courses. This information appears on the official class roll and on the student's schedule. While a graduate student may be permitted to take an undergraduate course, this course will not fulfill graduate degree requirements. Only courses numbered 5000 or above are graduate-level courses.

In programs with thesis requirements, a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic course work is required. Of these 30 semester hours, at least 9 semester hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above, with a minimum of 6 hours of thesis. In programs without thesis requirements, a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic course work is required. Of these 30 semester hours, at least 15 semester hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above. The remainder must be completed in courses numbered 5000 or above.

Determination of Credit Hours
Valdosta State University utilizes the federal definition of the credit hour as a basis for determining the amount of credit assigned for student work, complying with Federal Regulation Program Integrity Rules, University System of Georgia (USG) Policy 3.4, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Principle 10.7 and Policy Statement on Credit Hours. The Academic Committee of the VSU Faculty Senate is responsible for ensuring that credit hours awarded for course work are appropriate, and the VSU Registrar's Office ensures that credit hours are accurately attached to courses in the student information system. The Registrar's Office ensures that the number of class minutes for lecture- and laboratory-based courses have been accounted for in the scheduling of courses. The full policy statement is available upon request from the Office of Academic Affairs or the Registrar's Office.

Cross-Disciplinary Courses
Certain courses, because of their scope and focus, are identified by different designations, that is, cross-listed, such as SOCI 9070 / PADM 9070 Students may decide which designation they wish to register for, depending on their needs, but such a dual listed or cross-listed course can count only once and cannot be taken a second time for credit under a different designation. Cross-disciplinary courses are clearly identified in the "Courses of Instruction" section by the phrase "Also offered as ...."

Maximum Course Loads and Other Restrictions
The normal full load for a graduate student is 9-15 hours of graduate-level work fall and

spring semesters and 6 hours of graduate-level work in the summer semester. For the Master of Science in Nursing (http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/courseleaf.cgi?page=/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/index.html&step=text#Absence%20Regulations) program (both Family Nurse Practitioner and Psych-Mental Health tracks), a full load is 6 credit hours per term. Students are expected to enroll in and complete a minimum of 6 credit hours to maintain full-time status within the MSN (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/our-programs/master-of-science-in-nursing.php) program.

Course loads in excess of these limits may be allowed by permission of the major professor, or the department head and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Graduate assistants must register for a minimum of 6 hours per semester. The normal full load for a student with a graduate assistantship is 9 semester hours in fall and spring and 6 semester hours in summer.

For all financial aid programs, 9 semester hours is considered full time fall and spring semesters, and 6 semester hours is full-time in the summer. Five semester hours is considered half-time enrollment for graduate students. At least half-time enrollment is required for eligibility under all federal loan programs.

Undergraduate courses will not be calculated when determining a graduate student's full-time or part-time status or assistantship eligibility. However, these hours will be included in determining a student's maximum load, as stated above.

General Requirements for Graduate Degrees
To determine specific program requirements, including those for degree completion and graduation, visit our Programs page (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/our-programs/) and click on the program in which they are interested.

Time to Degree Completion or Admission to Doctoral Candidacy
After admission, courses taken more than seven years prior to the semester of degree completion cannot be used to meet graduate degree requirements or admission to doctoral candidacy requirements unless otherwise indicated by individual program requirements. Under extenuating circumstances, however, the student's advisor may appeal in writing for a onetime extension of this limitation. A student's advisor must send a memo

to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research requesting an extension. The memo must include a brief justification and the student's ID number. The student's transcript will be reviewed; the Associate Provost will then approve or deny the request in a memo to the advisor and will send a copy to the Registrar's Office. The maximum extension for completion of the program typically cannot exceed one additional calendar year unless otherwise approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Time to Degree Completion for Doctoral Programs
Students have five years to complete their dissertations after admission to candidacy unless otherwise indicated by program policy and/or approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Transfer Credit
The academic advisor reviews official transcripts to determine course equivalence/similarity. If the advisor determines the course is an appropriate transfer course, he/she sends a course substitution form to the Graduate School for approval. The course substitution form specifies the course, hours, institution of origin, and how the course should be applied (e.g., general elective or a course substitution for an existing course in the curriculum). Courses considered for transfer credit must: (1) be no more than 7 years of age at the time of admission, unless otherwise approved by the program; (2) be earned at an institution that is regionally accredited; (3) be graduate-level courses; and (4) not exceed specific program limitations on total number of hours. All transfer requests are subject to approval by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research, and grades transferred fall under the current deficiency point system.

Comprehensive Examinations
All graduate programs require a Comprehensive Examination or an acceptable substitute. Successful completion of this exam indicates that students have nearly completed their work toward the degree. The Comprehensive Examination may not be taken until all required course work has been completed or is in the process of being completed, and the language requirements have been fulfilled. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research shall be notified upon the student's successful completion of this requirement.

Theses and Dissertations
The thesis or dissertation represents the culmination of students' academic programs. It is a major achievement, reflecting their development as professionals in their chosen fields. Students have an opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual capabilities through the production of an original piece of research. While students will have the assistance of many others in completing this project, including faculty and fellow graduate students, the finished thesis or dissertation reflects their work, their effort, and their intellectual development.

Students should review the sections below pertaining to their thesis or dissertation project. Also, students using human or animal subjects in their research should consult the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration's webpage on Research Ethics (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/research/office-of-sponsored-programs-research-administration/research-ethics.php) for necessary forms and approvals.

Thesis

All students must register for thesis credit each semester in which they are actively working on their thesis. The total number of thesis credit hours required for the degree will be determined by the individual departments. Students must enroll in the thesis course in the semester in which they graduate. All thesis courses will be graded on a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" basis. For general thesis regulations, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php).

When a thesis is required, the defended thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School not less than 21 days before the scheduled date of graduation. The Thesis Committee shall certify in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research that the student has successfully defended the thesis at a scheduled defense. The student must submit the final, defended thesis to gradreviewer@valdosta.edu. After the Graduate School's review, students are required to submit a copy in Word to the University Archives for its online repository (V-text).

Optional: After review and approval, students may submit copies to the Library to be bound. A completed Binding Fee form must accompany copies to be bound. The Binding Fee form and V-text instructions are included on the Thesis and Dissertation Information web pages.

Signature on the thesis by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research indicates final acceptance of the student's thesis and marks the completion of requirements for the master's degree. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research will notify the Registrar's Office to authorize the student's graduation.

Dissertation

Students enrolled in a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program or the Doctor of Speech Language Pathology (S.L.P.D.) program must complete a dissertation. Students enrolled in a Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.) program must complete a dissertation-quality final project. All three programs follow the dissertation guidelines referenced below.

All students must register for dissertation credit each semester in which they are actively working on this project. A minimum of 9 semester hours of dissertation credit is required for the degree. Students must be enrolled in dissertation hours in the semester in which they graduate. All dissertation courses must be graded on a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" basis. For general dissertation regulations, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php).

The defended dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School no fewer than 21 days before the scheduled date of graduation. The student must submit the final, defended dissertation to gradreviewer@valdosta.edu. The Dissertation Committee shall certify in writing to the Associate Provost for

Graduate Studies and Research that the student has successfully defended the dissertation at an announced open meeting. After the Graduate School's review and approval, students are required to submit a copy to ProQuest and to VSU's online repository (V-text). A completed Binding Fee form must accompany copies to be bound. The Binding Fee form and V-text instructions are included on the Thesis and Dissertation Information page.

Signature of the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research on the dissertation indicates final acceptance of the student's dissertation and marks the completion of requirements for the Ed.D. degree, the S.L.P.D. degree, or the D.P.A. degree. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research will notify the Registrar's Office to authorize the student's graduation.

Second Master's Degree Program of Study
Students seeking a second master's degree must submit a Program of Study that is approved by their program and faculty advisor, department head, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. The Program of Study should list all courses to be taken for the second graduate degree. Transfer courses cannot be older than 7 years at the time of admission to the second degree. Courses may be drawn from a completed graduate degree or from a concurrent VSU degree upon the approval of the program, faculty advisor, department head, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. No graduate course in either category may be used in which the grade was below a "B."

Application for Graduation
Students must apply for graduation at least one semester in advance.

Procedures for Graduation Application

1. Complete the electronic Graduation Application (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/registrar/forms/graduation-forms.php).
2. Pay the $50 graduation fee (https://secure.touchnet.com/C20243_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=257&SINGLESTORE=true).
3. Verify the Application for Graduation (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/application-for-graduation.php) page for more information.

Students planning to attend graduation should make arrangements with the VSU Bookstore for purchase of cap, gown, and hood. The Registrar's Office should be consulted early in the program (at least one semester before graduation) for procedures and deadlines. For more details, consult the VSU Commencement webpage (http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/advancement/event-services/commencement/welcome.php).

The Application for Graduation fee is valid for one year beyond the initial term selected for completing degree requirements. A 3.0 total institutional GPA on all graduate courses completed at VSU after acceptance to the Graduate School is required for graduation. All financial obligations to the University must be cleared before an official diploma will be issued.

Graduate Assistantships
Valdosta State University's graduate assistantships are designed to promote the research, teaching, and service responsibilities of the University and to provide students with valuable professional development opportunities while earning graduate degrees. Therefore, the graduate assistantship involves the dual responsibilities of maintaining a satisfactory academic performance and of successfully performing the assigned teaching, research, or other responsibilities. The graduate assistant is expected to enroll and earn credit for a minimum of 6 graduate semester hours each term in which the assistantship is held. Graduate students work a minimum of 14 hours and a maximum of 19 hours per week. Graduate students may not have another job on campus while serving in an assistantship position.

Eligibility Requirements

Valdosta State University offers a limited number of graduate assistantships. The student must be accepted as either "Regular" or "Probationary" in an approved graduate degree or post-master's program at VSU. Students classified as either "Irregular" or "Non-Degree" are not eligible for assistantships. To apply, please visit the Graduate Assistantship website (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/graduate-assistantships.php).

Tuition Rates and Other Financial Obligations

The graduate assistantship program allows graduate assistants to pay a flat, per-semester tuition rate of $38.00, applicable to both in-state and out-of-state residents. Tuition is reduced in the following manner for both in-state and out-of-state students:

Fall and spring: A GA will receive a tuition waiver after payment of the first $38 of tuition each semester for a total of up to 15 credit hours in the fall and 15 credit hours in the spring. Any additional credits taken will be charged to the GA at the in-state rate.

Summer: A GA will receive a tuition waiver after payment of the first $38 of tuition for a total of up to 9 semester credit hours in the summer (semester I, II, III, IV). Any additional credits taken will be charged to the GA at the in-state rate.

Students are also required to pay the student-related fees. These fees include but are not limited to the Health, Athletic, Student Activity, Transportation, Technology, Access Card, and other fees. In addition, students are required to maintain health insurance, either through the VSU United Healthcare Plan or their own plan. Students are also responsible for their own living expenses and books. Visit the tuition website (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/tuition-and-financial-aid.php) for a complete list of student-related fees.

Academic Dishonesty
Academic integrity is the responsibility of all VSU faculty and students. Faculty members should promote academic integrity by including clear instruction on the components of academic integrity and clearly defining the penalties for cheating and plagiarism in their course syllabi. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Academic Integrity Policy as set forth in the Student Code of Conduct and the faculty members' syllabi. All students are expected to do their own work and to uphold a high standard of academic ethics. The Student Code of Conduct outlines academic integrity violations as

well as the academic response and disciplinary response to such violations. For more information, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php).

The online VSU Student Code of Conduct (https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php) reflects the most current policy on academic integrity. Academic integrity violations may result in suspension or expulsion from the university.

NOTE: Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until the mid-term by completing the withdrawal process on Banner. A withdrawal before mid-term is non-punitive, and a grade of "W" is assigned. However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for academic dishonesty.

In cases of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, in which a graduate student violates Section I after having been warned or sanctioned by one or more professors, he or she may then be referred to the Dean of Students Office where official charge may be drawn up and the student subjected to the established VSU disciplinary process. If an instructor assigns a grade of "F" or "U" for a course due to academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, and the student receives a Medical or Hardship withdrawal, the instructor may assign a "WF."

Plagiarism
Cheating and plagiarism are academic integrity violations. These violations are serious and will result in negative consequences. For information on policies and procedures for students committing these academic integrity violations, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php).

Plagiarism is defined as “the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one’s own original work, or attempts thereof,” (Article I of the Virginia Tech Honor Code Constitution (http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/?q=node/5)) (http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/?q=node/5). The violation, then, consists of both copying and misrepresenting the material in question. When a student places his or her name on any kind of work, he or she claims responsibility for the originality of the contents except for those parts that are specifically attributed to another or that are considered common knowledge. If a student has consulted any outside source, whether published or not, and has incorporated any of its “language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts” into his or her work without acknowledging that source, he or she may be guilty of misrepresenting the work’s originality. When paraphrasing material from an outside source, the student must change both the sentence structure and the vocabulary (where possible) in expressing the original material in his or her own words. Any instance in which the “language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts” have been borrowed from another’s work, paraphrased or not, without proper reference/citation, the act constitutes plagiarism on the part of the writer. For more information and resources regarding plagiarism, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php).

Course sections may use plagiarism-prevention technology. Students may have the option of submitting their written work online through a plagiarism-prevention service or of allowing the instructor to submit their work. The written work may be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

Student E-Mail Responsibilities
All students accepted to VSU receive an e-mail account through the University. It is the students’ responsibility to access this account frequently, as their graduate program and the Graduate School will send important information to that e-mail address. Indeed, the Graduate School will use graduate students’ university-given e-mail address as the official site of notifications to them. For information on university e-mail, click here. (http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/it/helpdesk/vsu-accounts/office-365.php)

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Grading Systems

The semester hour is the basic unit of work, in which each course offered has credit value in terms of a certain number of semester hours normally conforming to the number of contact class hours per week. For example, courses meeting three hours a week carry three hours credit. A typical exception occurs in laboratory work, in which two or three hours of class contact time would have a one-credit-hour value.

Grades and quality points represent the instructor’s final estimate of the student’s performance in a course. All grades assigned remain on the student’s permanent record and transcript. The following letters denote grades that are included in the computation of the grade point average:

Appeal of Dismissal from Graduate School

For the appeal form for dismissal from the Graduate School, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Graduate students who wish to appeal a dismissal must first discuss the issue with their advisor. Further appeals are then directed, in order, to their professor’s Department Head, College Dean, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research..

Expectations for Satisfactory Graduate-Level Student Performance

For the appeal form for dismissal from the Graduate School, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Graduate students are expected to earn grades of at least “B” in most of their course work for their degree. For graduation, a graduate student must have earned a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 in all graduate course work at Valdosta State University. Throughout their program, students’ performance must be acceptable on a continuing basis. If their GPA falls below a 3.0, students must maintain an overall GPA of not less than 2.5. No grade below “C” will be credited toward a graduate degree. All grades received for graduate courses taken at or transferred to VSU, after admission to the Graduate School, will be used to calculate the graduate cumulative grade point average. Courses may be retaken, if desired or required, but all graduate grades received will affect this average..

Grade Appeals

Grade appeals are handled at the departmental and college levels. Students should contact their advisor or department head for information about the appeals process and forms..

Course Repeat Policy

Under the Graduate Course Repeat Policy, graduate students may repeat a course for grade replacement in a maximum of two courses with posted letter grades of “C,” “D,” or “F”. A course can be repeated for grade replacement only once.

When a graduate course is taken at VSU and repeated at VSU with a higher grade, the highest grade received will be counted in the institutional GPA calculations. If a student repeats a course at VSU but receives a lower grade, the higher grade from a previous attempt will be used in the calculation of the institutional GPA. The courses must be taken and repeated at VSU. For more information about the Course Repeat Policy, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/new-graduate-student-online-orientation.php).

Absence Regulations
For students, success in class, whether face-to-face or online, begins with regular attendance/participation. Instructors must clearly outline their absence/participation expectations in their course syllabus, including any penalties for absence or non-participation and any procedures for missed work. All students are responsible for knowing the specific attendance/participation requirements as prescribed by their instructors and for the satisfactory make-up of missed work. When students are compelled for any reason to be absent from or unable to participate in class, they should immediately contact the instructor.

Attendance Verification:

During a designated period each term, instructors are required to verify student attendance for disbursement of Financial Aid. If a faculty member reports that a student has not attended a class, the Registrar’s Office will assign “W” for that student.

For Online Classes:

To comply with Federal Financial Aid regulations for considering “attendance” in an online class, instructors:

- Must not count students’ logging into a course’s learning management system (e.g., BlazeVIEW, Google Apps Sites) as participation in that course.
- Attendance may consider academic activities as a given course as participation in that course. For online classes, the activities in the following paragraph are considered academic activities:
- Participating in any assigned activity (e.g., attending a synchronous teleconference or video conference class session, submitting prepared material, completing interactive tutorials or interactive, computer-assisted instruction; or
- Discussing the course’s subject matter (e.g., online with other students, by email with the instructor)

Whether online or face-to-face, a student who misses or does not participate in more than 20% of the scheduled course or course activities could be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course.

The University does not issue an excuse to students for class absences. In case of absences as a result of illness or special situations, instructors may be informed of reasons for absences, but these are not excuses.

Students participating in authorized activities as an official representative of the University (i.e., athletic events, delegate to regional or national meetings or conferences, participation in university-sponsored performances) **are automatically excused by the university**: These students will not receive academic penalties and, in consultation with the instructor of record, will be given reasonable opportunities to complete assignments and exams or given compensatory assignment(s) if needed. The student must provide written confirmation from a faculty or staff advisor to the course instructor(s) not fewer than 10 days prior to the date for which the student will be absent from the class, except in the case of short notice events. Written confirmation and explanation of short notice events must be provided to the instructor as soon as possible. The student is responsible for all material presented in class and for all announcements and assignments. When possible, students are expected to complete these assignments before their absences. In the event of a disagreement regarding this policy, an appeal may be made by either the student or the instructor of record to the department head.

Students with Military Obligations that require their absence from class may seek an exemption from the class attendance policy. Students requesting an exemption should provide their military orders to the college Associate Dean, along with a request for an exemption prior to the start of the first week of classes. Working with the appropriate college Associate Dean, the student’s instructors are contacted and made aware of the request for an exemption. Instructors will carefully consider all such requests and base their decision upon the course attendance policies and the student’s ability to catch up on missed course materials upon his or her return.

Religious Observances:

The University permits students, faculty, and staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith. The faculty should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who choose to observe these holidays are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors.

Appeals for Attendance Disputes:

Attendance issues which cannot be resolved between the instructor and student should be referred immediately to the department head responsible for the course. Students who stop attending or participating in a course without officially withdrawing from a course will receive the penalties indicated in the instructor’s syllabus.

Withdrawals:

If students wish to withdraw, they should consult with their instructors. Students officially withdrawing from a course prior to the designated withdrawal date will receive a “W” for the course (unless the withdrawal exceeds the number allowed under the limited withdrawal policy). After the designated

withdrawal date, students experiencing a documentable medical or hardship situation may complete a Petition for Withdrawal form, which is available in office of the Dean of Students. If the petition is approved, the grade awarded is “W” (withdrew passing).

Auditing Classes
Students may be permitted to audit selected courses, provided regular enrollment in the course is permitted and provided such arrangement is agreeable to the instructor. Fees for auditing are the same as for regular registration. Students are not permitted to change from audit to credit or from credit to audit after the last day for course changes as specified in the official calendar.

Withdrawal from Courses Policies
These policies apply to all students (undergraduate and graduate) at Valdosta State University for all classes offered by VSU, whether delivered face-to-face or online. However, some VSU students may be enrolled in classes offered through collaborative partnerships with other institutions or eCore (eMajor, GOML, WebMBA, etc.). In these programs, some policies and process may differ slightly. Students taking classes in those programs should visit the appropriate program links for further information.

Before the Designated Withdrawal Date

Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until approximately one week after midterm by completing the online withdrawal process on BANNER. A grade of "W" will appear in the student's official records.

However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for academic dishonesty (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php). Instructors may assign a “W” on the proof roll for students not attending class. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the withdrawal process. A withdrawal is official when it is received and processed by the Office of the Registrar.

After the Designated Withdrawal Date

Students will not be allowed to withdraw after the designated withdrawal date as published in the school calendar as required by Board of Regents’ policy; however, students may petition an exception to the Board of Regents’ withdrawal deadline for cases of hardship by completing a petition for withdrawal form available in the Office of Centralized Advising. The petition will become a permanent part of the student’s file. If the petition is approved, the instructor may assign a grade of “W” or “WF” after mid-term. Note that “WF” is calculated in the grade point average the same as “F.” Any student who discontinues class attendance after midterm and does not officially withdraw may be assigned a grade of “F.” No fee adjustment will be made for withdrawals except as outlined in the Tuition, Fees, and Costs section of this catalog. The Office of Student Financial Services will receive a copy of the withdrawal form for refunding if applicable. Students receiving financial aid or graduate assistantships should be aware that withdrawal from courses may affect continued financial aid and assistantship eligibility.

To petition for withdrawal after the designated date, students must document either a medical or hardship situation and follow the process below:

Medical Withdrawals from the University

A student who has an injury or illness that prevents the completion of all classes for that term may request a Medical Withdrawal through the Office of Centralized Advising. The Medical Withdrawal process is outlined below. It should be noted that a Medical Withdrawal can be requested only after the designated withdrawal date. A student wanting to withdraw before the designated withdrawal date must follow the Withdrawal from Course Policy outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. If a student has to withdraw from a class before the designated withdrawal date for a documented medical reason, that student may use this process to appeal to change a regular withdrawal to a medical withdrawal. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Registrar (229-333-5727). **Questions regarding the late withdrawal process should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students(229-333-5941)**. It is the student’s responsibility to withdraw officially in accordance with university regulations. Only in very rare instances will a partial withdrawal be considered, such as in cases in which a student may not be able to complete a specific class because of a medical condition or injury that prohibits class participation. For more detailed information on the Medical Withdrawal policy and procedures, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/medical-withdrawal-process.php).

Hardship Withdrawals from the University

A student who has an emergency that prevents the completion of all classes for that term may request a Hardship Withdrawal through the Office of Centralized Advising. The Hardship Withdrawal process is outlined below. It should be noted that a Hardship Withdrawal can be requested only after the designated withdrawal date. A student wanting to withdraw before the designated withdrawal date must follow the Withdrawal from Course Policy outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. If a student has to withdraw from a class before the designated withdrawal date for a documented hardship reason, that student may use this process to appeal to change a regular withdrawal to a hardship withdrawal. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Registrar (229-333-5727). **Questions regarding the late withdrawal process should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students(229-333-5941)**. It is the student’s responsibility to withdraw officially in accordance with university regulations. Only in very rare instances will a partial withdrawal be considered, such as in cases in which a student may not be able to complete a specific class because of a hardship that prohibits class participation. For more detailed information on the Hardship Withdrawal policy and procedures, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/hardship-withdrawals.php).

Mental Health Withdrawals from the University

To ensure that its students receive due process rights, Valdosta State University has initiated the following Mental Health Withdrawal Procedure. Before a student may be withdrawn for mental health reasons, there must first be the following chain of events:

1. The student displays behavioral indicators, which are determined by a mental health professional to be of danger to the student or others.
2. Within a reasonable period of time, the student should be withdrawn from school for mental health reasons, an informal hearing will be held at which the student or his or her representative may present any pertinent information that he or she believes will have a bearing on the particular case.
3. If the student is deemed by the Office of Student Services to be a danger to himself or herself or others, the student should be withdrawn.

This procedure is enacted to ensure that the student's legal rights are not violated and that the University has the right to remove any student who it feels, based on professional evaluation, may present a danger to himself or herself or to others. No fee adjustment will be made for withdrawals except as outlined in the Tuition, Fees, and Costs section of this catalog. The Office of Student Financial Services will receive a copy of the withdrawal form for refunding if applicable.

Graduate Course Numbering
At Valdosta State University, courses numbered 1000-4999 are for undergraduate students only. Some courses numbered 3000-3999 are open to graduate students; such courses carry dual numbers, with the graduate version of the course numbered between 5000 and 5999. Similarly, courses numbered 4000-4999 are dual numbered 6000-6999 for graduate credit.

Courses numbered 7000-8999 are open to graduate students only. Courses numbered 9000-9999 are open to doctoral students only.

Graduate students should be sure that they are registered for graduate courses. This information appears on the official class roll and on the student's schedule. While a graduate student may be permitted to take an undergraduate course, this course will not fulfill graduate degree requirements. Only courses numbered 5000 or above are graduate-level courses.

In programs with thesis requirements, a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic course work is required. Of these 30 semester hours, at least 9 semester hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above, with a minimum of 6 hours of thesis. In programs without thesis requirements, a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic course work is required. Of these 30 semester hours, at least 15 semester hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above. The remainder must be completed in courses numbered 5000 or above.

Determination of Credit Hours
Valdosta State University utilizes the federal definition of the credit hour as a basis for determining the amount of credit assigned for student work, complying with Federal Regulation Program Integrity Rules, University System of Georgia (USG) Policy 3.4, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Principle 10.7 and Policy Statement on Credit Hours. The Academic Committee of the VSU Faculty Senate is responsible for ensuring that credit hours awarded for course work are appropriate, and the VSU Registrar's Office ensures that credit hours are accurately attached to courses in the student information system. The Registrar's Office ensures that the number of class minutes for lecture- and laboratory-based courses have been accounted for in the scheduling of courses. The full policy statement is available upon request from the Office of Academic Affairs or the Registrar's Office.

Cross-Disciplinary Courses
Certain courses, because of their scope and focus, are identified by different designations, that is, cross-listed, such as SOCI 9070 / PADM 9070 Students may decide which designation they wish to register for, depending on their needs, but such a dual listed or cross-listed course can count only once and cannot be taken a second time for credit under a different designation. Cross-disciplinary courses are clearly identified in the "Courses of Instruction" section by the phrase "Also offered as ...."

Maximum Course Loads and Other Restrictions
The normal full load for a graduate student is 9-15 hours of graduate-level work fall and

spring semesters and 6 hours of graduate-level work in the summer semester. For the Master of Science in Nursing (http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/courseleaf.cgi?page=/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/index.html&step=text#Absence%20Regulations) program (both Family Nurse Practitioner and Psych-Mental Health tracks), a full load is 6 credit hours per term. Students are expected to enroll in and complete a minimum of 6 credit hours to maintain full-time status within the MSN (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/our-programs/master-of-science-in-nursing.php) program.

Course loads in excess of these limits may be allowed by permission of the major professor, or the department head and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Graduate assistants must register for a minimum of 6 hours per semester. The normal full load for a student with a graduate assistantship is 9 semester hours in fall and spring and 6 semester hours in summer.

For all financial aid programs, 9 semester hours is considered full time fall and spring semesters, and 6 semester hours is full-time in the summer. Five semester hours is considered half-time enrollment for graduate students. At least half-time enrollment is required for eligibility under all federal loan programs.

Undergraduate courses will not be calculated when determining a graduate student's full-time or part-time status or assistantship eligibility. However, these hours will be included in determining a student's maximum load, as stated above.

General Requirements for Graduate Degrees

To determine specific program requirements, including those for degree completion and graduation, visit our Programs page (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/our-programs/) and click on the program in which they are interested.

Time to Degree Completion or Admission to Doctoral Candidacy
After admission, courses taken more than seven years prior to the semester of degree completion cannot be used to meet graduate degree requirements or admission to doctoral candidacy requirements unless otherwise indicated by individual program requirements. Under extenuating circumstances, however, the student's advisor may appeal in writing for a onetime extension of this limitation. A student's advisor must send a memo to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research requesting an extension. The memo must include a brief justification and the student's ID number. The student's transcript will be reviewed; the Associate Provost will then approve or deny the request in a memo to the advisor and will send a copy to the Registrar's Office. The maximum extension for completion of the program typically cannot exceed one additional calendar year unless otherwise approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Time to Degree Completion for Doctoral Programs
Students have five years to complete their dissertations after admission to candidacy unless otherwise indicated by program policy and/or approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Transfer Credit
The academic advisor reviews official transcripts to determine course equivalence/similarity. If the advisor determines the course is an appropriate transfer course, he/she sends a course substitution form to the Graduate School for approval. The course substitution form specifies the course, hours, institution of origin, and how the course should be applied (e.g., general elective or a course substitution for an existing course in the curriculum). Courses considered for transfer credit must: (1) be no more than 7 years of age at the time of admission, unless otherwise approved by the program; (2) be earned at an institution that is regionally accredited; (3) be graduate-level courses; and (4) not exceed specific program limitations on total number of hours. All transfer requests are subject to approval by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research, and grades transferred fall under the current deficiency point system.

Comprehensive Examinations
All graduate programs require a Comprehensive Examination or an acceptable substitute. Successful completion of this exam indicates that students have nearly completed their work toward the degree. The Comprehensive Examination may not be taken until all required course work has been completed or is in the process of being completed, and the language requirements have been fulfilled. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research shall be notified upon the student's successful completion of this requirement.

Theses and Dissertations
The thesis or dissertation represents the culmination of students' academic programs. It is a major achievement, reflecting their development as professionals in their chosen fields. Students have an opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual capabilities through the production of an original piece of research. While students will have the assistance of many others in completing this project, including faculty and fellow graduate students, the finished thesis or dissertation reflects their work, their effort, and their intellectual development.

Students should review the sections below pertaining to their thesis or dissertation project. Also, students using human or animal subjects in their research should consult the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration's webpage on Research Ethics (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/research/office-of-sponsored-programs-research-administration/research-ethics.php) for necessary forms and approvals.

Thesis

All students must register for thesis credit each semester in which they are actively working on their thesis. The total number of thesis credit hours required for the degree will be determined by the individual departments. Students must enroll in the thesis course in the semester in which they graduate. All thesis courses will be graded on a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" basis. For general thesis regulations, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php).

When a thesis is required, the defended thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School not less than 21 days before the scheduled date of graduation. The Thesis Committee shall certify in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research that the student has successfully defended the thesis at a scheduled defense. The student must submit the final, defended thesis to gradreviewer@valdosta.edu. After the Graduate School's review, students are required to submit a copy in Word to the University Archives for its online repository (V-text).

Optional: After review and approval, students may submit copies to the Library to be bound. A completed Binding Fee form must accompany copies to be bound. The Binding Fee form and V-text instructions are included on the Thesis and Dissertation Information web pages.

Signature on the thesis by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research indicates final acceptance of the student's thesis and marks the completion of requirements for the master's degree. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research will notify the Registrar's Office to authorize the student's graduation.

Dissertation

Students enrolled in a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program or the Doctor of Speech Language Pathology (S.L.P.D.) program must complete a dissertation. Students enrolled in a Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.) program must complete a dissertation-quality final project. All three programs follow the dissertation guidelines referenced below.

All students must register for dissertation credit each semester in which they are actively working on this project. A minimum of 9 semester hours of dissertation credit is required for the degree. Students must be enrolled in dissertation hours in the semester in which they graduate. All dissertation courses must be graded on a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” basis. For general dissertation regulations, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php).

The defended dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School no fewer than 21 days before the scheduled date of graduation. The student must submit the final, defended dissertation to gradreviewer@valdosta.edu. The Dissertation Committee shall certify in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research that the student has successfully defended the dissertation at an announced open meeting. After the Graduate School’s review and approval, students are required to submit a copy to ProQuest and to VSU's online repository (V-text). A completed Binding Fee form must accompany copies to be bound. The Binding Fee form and V-text instructions are included on the Thesis and Dissertation Information page.

Signature of the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research on the dissertation indicates final acceptance of the student’s dissertation and marks the completion of requirements for the Ed.D. degree, the S.L.P.D. degree, or the D.P.A. degree. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research will notify the Registrar’s Office to authorize the student’s graduation.

Second Master's Degree Program of Study
Students seeking a second master’s degree must submit a Program of Study that is approved by their program and faculty advisor, department head, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. The Program of Study should list all courses to be taken for the second graduate degree. Transfer courses cannot be older than 7 years at the time of admission to the second degree. Courses may be drawn from a completed graduate degree or from a concurrent VSU degree upon the approval of the program, faculty advisor, department head, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. No graduate course in either category may be used in which the grade was below a “B.”

Application for Graduation
Students must apply for graduation at least one semester in advance.

Procedures for Graduation Application

1. Complete the electronic Graduation Application (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/registrar/forms/graduation-forms.php).
2. Pay the $50 graduation fee (https://secure.touchnet.com/C20243_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=257&SINGLESTORE=true).
3. Visit the Application for Graduation (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/application-for-graduation.php) page for more information.

Students planning to attend graduation should make arrangements with the VSU Bookstore for purchase of cap, gown, and hood. The Registrar’s Office should be consulted early in the program (at least one semester before graduation) for procedures and deadlines. For more details, consult the VSU Commencement webpage (http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/advancement/event-services/commencement/welcome.php).

The Application for Graduation fee is valid for one year beyond the initial term selected for completing degree requirements. A 3.0 cumulative GPA on all graduate courses completed at VSU after acceptance to the Graduate School is required for graduation. All financial obligations to the University must be cleared before an official diploma will be issued.

Graduate Assistantships
Valdosta State University’s graduate assistantships are designed to promote the research, teaching, and service responsibilities of the University and to provide students with valuable professional development opportunities while earning graduate degrees. Therefore, the graduate assistantship involves the dual responsibilities of maintaining a satisfactory academic performance and of successfully performing the assigned teaching, research, or other responsibilities. The graduate assistant is expected to enroll and earn credit for a minimum of 6 graduate semester hours each term in which the assistantship is held. Graduate students work a minimum of 14 hours and a maximum of 19 hours per week. Graduate students may not have another job on campus while serving in an assistantship position.

Eligibility Requirements

Valdosta State University offers a limited number of graduate assistantships. The student must be accepted as either “Regular” or “Probationary” in an approved graduate degree or post-master’s program at VSU. Students classified as either “Irregular” or “Non-Degree” are not eligible for assistantships. To apply, please visit the Graduate Assistantship website (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/graduate-assistantships.php).

Tuition Rates and Other Financial Obligations

The graduate assistantship program allows graduate assistants to pay a flat, per-semester tuition rate of $38.00, applicable to both in-state and out-of-state residents. Tuition is reduced in the following manner for both in-state and out-of-state students:

Fall and spring: A GA will receive a tuition waiver after payment of the first $38 of tuition each semester for a total of up to 15 credit hours in the fall and 15 credit hours in the spring. Any additional credits taken will be charged to the GA at the in-state rate.

Summer: A GA will receive a tuition waiver after payment of the first $38 of tuition for a total of up to 9 semester credit hours in the summer (semester I, II, III, IV). Any additional credits taken will be charged to the GA at the in-state rate.

Students are also required to pay the student-related fees. These fees include but are not limited to the Health, Athletic, Student Activity, Transportation, Technology, Access Card, and other fees. In addition, students are required to maintain health insurance, either through the VSU United Healthcare Plan or their own plan. Students are also responsible for their own living expenses and books. Visit the tuition website (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/tuition-and-financial-aid.php) for a complete list of student-related fees.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is the responsibility of all VSU faculty and students. Faculty members should promote academic integrity by including clear instruction on the components of academic integrity and clearly defining the penalties for cheating and plagiarism in their course syllabi. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Academic Integrity Policy as set forth in the Student Code of Conduct and the faculty members' syllabi. All students are expected to do their own work and to uphold a high standard of academic ethics. The Student Code of Conduct outlines academic integrity violations as well as the academic response and disciplinary response to such violations. For more information, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php).

The online VSU Student Code of Conduct (https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php) reflects the most current policy on academic integrity. Academic integrity violations may result in suspension or expulsion from the university.

NOTE: Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until the mid-term by completing the withdrawal process on Banner. A withdrawal before mid-term is non-punitive, and a grade of "W" is assigned. However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for academic dishonesty.

In cases of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, in which a graduate student violates Section I after having been warned or sanctioned by one or more professors, he or she may then be referred to the Dean of Students Office where official charge may be drawn up and the student subjected to the established VSU disciplinary process. If an instructor assigns a grade of "F" or "U" for a course due to academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, and the student receives a Medical or Hardship withdrawal, the instructor may assign a "WF."

Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism are academic integrity violations. These violations are serious and will result in negative consequences. For information on policies and procedures for students committing these academic integrity violations, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php).

Plagiarism is defined as "the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one's own original work, or attempts thereof," (Article I of the Virginia Tech Honor Code Constitution (http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/?q=node/5)) (http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/?q=node/5). The violation, then, consists of both copying and misrepresenting the material in question. When a student places his or her name on any kind of work, he or she claims responsibility for the originality of the contents except for those parts that are specifically attributed to another or that are considered common knowledge. If a student has consulted any outside source, whether published or not, and has incorporated any of its "language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts" into his or her work without acknowledging that source, he or she may be guilty of misrepresenting the work's originality. When paraphrasing material from an outside source, the student must change both the sentence structure and the vocabulary (where possible) in expressing the original material in his or her own words. Any instance in which the "language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts" have been borrowed from another's work, paraphrased or not, without proper reference/citation, the act constitutes plagiarism on the part of the writer. For more information and resources regarding plagiarism, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php).

Course sections may use plagiarism-prevention technology. Students may have the option of submitting their written work online through a plagiarism-prevention service or of allowing the instructor to submit their work. The written work may be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

Student E-Mail Responsibilities

All students accepted to VSU receive an e-mail account through the University. It is the students' responsibility to access this account frequently, as their graduate program and the Graduate School will send important information to that e-mail address. Indeed, the Graduate School will use graduate students' university-given e-mail address as the official site of notifications to them. For information on university e-mail, click here. (http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/it/helpdesk/vsu-accounts/office-365.php)

OLD CODE - COURSELEAF

On this page:

Grading System *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Grading System*)*
Appeal of Dismissal from Graduate School *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Appeal of Dismissal*)*
Expectations for Satisfactory Graduate-Level Student Performance *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Expectations for Satisfactory*)*
Grade Appeals *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Grade Appeals*)*
Absence Regulations *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Absence Regulations*)*
Auditing Classes *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Auditing Classes*)*
Withdrawal from Courses Policies *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Withdrawal from courses policies*)*
Graduate Course Numbering *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Graduate Course Numberings*)*
Determination of Credit Hours *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Determination of Credit Hours*)*
Cross-Disciplinary Courses *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Cross-disciplinary courses*)*
Maximum Course Loads and Other Restrictions *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Maximum course loads and other restrictions*)*

General Requirements for Graduate Degrees *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#General requirements for Grad degrees*)*
Time to Degree Completion or Admission to Doctoral Candidacy *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Request for Extension of 7 year rule*)*

Time to Degree Completion for Doctoral Programs
Transfer Credit *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Transfer Credit*)*
Comprehensive Examinations *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Comprehensive Examinations*)*
Theses and Dissertations *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Theses and Dissertations*)*
Second Master's Degree Program of Study *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Second*)*
Application for Graduation *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#application for graduation*)*
Graduate Assistantships *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Graduate Assistantships*)*
Academic Dishonesty *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Academic dishonesty*)*
Plagiarism *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Plagarism*)*
Student E-mail Responsibilities *(*http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/#Student Email Responsibilites*)*

Grading System

The semester hour is the basic unit of work, in which each course offered has credit value in terms of a certain number of semester hours normally conforming to the number of contact class hours per week. For example, courses meeting three hours a week carry three hours credit. A typical exception occurs in laboratory work, in which two or three hours of class contact time would have a one-credit-hour value.

Grades and quality points represent the instructor's final estimate of the student's performance in a course. All grades assigned remain on the student's permanent record and transcript. The following letters denote grades that are included in the computation of the grade point average:

Graduate students may calculate their graduate grade point average by dividing the number of graduate semester credit hours taken into the total number of quality points earned.

The following letters denote cases in which the grade is not included in the computation of the grade point average:

I = Incomplete

IP = In progress (course scheduled for more than one semester)

K = Credit by examination

NR = Not reported by instructor or course ending date is after the scheduled end of the semester

S = Satisfactory

U = Unsatisfactory

V = Audit

W = Withdrew without penalty

Total institutional grade point averages are calculated at the close of every semester in which course work is taken. This calculation appears on the permanent record of each student. Students may review this grade record and grade point average by viewing their transcript located inside BannerWeb. To view their transcripts, students should log in and follow prompts to "Student Services and Financial Aid." Matters requiring interpretation of a graduate record should normally be referred to the student's advisor or the Graduate School. Undergraduate grades will not be calculated as part of the graduate student's semester or total institutional average.

A report of "I" (incomplete) indicates that a student was doing satisfactory work at the end of the term but, for non-academic reasons, was unable to complete all requirements for the course. A report of "I" requires the subsequent completion of all course requirements within a time limit specified by the instructor, not to exceed one calendar year from the end of the term in which a grade of incomplete is assigned, regardless of the student's enrollment status during the period specified for completion. It is the student's responsibility to request that a grade of "I" be assigned for a class. To request a grade of incomplete, students should go to the website (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/registrar/documents/incomplete-form-updated.pdf) to download the Request for Assigning a Grade of Incomplete form. Students should remember that they should keep attending class, if possible, until the paperwork for the "I" is submitted. Additionally, their graduation dates will be adjusted if their incompletes are not resolved by their projected graduation date.

A grade of "IP" indicates that credit has not been given in courses that require a continuation of work beyond the semester for which the students signed up for the course. The use of the symbol is approved for dissertation and thesis hours and project courses. It cannot be substituted for an "I."

The computation of the overall grade point average treats "WF" and "F" grades identically: both are failing grades. Grades of "W" do not enter into the computation. Earning grades below "B" in graduate courses will result in the following consequences:

- Students will be dismissed from the Graduate School if they accumulate three or more academic deficiency points unless otherwise indicated by individual program policy. A grade of “C” (although it may be credited toward a degree) equals one deficiency point. A grade of “D,” “WF” or “F,” or “U” (none of which will be credited toward a degree) equals two deficiency points unless otherwise indicated by individual program policy.
- Warning letters will be issued to students for each earned deficiency point until enough points are accumulated to warrant dismissal.

For additional policies related to retention, dismissals, and readmission, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/withdrawal-policy.php).

Students should work with their advisors and professors to avoid earning deficiency points (e.g., withdrawing from school before receiving failing grades). To view withdrawal polices, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Appeal of Dismissal from Graduate School

For the appeal form for dismissal from the Graduate School, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/appeals.php).

Graduate students who wish to appeal a dismissal must first discuss the issue with their advisor. Further appeals are then directed, in order, to their professor’s Department Head, College Dean, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Expectations for Satisfactory Graduate-Level Student Performance

Graduate students are expected to earn grades of at least “B” in most of their course work for their degree. For graduation, a graduate student must have earned a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 in all graduate course work at Valdosta State University. Throughout their program, students’ performance must be acceptable on a continuing basis. If their GPA falls below a 3.0, students must maintain an overall GPA of not less than 2.5. No grade below “C” will be credited toward a graduate degree. All grades received for graduate courses taken at or transferred to VSU, after admission to the Graduate School, will be used to calculate the graduate cumulative grade point average. Courses may be retaken, if desired or required, but all graduate grades received will affect this average.

Grade Appeals

Grade appeals are handled at the departmental and college levels. Students should contact their advisor or department head for information about the appeals process and forms.

Course Repeat Policy

Under the Graduate Course Repeat Policy, graduate students may repeat a course for grade replacement in a maximum of two courses with posted letter grades of “C,” “D,” or “F”. A course can be repeated for grade replacement only once.

When a graduate course is taken at VSU and repeated at VSU with a higher grade, the highest grade received will be counted in the institutional GPA calculations. If a student repeats a course at VSU but receives a lower grade, the higher grade from a previous attempt will be used in the calculation of the institutional GPA. The courses must be taken and repeated at VSU. For more information about the Course Repeat Policy, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/new-graduate-student-online-orientation.php).

Absence Regulations

For students, success in class, whether face-to-face or online, begins with regular attendance/participation. Instructors must clearly outline their absence/participation expectations in their course syllabus, including any penalties for absence or non-participation and any procedures for missed work. All students are responsible for knowing the specific attendance/participation requirements as prescribed by their instructors and for the satisfactory make-up of missed work. When students are compelled for any reason to be absent from or unable to participate in class, they should immediately contact the instructor.

Attendance Verification:

During a designated period each term, instructors are required to verify student attendance for disbursement of Financial Aid. If a faculty member reports that a student has not attended a class, the Registrar’s Office will assign “W” for that student.

For Online Classes:

To comply with Federal Financial Aid regulations for considering “attendance” in an online class, instructors:

- Must not count students’ logging into a course’s learning management system (e.g., BlazeVIEW, Google Apps Sites) as participation in that course.
- Must count any “academically related” activity in a given course as participation in that course. For online classes, the activities in the following categories are considered “academically related”:
- Participating in any assigned activity (e.g., attending a synchronous teleconference or video conference class session, submitting prepared material, taking examinations, engaging in an assigned study group, providing a self-introduction to the class in a discussion forum designated for this purpose);

- Completing interactive tutorials or interactive, computer-assisted instruction; or
- Discussing the course's subject matter (e.g., online with other students, by email with the instructor)

Whether online or face-to-face, a student who misses or does not participate in more than 20% of the scheduled course or course activities could be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course.

The University does not issue an excuse to students for class absences. In case of absences as a result of illness or special situations, instructors may be informed of reasons for absences, but these are not excuses.

Students participating in authorized activities as an official representative of the University (i.e., athletic events, delegate to regional or national meetings or conferences, participation in university-sponsored performances) **are automatically excused by the university**: These students will not receive academic penalties and, in consultation with the instructor of record, will be given reasonable opportunities to complete assignments and exams or given compensatory assignment(s) if needed. The student must provide written confirmation from a faculty or staff advisor to the course instructor(s) not fewer than 10 days prior to the date for which the student will be absent from the class, except in the case of short notice events. Written confirmation and explanation of short notice events must be provided to the instructor as soon as possible. The student is responsible for all material presented in class and for all announcements and assignments. When possible, students are expected to complete these assignments before their absences. In the event of a disagreement regarding this policy, an appeal may be made by either the student or the instructor of record to the department head.

Students with Military Obligations that require their absence from class may seek an exemption from the class attendance policy. Students requesting an exemption should provide their military orders to the college Associate Dean, along with a request for an exemption prior to the start of the first week of classes. Working with the appropriate college Associate Dean, the student's instructors are contacted and made aware of the request for an exemption. Instructors will carefully consider all such requests and base their decision upon the course attendance policies and the student's ability to catch up on missed course materials upon his or her return.

Religious Observances:

The University permits students, faculty, and staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith. The faculty should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who choose to observe these holidays are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors.

Appeals for Attendance Disputes:

Attendance issues which cannot be resolved between the instructor and student should be referred immediately to the department head responsible for the course. Students who stop attending or participating in a course without officially withdrawing from a course will receive the penalties indicated in the instructor's syllabus.

Withdrawals:

If students wish to withdraw, they should consult with their instructors. Students officially withdrawing from a course prior to the designated withdrawal date will receive a "W" for the course (unless the withdrawal exceeds the number allowed under the limited withdrawal policy). After the designated withdrawal date, students experiencing a documentable medical or hardship situation may complete a Petition for Withdrawal form, which is available in office of the Dean of Students. If the petition is approved, the grade awarded is "W" (withdrew passing).

Auditing Classes

Students may be permitted to audit selected courses, provided regular enrollment in the course is permitted and provided such arrangement is agreeable to the instructor. Fees for auditing are the same as for regular registration. Students are not permitted to change from audit to credit or from credit to audit after the last day for course changes as specified in the official calendar.

Withdrawal from Courses Policies

These policies apply to all students (undergraduate and graduate) at Valdosta State University for all classes offered by VSU, whether delivered face-to-face or online. However, some VSU students may be enrolled in classes offered through collaborative partnerships with other institutions or eCore (eMajor, GOML, WebMBA, etc.). In these programs, some policies and process may differ slightly. Students taking classes in those programs should visit the appropriate program links for further information.

Before the Designated Withdrawal Date

Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until approximately one week after midterm by completing the online withdrawal process on BANNER. A grade of "W" will appear in the student's official records.

However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for academic dishonesty (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php). Instructors may assign a "W" on the proof roll for students not attending class. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the withdrawal process. A withdrawal is official when it is received and processed by the Office of the Registrar.

After the Designated Withdrawal Date

Students will not be allowed to withdraw after the designated withdrawal date as published in the school calendar as required by Board of Regents' policy; however, students may petition an exception to the Board of Regents' withdrawal deadline for cases of hardship by completing a petition for withdrawal form available in the Office of Centralized Advising. The petition will become a permanent part of the student's file. If the petition is approved, the instructor may assign a grade of "W" or "WF" after mid-term. Note that "WF" is calculated in the grade point average the same as "F." Any student who discontinues class attendance after midterm and does not officially withdraw may be assigned a grade of "F." No fee adjustment will be made for withdrawals except as outlined in the Tuition, Fees, and Costs section of this catalog. The Office of Student Financial Services will receive a copy of the withdrawal form for refunding if applicable. Students receiving financial aid or graduate assistantships should be aware that withdrawal from courses may affect continued financial aid and assistantship eligibility.

To petition for withdrawal after the designated date, students must document either a medical or hardship situation and follow the process below:

Medical Withdrawals from the University

A student who has an injury or illness that prevents the completion of all classes for that term may request a Medical Withdrawal through the Office of Centralized Advising. The Medical Withdrawal process is outlined below. It should be noted that a Medical Withdrawal can be requested only after the designated withdrawal date. A student wanting to withdraw before the designated withdrawal date must follow the Withdrawal from Course Policy outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. If a student has to withdraw from a class before the designated withdrawal date for a documented medical reason, that student may use this process to appeal to change a regular withdrawal to a medical withdrawal. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Registrar (229-333-5727). **Questions regarding the late withdrawal process should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students(229-333-5941)**. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw officially in accordance with university regulations. Only in very rare instances will a partial withdrawal be considered, such as in cases in which a student may not be able to complete a specific class because of a medical condition or injury that prohibits class participation. For more detailed information on the Medical Withdrawal policy and procedures, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/medical-withdrawal-process.php).

Hardship Withdrawals from the University

A student who has an emergency that prevents the completion of all classes for that term may request a Hardship Withdrawal through the Office of Centralized Advising. The Hardship Withdrawal process is outlined below. It should be noted that a Hardship Withdrawal can be requested only after the designated withdrawal date. A student wanting to withdraw before the designated withdrawal date must follow the Withdrawal from Course Policy outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. If a student has to withdraw from a class before the designated withdrawal date for a documented hardship reason, that student may use this process to appeal to change a regular withdrawal to a hardship withdrawal. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Registrar (229-333-5727). **Questions regarding the late withdrawal process should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students(229-333-5941)**. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw officially in accordance with university regulations. Only in very rare instances will a partial withdrawal be considered, such as in cases in which a student may not be able to complete a specific class because of a hardship that prohibits class participation. For more detailed information on the Hardship Withdrawal policy and procedures, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/hardship-withdrawals.php).

Mental Health Withdrawals from the University

To ensure that its students receive due process rights, Valdosta State University has initiated the following Mental Health Withdrawal Procedure. Before a student may be withdrawn for mental health reasons, there must first be the following chain of events:

1. The student displays behavioral indicators, which are determined by a mental health professional to be of danger to the student or others.
2. When a mental health professional recommends that a student needs to be withdrawn from school for mental health reasons, an informal hearing will then be set up to determine whether or not the student should be withdrawn.
3. In this informal hearing conducted by the Office of the Dean of Students, the student or his or her representative may present any pertinent information that he or she believes will have a bearing on the particular case.

This procedure is enacted to ensure that the student's legal rights are not violated and that the University has the right to remove any student who it feels, based on professional evaluation, may present a danger to himself or herself or to others. No fee adjustment will be made for withdrawals except as outlined in the Tuition, Fees, and Costs section of this catalog. The Office of Student Financial Services will receive a copy of the withdrawal form for refunding if applicable.

Graduate Course Numbering

At Valdosta State University, courses numbered 1000-4999 are for undergraduate students only. Some courses numbered 3000-3999 are open to graduate students; such courses carry dual numbers, with the graduate version of the course numbered between 5000 and 5999. Similarly, courses numbered 4000-4999 are dual numbered 6000-6999 for graduate credit.

Courses numbered 7000-8999 are open to graduate students only. Courses numbered 9000-9999 are open to doctoral students only.

Graduate students should be sure that they are registered for graduate courses. This information appears on the official class roll and on the student's schedule. While a graduate student may be permitted to take an undergraduate course, this course will not fulfill graduate degree requirements. Only courses numbered 5000 or above are graduate-level courses.

In programs with thesis requirements, a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic course work is required. Of these 30 semester hours, at least 9 semester hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above, with a minimum of 6 hours of thesis. In programs without thesis requirements, a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic course work is required. Of these 30 semester hours, at least 15 semester hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above. The remainder must be completed in courses numbered 5000 or above.

Determination of Credit Hours

Valdosta State University utilizes the federal definition of the credit hour as a basis for determining the amount of credit assigned for student work, complying with Federal Regulation Program Integrity Rules, University System of Georgia (USG) Policy 3.4, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Principle 10.7 and Policy Statement on Credit Hours. The Academic Committee of the VSU Faculty Senate is responsible for ensuring that credit hours awarded for course work are appropriate, and the VSU Registrar's Office ensures that credit hours are accurately attached to courses in the student information system. The Registrar's Office ensures that the number of class minutes for lecture- and laboratory-based courses have been accounted for in the scheduling of courses. The full policy statement is available upon request from the Office of Academic Affairs or the Registrar's Office.

Cross-Disciplinary Courses

Certain courses, because of their scope and focus, are identified by different designations, that is, cross-listed, such as SOCI 9070 / PADM 9070 Students may decide which designation they wish to register for, depending on their needs, but such a dual listed or cross-listed course can count only once and cannot be taken a second time for credit under a different designation. Cross-disciplinary courses are clearly identified in the "Courses of Instruction" section by the phrase "Also offered as ...."

Maximum Course Loads and Other Restrictions

The normal full load for a graduate student is 9-15 hours of graduate-level work fall and

spring semesters and 6 hours of graduate-level work in the summer semester. For the Master of Science in Nursing (http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/courseleaf.cgi?page=/graduate/academic-standards-regulations/index.html&step=text#Absence%20Regulations) program (both Family Nurse Practitioner and Psych-Mental Health tracks), a full load is 6 credit hours per term. Students are expected to enroll in and complete a minimum of 6 credit hours to maintain full-time status within the MSN (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/our-programs/master-of-science-in-nursing.php) program.

Course loads in excess of these limits may be allowed by permission of the major professor, or the department head and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Graduate assistants must register for a minimum of 6 hours per semester. The normal full load for a student with a graduate assistantship is 9 semester hours in fall and spring and 6 semester hours in summer.

For all financial aid programs, 9 semester hours is considered full time fall and spring semesters, and 6 semester hours is full-time in the summer. Five semester hours is considered half-time enrollment for graduate students. At least half-time enrollment is required for eligibility under all federal loan programs.

Undergraduate courses will not be calculated when determining a graduate student's full-time or part-time status or assistantship eligibility. However, these hours will be included in determining a student's maximum load, as stated above.

General Requirements for Graduate Degrees

To determine specific program requirements, including those for degree completion and graduation, visit our Programs page (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/our-programs/) and click on the program in which they are interested.

Time to Degree Completion or Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

After admission, courses taken more than seven years prior to the semester of degree completion cannot be used to meet graduate degree requirements or admission to doctoral candidacy requirements unless otherwise indicated by individual program requirements. Under extenuating circumstances, however, the student's advisor may appeal in writing for a onetime extension of this limitation. A student's advisor must send a memo to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research requesting an extension. The memo must include a brief justification and the student's ID number. The student's transcript will be reviewed; the Associate Provost will then approve or deny the request in a memo to the advisor and will send a copy to the Registrar's Office. The maximum extension for completion of the program typically cannot exceed one additional calendar year unless otherwise approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Time to Degree Completion for Doctoral Programs

Students have five years to complete their dissertations after admission to candidacy unless otherwise indicated by program policy and/or approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

Transfer Credit

The academic advisor reviews official transcripts to determine course equivalence/similarity. If the advisor determines the course is an appropriate transfer course, he/she sends a course substitution form to the Graduate School for approval. The course substitution form specifies the course, hours, institution of origin, and how the course should be applied (e.g., general elective or a course substitution for an existing course in the curriculum). Courses considered for transfer credit must: (1) be no more than 7 years of age at the time of admission, unless otherwise approved by the program; (2) be earned at an institution that is regionally accredited; (3) be graduate-level courses; and (4) not exceed specific program limitations on total number of hours. All transfer requests are subject to approval by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research, and grades transferred fall under the current deficiency point system.

Comprehensive Examinations

All graduate programs require a Comprehensive Examination or an acceptable substitute. Successful completion of this exam indicates that students have nearly completed their work toward the degree. The Comprehensive Examination may not be taken until all required course work has been completed or is in the process of being completed, and the language requirements have been fulfilled. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research shall be notified upon the student's successful completion of this requirement.

Theses and Dissertations

The thesis or dissertation represents the culmination of students' academic programs. It is a major achievement, reflecting their development as professionals in their chosen fields. Students have an opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual capabilities through the production of an original piece of research. While students will have the assistance of many others in completing this project, including faculty and fellow graduate students, the finished thesis or dissertation reflects their work, their effort, and their intellectual development.

Students should review the sections below pertaining to their thesis or dissertation project. Also, students using human or animal subjects in their research should consult the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration's webpage on Research Ethics (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/research/office-of-sponsored-programs-research-administration/research-ethics.php) for necessary forms and approvals.

Thesis

All students must register for thesis credit each semester in which they are actively working on their thesis. The total number of thesis credit hours required for the degree will be determined by the individual departments. Students must enroll in the thesis course in the semester in which they graduate. All thesis courses will be graded on a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" basis. For general thesis regulations, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php).

When a thesis is required, the defended thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School not less than 21 days before the scheduled date of graduation. The Thesis Committee shall certify in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research that the student has successfully defended the thesis at a scheduled defense. The student must submit the final, defended thesis to gradreviewer@valdosta.edu. After the Graduate School's review, students are required to submit a copy in Word to the University Archives for its online repository (V-text).

Optional: After review and approval, students may submit copies to the Library to be bound. A completed Binding Fee form must accompany copies to be bound. The Binding Fee form and V-text instructions are included on the Thesis and Dissertation Information web pages.

Signature on the thesis by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research indicates final acceptance of the student's thesis and marks the completion of requirements for the master's degree. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research will notify the Registrar's Office to authorize the student's graduation.

Dissertation

Students enrolled in a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program or the Doctor of Speech Language Pathology (S.L.P.D.) program must complete a dissertation. Students enrolled in a Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.) program must complete a dissertation-quality final project. All three programs follow the dissertation guidelines referenced below.

All students must register for dissertation credit each semester in which they are actively working on this project. A minimum of 9 semester hours of dissertation credit is required for the degree. Students must be enrolled in dissertation hours in the semester in which they graduate. All dissertation courses must be graded on a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" basis. For general dissertation regulations, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php).

The defended dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School no fewer than 21 days before the scheduled date of graduation. The student must submit the final, defended dissertation to gradreviewer@valdosta.edu. The Dissertation Committee shall certify in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research that the student has successfully defended the dissertation at an announced open meeting. After the Graduate School's

review and approval, students are required to submit a copy to ProQuest and to VSU's online repository (V-text). A completed Binding Fee form must accompany copies to be bound. The Binding Fee form and V-text instructions are included on the Thesis and Dissertation Information page.

Signature of the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research on the dissertation indicates final acceptance of the student's dissertation and marks the completion of requirements for the Ed.D. degree, the S.L.P.D. degree, or the D.P.A. degree. The Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research will notify the Registrar's Office to authorize the student's graduation.

Second Master's Degree Program of Study

Students seeking a second master's degree must submit a Program of Study that is approved by their program and faculty advisor, department head, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. The Program of Study should list all courses to be taken for the second graduate degree. Transfer courses cannot be older than 7 years at the time of admission to the second degree. Courses may be drawn from a completed graduate degree or from a concurrent VSU degree upon the approval of the program, faculty advisor, department head, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. No graduate course in either category may be used in which the grade was below a "B."

Application for Graduation

Students must apply for graduation at least one semester in advance.

Procedures for Graduation Application

1. Complete the electronic Graduation Application (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/registrar/forms/graduation-forms.php).
2. Pay the $50 graduation fee (https://secure.touchnet.com/C20243_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=257&SINGLESTORE=true).
3. Visit the Application for Graduation (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/application-for-graduation.php) page for more information.

Students planning to attend graduation should make arrangements with the VSU Bookstore for purchase of cap, gown, and hood. The Registrar's Office should be consulted early in the program (at least one semester before graduation) for procedures and deadlines. For more details, consult the VSU Commencement webpage (http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/advancement/event-services/commencement/welcome.php).

The Application for Graduation fee is valid for one year beyond the initial term selected for completing degree requirements. A 3.0 cumulative GPA on all graduate courses completed at VSU after acceptance to the Graduate School is required for graduation. All financial obligations to the University must be cleared before an official diploma will be issued.

Graduate Assistantships

Valdosta State University's graduate assistantships are designed to promote the research, teaching, and service responsibilities of the University and to provide students with valuable professional development opportunities while earning graduate degrees. Therefore, the graduate assistantship involves the dual responsibilities of maintaining a satisfactory academic performance and of successfully performing the assigned teaching, research, or other responsibilities. The graduate assistant is expected to enroll and earn credit for a minimum of 6 graduate semester hours each term in which the assistantship is held. Graduate students work a minimum of 14 hours and a maximum of 19 hours per week. Graduate students may not have another job on campus while serving in an assistantship position.

Eligibility Requirements

Valdosta State University offers a limited number of graduate assistantships. The student must be accepted as either "Regular" or "Probationary" in an approved graduate degree or post-master's program at VSU. Students classified as either "Irregular" or "Non-Degree" are not eligible for assistantships. To apply, please visit the Graduate Assistantship website (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/graduate-assistantships.php).

Tuition Rates and Other Financial Obligations

The graduate assistantship program allows graduate assistants to pay a flat, per-semester tuition rate of $38.00, applicable to both in-state and out-of-state residents. Tuition is reduced in the following manner for both in-state and out-of-state students:

Fall and spring: A GA will receive a tuition waiver after payment of the first $38 of tuition each semester for a total of up to 15 credit hours in the fall and 15 credit hours in the spring. Any additional credits taken will be charged to the GA at the in-state rate.

Summer: A GA will receive a tuition waiver after payment of the first $38 of tuition for a total of up to 9 semester credit hours in the summer (semester I, II, III, IV). Any additional credits taken will be charged to the GA at the in-state rate.

Students are also required to pay the student-related fees. These fees include but are not limited to the Health, Athletic, Student Activity, Transportation, Technology, Access Card, and other fees. In addition, students are required to maintain health insurance, either through the VSU United Healthcare Plan or their own plan. Students are also responsible for their own living expenses and books. Visit the tuition website (http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/tuition-and-financial-aid.php) for a complete list of student-related fees.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is the responsibility of all VSU faculty and students. Faculty members should promote academic integrity by including clear instruction on the components of academic integrity and clearly defining the penalties for cheating and plagiarism in their course syllabi. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Academic Integrity Policy as set forth in the Student Code of Conduct and the faculty members' syllabi. All students are expected to do their own work and to uphold a high standard of academic ethics. The Student Code of Conduct outlines academic integrity violations as well as the academic response and disciplinary response to such violations. For more information, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php).

The online VSU Student Code of Conduct (https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php) reflects the most current policy on academic integrity. Academic integrity violations may result in suspension or expulsion from the university.

NOTE: Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until the mid-term by completing the withdrawal process on Banner. A withdrawal before mid-term is non-punitive, and a grade of "W" is assigned. However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for academic dishonesty.

In cases of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, in which a graduate student violates Section I after having been warned or sanctioned by one or more professors, he or she may then be referred to the Dean of Students Office where official charge may be drawn up and the student subjected to the established VSU disciplinary process. If an instructor assigns a grade of "F" or "U" for a course due to academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, and the student receives a Medical or Hardship withdrawal, the instructor may assign a "WF."

Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism are academic integrity violations. These violations are serious and will result in negative consequences. For information on policies and procedures for students committing these academic integrity violations, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php).

Plagiarism is defined as "the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one's own original work, or attempts thereof," (Article I of the Virginia Tech Honor Code Constitution (http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/?q=node/5)) (http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/?q=node/5). The violation, then, consists of both copying and misrepresenting the material in question. When a student places his or her name on any kind of work, he or she claims responsibility for the originality of the contents except for those parts that are specifically attributed to another or that are considered common knowledge. If a student has consulted any outside source, whether published or not, and has incorporated any of its "language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts" into his or her work without acknowledging that source, he or she may be guilty of misrepresenting the work's originality. When paraphrasing material from an outside source, the student must change both the sentence structure and the vocabulary (where possible) in expressing the original material in his or her own words. Any instance in which the "language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts" have been borrowed from another's work, paraphrased or not, without proper reference/citation, the act constitutes plagiarism on the part of the writer. For more information and resources regarding plagiarism, click here (https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-dishonesty.php).

Course sections may use plagiarism-prevention technology. Students may have the option of submitting their written work online through a plagiarism-prevention service or of allowing the instructor to submit their work. The written work may be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

Student E-Mail Responsibilities

All students accepted to VSU receive an e-mail account through the University. It is the students' responsibility to access this account frequently, as their graduate program and the Graduate School will send important information to that e-mail address. Indeed, the Graduate School will use graduate students' university-given e-mail address as the official site of notifications to them. For information on university e-mail, click here (http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/it/helpdesk/vsu-accounts/office-365.php).