



College of Engineering and Science

Graduate Student Handbook

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A Checklist for Your First Week as a Graduate Student

The following checklist is meant for you to do in order from top to bottom:

- If you are an international student, check in with the International Students Office (ISO), and attend the international student orientation.
- Review your curriculum, <https://coes.latech.edu/students/advising-materials/>. Then meet with your advisor to make your class schedule, get released for registration and discuss your plan of study.
- Register for at least 6 credit hours at the Registrar (in Keeny Hall), and ask them for your BOSS ID and PIN number.
- Pay for classes at the Cashiers Office, right across from the Registrar. If you are on an assistantship, show them your offer letter, and they will allow you to split your tuition into three monthly payments.
- Get your email address from the Computing Center (in Wylly Tower).
- Go to Tech Express (in the Student Center) for a Student ID.
- If you are on an assistantship, go to the Graduate Studies Office and provide both your tech email address and *your Ruston address*. These two pieces of information are needed to start your assistantship paperwork.
- Try logging into your Tech online resources: email, BOSS, Moodle, and Google applications. You will find the time and location of your courses on BOSS, and most professors utilize Moodle to share course content. Every student is also given a Google account (if your tech email is abc123@latech.edu, then your Google account will be abc123@email.latech.edu), which comes with a Google drive.

Getting Through Your First Quarter

No matter what program you are in, your first quarter should consist of finding an advisor and creating a Plan of Study, which should be submitted online (forms.latech.edu) before the end of the quarter. Print out the curriculum to your program (all can be found online) and talk to your advisor about the specific courses you should take to both meet program requirements and adequately explore your interests.

If you have not yet given the Graduate School your official transcripts from previously attended schools, start this process immediately as it *has to be completed before the quarter ends*.

PhD and MS Thesis Students: The advisor you are given at the start of the quarter can be changed, so explore your options before making a decision. Finding the right research advisor is extremely influential to your graduate experience. Each has a unique personality and a different set of research interests, and it is important to thoughtfully consider how well you will work with your advisor and their research team. If you entered the program without an assistantship and would like to be a research assistant, find one who has current funding from a grant or contract.

Benchmarks for PhD Students

As a PhD student, you have a lot to complete, so here are some benchmarks to keep in mind to stay on track. Word of caution: Do not register for a written or oral exam unless you are sure you are sure that you are ready to take it. You will be expected to finish it in the quarter you register for it.

During Your 1st Quarter:

- Choose an academic advisor
- Create an online Plan of Study
- Familiarize yourself with the literature related to the research you will be expected to carry out (www.scopus.com and <https://digitalcommons.latech.edu/> are great resources that LA Tech has for this).

Before Your 2nd Year Ends:

- Most coursework should be completed
- Pass the written comprehensive examination.
- Start to make significant progress on your research.
- If your program requires it, have a proposal for your dissertation research written or ready to be written.

Before Your 3rd Year Ends:

- Pass the oral comprehensive examination.
- Have major progress on your research, ideally ready to write and/or publish one or more journal articles.
- Have a good idea of what you will need to accomplish for your dissertation within the next two to three years.

Graduate Assistantships

MS Students: Assistantship covers one month out of each quarter at 10 hours a week for a stipend of \$300, the out of state fee waiver will be applied. Students can seek out other campus employment as long as the maximum combined hours worked does not exceed 20 hours a week.

TA vs. RA: Teaching assistants (TAs) work for the college (COES) and are assigned a work supervisor by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Research assistants (RAs) work for their research advisor and are usually paid through a grant. Whether you are a TA or an RA, you should consult with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies if you are having issues with your work supervisor/advisor. *TAs in research related degrees (PhD and MS Thesis/Practicum students) still need to carry out research to get a degree.*

Workday: When HR has completed the hiring process, they will send you an email to complete your onboarding on Workday. You can access payslips, timesheets and other relevant information there. Moodle has a section dedicated to Graduate Student functions.

Timesheets: These must be submitted bi-weekly through Workday. Detailed instructions can be found on Moodle. You cannot work during a holiday, and you can only work the amount of hours stated on your award letter (not more). You should only enter absences taken.

Traveling. You must **physically** remain in Ruston on the days you have been appointed to work. If you travel outside of Ruston for more than a couple days (losing more hours than you can make up), you will not get paid for that time, and you will have to notify the Graduate Studies Office. If you are traveling out of the country, you will have to fill out the Traveling on an Assistantship Form, which you can obtain, fill out, and submit in the Graduate Studies Office.

Academic Status

As a graduate student, you were admitted unconditionally or conditionally, and this status may change throughout the course of your education, depending on your academic performance and conduct. It is important to note: your status must be unconditional in order to graduate. Also, some types of financial aid require you to be unconditional in order to receive it.

Unconditional Status: To maintain an unconditional status, you must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. If your GPA falls below 3.0, you will be on academic probation and will be given two additional quarters to restore your GPA. If you are unsuccessful in restoring your GPA, you will be dropped to post baccalaureate status. Also, you cannot earn a grade lower than a B on academic probation or else you will automatically be dropped to post baccalaureate status.

Conditional Status: If you were admitted to a graduate program conditionally, you must meet the conditions within the first 9 credit hours earned, and you must have a GPA of 3.0 or above. Students with a conditional status are not eligible for academic probation. If you earn a grade lower than a “C” while on conditional status, or if you fail to meet the previously stated requirements, you will be dropped to post baccalaureate status.

Post Baccalaureate Status: Students in post baccalaureate status are not allowed to hold a graduate assistantship or take courses for graduate status. You will be notified at the end of the quarter if you are dropped to post baccalaureate status.

Appealing Status: Within two weeks of your change in status to post baccalaureate, you can appeal the decision. To do this, submit an online form at: https://forms.latech.edu/grad_appeals/.

Student Course Load and Registration

Part-Time Vs. Full-Time. A student taking 6 or more semester credit hours (SCH) is considered full-time, and a student taking anything less than 6 SCH is considered part-time. If you are on an assistantship, you must be a full-time student, and this must be reflected on the plan of study. In the summer, a graduate assistant may be able to take only 3 SCH if, and only if, they had been registered as full-time in Spring and are pre-registered as full-time for Fall. *For international students on F-1 visas, going below full-time may result in loss of status.*

Maximum Course Load. Generally, the maximum graduate credit course load is 12 hours, but only 9 of those hours can be from 500- and 600-level courses. If you are on an assistantship, the maximum credit course load is 9 credit hours. In special circumstances, you can request the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies to approve taking more hours.

Research Thesis/Dissertation Courses. If you are a MS student on the thesis track, you will need to take a research thesis course: make sure the course is a 500-level course (e.g. ENGR 551), not a 600- or 700-level course. If you are a PhD student, make sure you are taking a 600-level research dissertation course (e.g. ENGR 651) up until you pass your oral qualifying examination. After passing your oral, make sure to take the 700-level research dissertation course (e.g. ENGR 751).

Transfer Credit. MS students are allowed to transfer $\frac{1}{3}$ of required SCH from a regionally accredited university for degree credit, as long as the student earned a “B” or higher in the courses transferred. For PhD students, a majority of the total credits required for their degree must be earned at LA Tech. If you wish to transfer courses, talk to your advisor about starting the process.

Plan of Study

When you enter a new graduate program, a Plan of Study will need to be submitted before your first quarter ends, and it needs to be created online at https://forms.latech.edu/plan_of_study/. A Plan of Study is needed for each program you are in, and you should speak with your academic advisor about the curriculum for your program before creating one. Your Program Coordinator is another great resource if you're trying to figure out course substitutions or transfers.

When you are ready to create an original or revised plan of study, make sure to have your curriculum sheet available for reference. If this is not done in the first quarter, you will not be allowed to register for classes in the second quarter.

Students should update their plan of study after written and oral exams are taken.

Final Plan of Study. You will need to submit a final Plan of Study the quarter you are expecting to graduate. You will only need to list the courses you took in order to meet program requirements, and everything (i.e. letter grades, term periods, etc.) will need to be filled in. You will not be able to list any courses where you earned a grade lower than a "C", and you can only list two "C"s.

Readmission

If you want to enroll in courses after having been absent for one quarter (not including summer), you will have to submit a "Readmit" application online, but you will not have to pay a processing fee. If you want to enroll in courses after having been absent for more than one quarter (not including summer), you will need to submit a "Readmit" application online, and you will have to pay a processing fee. You must be in good academic standing in order to apply for readmission, and if you are not, you will have to successfully appeal for reinstatement first.

Non-Degree Programs

FYI: A student in a graduate non-degree program is not eligible for graduate academic probation and must maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 or they will be dropped from a graduate status to a post-baccalaureate status.

Graduate Certificate Programs. The College of Engineering and Science offers three graduate certificate programs (Six Sigma Green Belt, Six Sigma Black Belt, and Communication Systems), but one of them (Communication Systems) is for CenturyLink employees only.

Life-Long Learning (LLL). In this program, there is no limit to the number of courses students may take, but if they choose to enter a graduate program, a maximum of 12 credit hours of coursework earned in the LLL program can be applied towards degree requirements.

Transient. Students admitted to a graduate program at another institution can earn a maximum of 12 credit hours from Tech for the sake of transferring. Transient admission is good for only one quarter, and students will need to reapply for subsequent quarters.

Concurrent Baccalaureate and Master's Program Enrollment

Undergraduate seniors enrolled in a regionally accredited institution who have at least a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.2, and a maximum of 30 credit hours left before degree completion, can apply for concurrent enrollment (ask Graduate School how to apply). While concurrently enrolled, the student must maintain good academic standing in both programs or they will be dropped from the Master's program. After graduating from their baccalaureate program, the student will need to reapply (new application) to their Master's program, but as a regular graduate student.

A Checklist for Graduation

Start preparing for graduation a quarter in advance. Here is a list to follow:

- ❑ A quarter before graduation, make sure the degree you wish to graduate in is listed as your primary degree on BOSS (go to the Graduate Studies Office to double check).
- ❑ At the beginning of the quarter, register for Graduation by completing the online form and having it signed by you and the Program Coordinator and bring it to the graduate studies office. <https://www.latech.edu/documents/2018/07/graduation-application-form.pdf/>
- ❑ If you are a PhD or MS thesis student, it is best to defend your PhD/Thesis prior to the quarter in which you want to graduate (or in the very beginning of the quarter).
- ❑ Make sure your GPA is higher than or equal to a 3.0. If it is not, you will not be able to graduate.
- ❑ If you have not yet finished your dissertation/thesis, you must enroll in at least 3 SCH of a research thesis/dissertation course.
- ❑ Use the Thesis/Dissertation Routing form online when you submit your work. It can be found at <https://forms.latech.edu/>.
- ❑ At the beginning of your final quarter, create a “final” Plan of Study where you list ONLY the courses you took to meet the program’s requirements. Make sure to include the grades you received and the term you took each course. Do not include any courses where you received a “D”, and do not include more than two courses where you made a “C”. If you are a PhD student, make sure to include GS-form 11.
- ❑ In order to graduate, you must not have any incomplete grades. Check your transcripts, and if you have any grades of “I”, “IA”, “IB”, “IC”, or “ID”, ask the professor of the course to change it to a final grade. If you have not completed your thesis/dissertation, and you are expecting to complete it the quarter you graduate, your research courses for your program are allowed to remain incomplete until you finish the course.

For More Information...

Call the Graduate Studies Office at 318-257-4314.

Check out the Graduate Studies website:

<https://coes.latech.edu/graduate-programs/>



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