

Office of Graduate Studies

Degree Plans Fact Sheet

Each graduate student must submit an official degree plan to the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) for approval. The degree plan formally declares your degree objective, the membership of your advisory committee, and the specific courses that you will be required to complete as part of your degree program. You will develop your proposed degree plan in consultation with your advisory committee. The degree plan must be approved by your advisory committee members, your department head and, if applicable, your intercollegiate faculty chairperson.

Completed degree plans must be submitted to OGS according to the following regulation with the student meeting whichever of these deadlines falls earliest:

- *following the deadline imposed by the student's college or interdisciplinary degree program.*
- *no later than 90 days prior to the date of the final oral examination or thesis defense for master's students or 90 days prior to the date of the preliminary examination for doctoral students*
- *according to deadlines published in the OGS calendar each semester for graduation that semester.*

The calendar may be found at: <<http://ogs.tamu.edu/OGS/currentCalendars.htm>>.

Specific rules and limitations on course work and committee membership can be found in the Texas A&M University *Graduate Catalog*. Once a degree plan is approved by OGS, changes in course work or committee membership may be requested by petition to OGS. "Petition Forms" may be downloaded from the OGS homepage. Changes of major, degree or department must be requested by submitting a petition and/or a new degree plan/course work petition.

Degree Plan Checklist

Did you remember to:

- Provide your correct Student Identification Number?*
- Have all required transcripts sent to the Office of Graduate Admissions?*
- Use official course numbers and department abbreviations?*
- Confirm eligibility of transfer work?*
- Confirm that all committee members are members of the Graduate Faculty?*
- Provide correct names and departmental affiliations of committee members?*
- Make sure any special appointments have been approved or that the proper paperwork is sent to OGS along with the degree plan?*
- Observe all requirements and limitations on use of course work, outlined in the Graduate Catalog?*

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Q&A

- Q:** When should I submit my degree plan?
- A:** Prior to the deadline imposed by the student's college, or interdisciplinary degree program, if applicable, and no later than 90 days prior to the date of the final exam (Masters), or the preliminary exam (Doctoral), or by the deadline on the OGS calendar.
- Q:** *May I submit my degree plan after the published deadline?*
- A:** Students are advised to meet the deadlines that apply to them. Failure to do so may jeopardize approval for the student to graduate at the end of the desired semester.
- Q:** *How long does it normally take for OGS to process degree plans?*
- A:** The processing time depends on when the degree plan is submitted. If the degree plan is submitted near the published deadline for the semester, processing can take 6 to 8 weeks. Degree plans submitted at other times during the semester can be processed in 2 to 4 weeks.
- Q:** *How many hours are needed on my degree plan?*
- A:** Specific requirements vary by degree. Generally, master's non-thesis-option students must carry 36 hours and master's thesis-option students must carry 32 hours for the MS, and 30 hours for the MA, MCS and MEN. Students should check the Graduate Catalog for their specific hour requirements. Doctoral students must carry 96 hours if they do not have a master's degree, and they must carry 64 hours if they have a master's degree. See the *Graduate Catalog* for additional information.
- Q:** *How should I list courses on my degree plan: alphabetically or by course number?*
- A:** As long as your ordering system is uniform, you may use either system.
- Q:** *How many committee members do I need?*
- A:** Advisory committees for master's degrees must have at least three members, and advisory committees for doctoral degrees must have at least four members. Special appointments to your committee are not included in this count. Your chairperson must be from your department or from your intercollegiate faculty (if applicable), and you must have at least one member from outside of your department.
- In some departments the student's committee will be comprised of the Graduate Program Director. Your department can tell you which type of committee applies to you.
- Q:** *What do I need to do if changes are needed AFTER my degree plan has been approved?*
- A:** Once your degree plan has been approved, any changes must be requested by submitting the appropriate OGS Petition Form. Your signature together with those of your committee, department head and intercollegiate faculty chair (if applicable) are required on the petition.
- Q:** *If one of my committee members is out of town, can someone else sign the degree plan for him or her?*
- A:** Yes, any authorized signer for that member's department or intercollegiate program may sign.
- Q:** *Where can I go for help in completing my degree plan?*
- A:** Start with your graduate advisor in your department. The *Graduate Catalog* and a copy of your transcript are also useful. You may access the *Graduate Student Handbook* on the Internet: <http://ogs.tamu.edu/OGS/currentGraduateHandbook.htm>. If you still have questions, call the OGS staff at (979) 845-3631 or e-mail them at ogs@tamu.edu.
- Q:** *Why is it important to have deadlines for the submission of degree plans?*
- A:** The degree plan is to be a "plan" of courses the student and advisory committee have selected to fulfill the degree requirements. The plan should be formulated early in the student's graduate career and not serve as a report of courses taken.