

**Graduate Student Handbook:
Department of Forensic & Investigative Science
2025-2026**

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1. Introduction

The WVU Graduate/Professional Catalog is available online at:
<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/>

The Graduate/Professional Catalog includes West Virginia University (WVU) rules and policies concerning graduate education and information about students' rights and responsibilities. These rules and policies apply to all students in the Forensic & Investigative Science program, unless a rule or policy is superseded by a more stringent rule or policy of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences (ECAS) or the Department of Forensic & Investigative Science (FIS) (described in this Handbook). Any deadlines in this Handbook that fall on a weekend or University holiday will automatically convert to the next date the University is open.

1.1. Overview of Programs & Department

The Department of Forensic & Investigative Science at WVU is nationally known for the excellent education it delivers to students in preparing them to be forensic professionals. With research-active faculty, a student centric philosophy, a contemporary curriculum, world-class equipment and facilities—including state-of-the-art research laboratories, a five-building crime scene complex, and a ballistics laboratory—students in FIS receive a unique and hands-on learning experience.

The Master of Science (MS) degree in Forensic & Investigative Science is a research-oriented degree program that also has a rigorous coursework requirement. The MS degree program is accredited by the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission ([FEPAC](#)) of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences ([AAFS](#)).

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Forensic Science elevates WVU's stature in forensic science research and education from one of national excellence to one of international prominence. The major emphasis of the PhD program is the development and completion of a research project that involves many advanced techniques and concepts at the frontiers of the discipline, culminating in an oral defense of the PhD dissertation. Graduates of the PhD program are suited to laboratory leadership positions and careers in research as college professors or government researchers e.g., with FBI, DEA, ATF, FDA, NIST.

2. Admission

2.1. Introduction

Admission to the Master of Science in Forensic & Investigative Science and the PhD in Forensic Science is competitive. Depending on resources, the MS Program typically admits 5-10 students per year and the PhD program typically admits 2-4 students per year.

2.2. English

The University requires international students for whom English is not a native language to submit the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). WVU accepts either the TOEFL or the IELTS for this purpose. WVU's minimum score requirements for English proficiency are:

- Academic [IELTS](#): 6.5
- [TOEFL](#) IBT: 79 (WVU accepts MyBest scores)
- [PTE](#) Academic: 53
- [Duolingo](#) English Test: 105

Please see: Office of Admissions–English Language Proficiency for more information. <https://admissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/international-students>.

The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies manages the application and admission process and serves as the point of contact for all graduate students in the department.

2.3. Minimum Requirements for Admission to the M.S. Program

The application process is online. Applicants must submit their University Graduate Application at: <https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/>

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree in a natural science, forensic science, or equivalent, which includes *at least* 1 year of the following courses:

- Fundamentals of Chemistry (inclusive of laboratories)
- Organic Chemistry (inclusive of laboratories)
- Biology (inclusive of laboratories)
- Physics (inclusive of laboratories)
- Calculus I and II

In addition to the above course requirements, students must:

- submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores (taken within the last 5 years) with a score of 300 or better (combined verbal and quantitative reasoning);
- possess a GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale;

- provide two letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with the student's academic record and potential for graduate study;
- submit a writing sample between 3-6 pages. The writing sample may be one or more of the following:
 - a peer-reviewed publication where the applicant is the lead author (published, accepted, or in-press);
 - an honors thesis, research report, or capstone report in which the applicant is the sole author. The report may be converted to a publication-ready document, conforming to a preprint to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (such as JFS or FSI), or to a white paper (a maximum length of 6 pages, single-spaced);
 - an essay (single-spaced Times New Roman, 12-point font) discussing one of the following statements:
 - “Forensic science will survive criticism about its reliability.”
 - “The role of NIST OSAC in strengthening forensic practice.”
 - “Ways in which standards approved by the NIST OSAC organization have helped to strengthen the practice of forensic science.”
 - “Recent developments in error rates or uncertainty in any chosen forensic science domain.”
 - “Forensic laboratories would benefit from reinforcing the silos of forensic science.”

Upon receipt and evaluation of the application package, candidates will be screened for suitability with existing faculty and resources. Promising candidates will be invited for an interview with one or more members of the Graduate Studies Committee. The interview process establishes mutual compatibility between the applicant and the faculty, WVU, and Morgantown. Successful candidates will receive an offer letter from the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies that will identify the faculty member with whom the candidate is likely to work along with any financial commitments, such as graduate teaching/research assistantships.

2.4. Minimum Requirements for Admission to the PhD Program

The PhD program’s course content is based on the successful completion of the core curriculum for the Department’s MS program. The PhD program also includes an oral qualifying examination, a dissertation proposal presentation, and an oral defense of the dissertation.

Students who have completed an MS at another institution may be eligible to enter the PhD program directly. Their coursework will be evaluated against that of WVU’s program, and each student will be required to complete course deficiencies as part of his/her/their course of study under the PhD program, in addition to the PhD specific requirements provided below.

The application process is online. Applicants must submit their University Graduate Application at: <https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/>

The student works with the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies to ensure that the application packet is complete. The Department's Graduate Studies Committee evaluates each application and invites potential students for an interview.

Individuals applying for admission must:

- submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores (taken within the last 5 years) with a score of 300 or better (combined verbal and quantitative reasoning);
- possess a GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale;
- provide three letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with the student's academic record and potential for graduate study;
- submit a research writing sample. The writing sample may be one or more of the following:
 - a peer-reviewed publication, where the student is the lead author (published, accepted, or in-press);
 - thesis research converted to a publication-ready document, conforming to a preprint to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (such as JFS or FSI), including appropriate subsections.;
 - the student's thesis research (or research proposal) converted to a white paper (maximum length of 6 pages, single-spaced);
 - an undergraduate research project report converted to a white paper (maximum length of 6 pages, single-spaced).

Upon receipt and evaluation of the application package, candidates will be screened for suitability with existing faculty and resources. Promising candidates will be invited for an interview with one or more members of the Graduate Studies Committee. The interview process establishes mutual compatibility between the applicant and the faculty, WVU, and Morgantown. Successful candidates will receive an offer letter from the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies that will identify the faculty member with whom the candidate is likely to work along with any financial commitments, such as graduate teaching/research assistantships.

2.5. Credit Requirements for Graduation

2.5.1. Master of Science Program

Graduate students in the MS program must successfully complete a minimum of 40 hours of credit, including a research-based thesis. Each student must apply 6 hours of research credit toward the 40-hour requirement; the remaining 34 hours of credit must be earned in graduate-level courses in forensic science, chemistry, toxicology, biology or other approved courses at the 400 level or above. A maximum of 40% of a student's coursework may be at the 400 level. Courses are approved by the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies upon recommendation from the student's research advisor and research committee.

2.5.2. MS Required Courses (minimum of 42 hrs)

Each student is required to complete the MS program's core courses (or equivalents), with a grade of C or better. Please visit the site below for the current curriculum:

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/forensicandinvestigativescience/ms/>

2.5.3. PhD Program

Graduate students in the PhD program must successfully complete a minimum of 70 credit hours, including a research-based dissertation. Each student may apply a maximum of 30 credit hours of research toward the 70-hour requirement; the remaining 40 credit hours must be earned in graduate-level courses in forensic science, chemistry, toxicology, biology, or other approved courses at the 400 level or above. A maximum of 40% of a student's coursework may be at the 400 level. Courses are approved by the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies upon recommendation from the student's research advisor.

The PhD builds upon the extensive coursework requirements of the department's MS program but provides a more enriching research experience. The PhD coursework provides the foundation for students to develop the skills and experience required to become future leaders and educators in forensic science. The PhD experience offers a more detailed understanding of the discipline, analytical and statistical skill development, and the development of effective written and oral communication skills.

2.5.4. PhD Required Courses (minimum of 70 hrs)

Each student is required to complete the MS program's core courses (or equivalents), with a grade of C or better. This is supplemented by specific PhD-level courses discussing research design and graduate seminar credits. Please visit the link below for the current curriculum:

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/forensicandinvestigativescience/phd/>

In addition to the MS program's courses and the PhD-specific courses, at least 30 hours of PhD-level research and a PhD-level research-based dissertation are required. Each student must earn a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better with no grade less than a C and satisfactory evaluations in research.

Students who have completed an MS at another institution may be eligible to enter the PhD program directly; their course work will be evaluated against that of WVU's program, and each student will be required to complete course deficiencies as part of his/her/their course of study under the PhD program, and in addition to the PhD requirements previously listed. A record of the required and equivalent courses will be entered into the student's Plan of Study.

2.5.5. Course Grades

2.5.5.1. Incomplete (I)

Conditions under which the grade of “I” is given are described in the WVU Graduate/Professional Catalog:

http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/advising_and_evaluation/#gradestext

The Catalog also explains how grades of “I” affect a student’s GPA and graduation status. The Office of the University Registrar assigns the grade of “NR” when no grade is reported by the course instructor. Faculty must modify grades of “NR” and “I” through STAR according to university policy.

2.5.5.2. Grades D or F

A grade of D or F in any course taken by a graduate student is unsatisfactory and will lead to placing the student on probation. A total of two grades of D or F may lead to dismissal from the program. Courses with a grade of D or F do not count toward graduation but are calculated in the student’s GPA, so such a grade in any course in the Plan of Study must be remediated.

Also note that students will be required to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0, and a 3.0 in coursework applied to the graduate program, to remain in good standing within the program.

2.5.5.3. Grading for Research Credits

Research credits are graded as satisfactory, unsatisfactory, or incomplete. Students must earn a satisfactory rating in research to remain in good standing with the program. A total of two unsatisfactory ratings in research may lead to dismissal from the program.

2.6. Research Requirements for MS Program

Students must successfully complete the following requirements: (1) convene a research committee; (2) prepare a written thesis proposal; (3) complete an oral proposal defense; (4) write a full research thesis; and (5) complete an oral thesis defense. Students are expected to enroll in research during the summer months.

2.6.1. Research Committee

A research thesis Chair is typically identified when students are offered admittance into the program. If a student is not already successfully working with a research group or wishes to change research topics, he/she/they must hold informal discussions with relevant faculty members to determine project feasibility. The agreed-upon research project should be in an area of interest to both the student and the faculty member. If a student cannot secure a research group/project, he or she is

in jeopardy of being dismissed from the program based on a lack of forward progress in research. Research progress is typically assessed by graduate faculty at the end of every academic semester and, when possible, the summer semester.

2.6.1.1. Establishing a Committee Chair and a Plan of Study

The first step in the development of a research/thesis project is for the student to identify a suitable committee Chair and prepare a working topic for his/her/their thesis. Next, the student performs a literature review and develops a research question and rationale, which should be submitted to his/her/their committee Chair. The student then works with the committee Chair to identify suitable committee members. The student is ultimately responsible for establishing a committee. The Plan of Study Form should be completed and submitted to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies before the end of the first semester. This date will be determined by the Eberly College deadlines for graduation (last day to hold a defense). These dates will be distributed to the students by the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies at the start of every semester, and as soon as they are available from the Eberly College.

Failure to complete the Plan of Study by the end of the first semester may result in the student being placed on probation. Students are also required to defend their research proposal in a public forum, before their committee, and before the end of the second semester. Failure to defend in a timely manner may lead to probation or dismissal.

2.6.1.2. Committee Composition

The committee will consist of at least three members. The Chair must be a regular member of the graduate faculty at WVU in the FIS program. This will include adjuncts within the Department who are members of the Graduate Faculty. Please visit the following link to review faculty status:

[Graduate Faculty Members List | Graduate Education and Life | West Virginia University \(wvu.edu\)](#).

Non-tenure track FIS faculty may serve as Chair if he/she/they are a regular member of the graduate faculty. Only one member may not be a member of the graduate faculty. [Please see the graduate catalog for rules regarding the composition of committees](#). One member must be from outside the Department of Forensic & Investigative Science, as per FEPAC guidelines.

2.6.1.3. Committee Substitutions

Substitution is appropriate only if a faculty member resigns, will be on leave at the time the committee meetings are scheduled or is unable to be present at the prospectus meeting or final defense. Requests for substitution require formal action and must be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the

proposal or defense meeting. Stipulations regarding substitutions are available in the WVU [Graduate/Professional Catalog](#). The student and his/her/their committee Chair first must discuss potential substitutions and then seek written approval of the change in committee membership. If any changes in committee membership beyond substituting one committee member are necessary, a new committee must be formed.

A request for substitution of a committee member should take the form of a memo from the student's advisor addressed to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Eberly College (or Dean's designee). The request should indicate the reason for the change and indicate the graduate faculty status of the substitute faculty member. The student should sign the request, and spaces should be provided for signatures from the Chair of the Committee, the substitute faculty member, the original faculty member, the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies, and the Associate Dean (or Dean's designee). After obtaining original and substitute faculty signatures, the student's PI should submit the request to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies, who will verify and sign the before submitting to the Dean's office for approval.

If the Chair of a committee leaves the University, but is willing to complete service on the committee, he/she/they may mentor the student to completion of the defense, provided at least one co-Chair of the committee is a full-time employee of WVU with regular graduate faculty status at the time of the defense. If he/she/they do not agree to complete service on the committee, the committee may be reorganized to meet all previously stated guidelines. Normally, one of the other committee members will be willing to take on the role of Chair, although another faculty member with graduate faculty status may be asked to serve. A memo describing these changes, with appropriate approval signatures as described above, must be submitted.

For more information on committee composition visit:
[Degree Regulations < West Virginia University](#)

2.6.2. Research Proposal

After tentative approval of the research question, each student must prepare a full research proposal and submit it to the Chair of his/her/their research committee for review and approval. The research proposal aims to clearly articulate the research goals and objectives of the student's thesis, including an experimental procedure, data analysis, and interpretation strategy that is scientifically sound and likely to help elucidate the research question(s) under investigation. The Chair has a responsibility to help the student devise an experimental approach that will lead to scientifically valid, unambiguous, and statistically meaningful results.

Given the significance of the proposal, the initial draft will likely require one or more revisions before being approved. The student must coordinate with his/her/their committee Chair to ensure that all parties know the projected timeline to complete and submit proposal drafts. The student should anticipate that a full draft review will take a *minimum* of two weeks to complete, but the time required for a review will be highly dependent on the date when a student submits a draft for review and the quality of the document. As such, the student must coordinate and communicate with his/her/their committee Chair at least one month in advance of any deadline (personal or University-stipulated) to avoid unforeseen scheduling obstacles.

Unless given express written permission, a student may only circulate his/her/their proposal to another committee member once the draft has been approved by his/her/their Chair. Once approved, the document can be forwarded to all other committee members, and a proposal defense date can be scheduled in consultation with the committee. Again, when scheduling this meeting, the student should anticipate that the committee will need at least two weeks to review the Chair-approved draft. However, there is no guarantee that all parties will be equally available, and it is the student's responsibility to communicate with his/her/their committee members at least one month in advance of any submission and anticipated meeting date to ensure availability.

The proposal should be completed and defended before the Eberly College Graduation deadline (the last day to hold a defense) of the second semester of study. The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies will distribute these dates to the students as soon as they are available from the College. The absolute last day to hold a proposal defense is May 15th for the spring semester and December 15th for the fall semester. If required activities are not completed by the prescribed date, the student may be placed on probation.

2.6.2.1. Scope and Length

The proposal should describe the research problem in sufficient depth and breadth so that the study's rationale is clear to the committee members. The methods should be presented in sufficient detail that the procedures of the research could be replicated on the basis of the proposal alone. In most cases, the proposal document will be at most 25 pages of text, excluding cover page, references, and supporting materials. The student should check with his/her/their Chair and committee to determine if they prefer a brief introduction in the proposal that will be expanded for the final document or if they prefer a complete introduction that will require minimal modifications for the final thesis.

The proposal, along with the list of changes requested by the committee at the proposal defense meeting, is a formal agreement between the student and the committee as to what will constitute the thesis project.

The proposal shall include the following items and chapters (at a minimum):

- Title
- Name of student
- List of committee members
- Introduction: including the significance of the work and how the research fills a research "gap"
- Literature survey describing the historical and current state of knowledge/research in the area
- Methods/experimental design
- Proposed data analysis, including statistical methods as appropriate
- Expected deliverables: e.g., tables, graphs, plots, etc. Be specific!
- Timeline
- Detailed budget
- References

2.6.3. Proposal Defense

After the committee Chair approves the proposal, the student shall provide a hard-copy or electronic copy of the document to each of the other committee members in preparation for scheduling a defense.

2.6.3.1. Arrangements

The student is responsible for scheduling a room and making the necessary arrangements for audio-visual equipment needed for the proposal defense meeting. Departmental guidelines preclude students from providing food or beverages at the proposal defense meeting.

2.6.3.2. Scheduling

When scheduling defenses, allow approximately two hours. Details concerning the scheduling of a defense are provided in the Graduate Catalog, including tentative pre-approval of any documents:

[Degree Regulations < West Virginia University](#)

For a proposal, each committee member must receive the document at least two weeks before the agreed upon proposal defense date. For the defense of research, such as a thesis or dissertation defense, the deadline is expanded to at least four weeks. In other words, the committee must be provided up to two weeks to tentatively approve the written document before the defense can be scheduled/convened. After the committee provides tentative approval of the document, the student can schedule a defense date no sooner than two weeks after receiving tentative approval.

Because most faculty in the Department of Forensic & Investigative Science are appointed on contracts that require service from mid-August to mid-May of the

calendar year, students have no claim on faculty members' time from mid-May through mid-August. Committee meetings may be convened in the summer only if all committee members agree. Committee meetings may only be scheduled on days when the Department of Forensic & Investigative Science is open for business (*i.e.*, meetings may not take place on weekends or University holidays). No constraints are placed on the time of day for a meeting, but all committee members must agree to both the date and time of the meeting. One committee member may participate by phone/web, but this may not be the committee Chair.

2.6.3.3. Announcement

When an approved proposal defense date has been set, the student must prepare a one-page announcement of the scheduled meeting. This document must be approved by the committee Chair, and shall include, at minimum, the research title, student name, committee members, date and location of the proposal defense meeting, and a ~3 paragraph abstract describing the work. A PDF of this document must be emailed to the Department Chair, the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies, the Chair of the Committee, all Departmental Faculty, and all students enrolled in the Graduate Seminar (FIS 696/796), at least one week in advance of the scheduled proposal defense meeting date.

In addition to the emailed soft/electronic copy, the student must:

- Print (on colored paper) and post 10 copies of the announcement in each of the six designated bulletin boards in OGH¹ (two on each floor) one week in advance of the defense date.
- Remove all copies of the announcement within 24 hours after the proposal defense meeting.

If a student fails to announce a proposal defense by the required deadlines, and a valid complaint is filed to the student's PI or the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies, the student could be required to reschedule the defense to a date that allows at least seven days of public notice.

2.6.3.4. Proposal Defense Meeting

The student and all members of the committee must be present at the proposal defense meeting.

The meeting must be adjourned if any committee member is absent. The presentation part of the proposal defense meeting is open to the public. However, the remainder of the meeting will be closed to those not on the committee. The proposal defense meeting may be postponed or canceled prior to the meeting if the majority of the committee agrees that the proposal defense is insufficiently developed for the proposal defense meeting to take place.

¹ OGH = Oglebay Hall

The proposal defense meeting consists of a brief presentation by the student followed by a discussion of the proposal by the committee and the student. The student should assume that the committee members have read the written proposal document, and therefore, the presentation should be no more than 30 minutes long, and devoted primarily to methods, anticipated data analysis, and deliverables. The rest of the meeting should be dedicated to discussion and questions. The student will be asked to leave the room at the end of the meeting, at which point the committee members decide the outcome of the proposal defense meeting.

2.6.3.5. Proposal Defense Outcome

The outcome of the proposal defense meeting can be pass, fail, or pass with revisions. Decisions apply to the oral presentation, as well as the document but need not be consistent. For example, a student can pass the oral proposal but be asked to provide revisions to the document. This outcome must be documented using the Thesis/Dissertation Oral Proposal Form. The form can be obtained from the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. The student is responsible for ensuring its completeness (requires signatures from all committee members) and returning it to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies within 48 hours of the proposal defense.

If the document or presentation is passed but requires revisions, the student must make a list of the required/intended revisions/changes and submit the list (via e-mail) to all committee members within one week following the proposal defense meeting. The Chair of the Committee is responsible for ensuring that the list is complete (consulting with other committee members as appropriate). When all revisions/changes have been made and accepted by the committee, the student will submit a second Thesis/Dissertation Oral Proposal Form that reflects his/her/their updated status. This form requires signatures from all committee members, and the student's status will not be updated until the second form is submitted to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies.

If the student fails the oral or written document, he or she may elect to undertake major revisions to the presentation, and/or the document, and begin the entire cycle of proposing again.

2.6.4. Writing of Thesis

Depending on the nature of the research and subsequent publications, the student should consult with his/her/their committee Chair regarding the format and required sections/chapters for the final thesis document. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the format meets the requirements of the College and University libraries. Please visit <https://etd.lib.wvu.edu> for more details.

2.6.5. Publication in Lieu of a Thesis

The thesis submission process must follow the ECAS guidelines, and the thesis structure and content can follow one of the following options:

- a. A copy of the published manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal. If the paper is published, the student must follow the journal citation and copyright policies and add the respective statement to the thesis.
- b. A copy of a manuscript submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. The student must submit proof of submission to the committee members, such as a confirmation email from the publisher.
- c. A copy of a publication-ready manuscript following the format of a peer-reviewed journal. The student must specify to the committee members what journal format they followed.

Note 1: A minimum of one manuscript (publication-ready, submitted, and/or accepted) is required. If the student has published more than one article, all may be included in the thesis with their respective copyright statements.

Note 2: Examples of peer-reviewed journals include, but are not limited to the following: *AFTE, Journal of Forensic Sciences, Forensic Science International, Science and Justice, Forensic Chemistry, Journal of Chemometrics, Spectrochimica Acta Part B, Analyst, Analytical Methods, Analytical Chemistry, Journal of Analytical Atomic Spectroscopy, Talanta, Journal of American Society of Mass Spectrometry, Rapid Communications in Mass Spectrometry, Journal of Analytical Toxicology, Journal of Applied Toxicology, International Journal of Mass Spectrometry, Journal of Forensic Identification.*

Note 3: The student must adhere to the journal format and content policies, including page limits. Any supplemental material accompanying the manuscript must also be submitted as an appendix to the thesis.

2.6.6. Oral Defense of Thesis

Steps regarding the submission of the thesis and scheduling of the final defense are as follows (note that a student must be enrolled in research in the semester they wish to defend, submit his/her/their thesis, and graduate):

- The Chair of research committee reviews and accepts the final draft of the thesis;
- Upon approval from the committee Chair, the student submits the final draft to the remainder of the research committee, providing a minimum of two weeks for review;
- After the committee provides tentative approval of the document, the student can schedule a defense date no sooner than two weeks after receiving tentative approval.
- Once the defense date is scheduled, the student's advisor must immediately file a Defense Date Declaration Form to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate

Studies, who will then forward the form to Eberly College. The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences must receive the Defense Date Declaration Form at least two weeks before the defense date, so the student's advisor should provide at least 48-hrs for the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies to forward the form in time to meet the two-week deadline:

[Graduation Forms and Processes | Eberly College of Arts and Sciences | West Virginia University](#)

- Email and post an announcement of the final defense, following the same guidelines outlined for preparing a proposal defense. Each term the Graduation Deadlines will be emailed to the students once received from the College.

Students should request room reservations with the Department's administrative assistant and/or facilities director and plan for a 30-45-minute oral presentation followed by a public Q&A session and a closed-door Q&A session with their committee. The student must successfully defend his/her/their research question(s), methodology, data analysis, and conclusions.

In addition to defending questions directly related to the research and thesis, students will be expected to provide and defend answers to any additional forensic-science-based questions asked by the committee. This examination evaluates the student's knowledge base, critical thinking skills, and communication skills.

After a successful thesis defense, all committee members will sign the Thesis and Dissertation Oral Defense Form. This form signifies the passing of the oral defense. The student's Chair is responsible for collecting the committee's signatures. The student's Chair should return this form to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies at the conclusion of the defense. The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies will submit the form to the College within two business days of the defense and retain the hard copy in the Department's files. Electronic signatures are permitted.

The written thesis must be submitted to the library according to the deadlines set by the [WVU libraries](#). The Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) must be submitted and accepted by the library to be eligible for graduation in a given term. An ETD form must be signed by all committee members signifying approval of the written thesis prior to submission to the library. No more than one unfavorable vote is permitted.

All students will present their work in a public setting and defend their research with their research committee in a closed setting.

2.6.7. Outcome of Thesis Defense

The thesis committee will determine whether to pass or fail on the oral presentation and the written document. If the thesis still needs to be published, the committee can request that edits be completed prior to acceptance and submission to the University

library. If the thesis has already been published, the committee can ask for additions to be added to the document (as an appendix) prior to acceptance and submission to the University library. Once accepted, the students will submit their thesis to the library following all ECAS guidelines and the formatting described above. If intended for publication, the student should request a suitable embargo period on the publication of the thesis to ensure the eligibility to transfer copyright to a journal publisher.

2.7. Research Requirements for PhD Program

Doctoral students are required to meet the same requirements as the MS Research requirements (section 6), except that progress shall be made towards a PhD dissertation instead of an MS thesis. The research committee composition shall meet the requirements in section (2.6.1.2), except that the committee shall consist of a minimum of four members, and the majority must be WVU faculty. Additional details can be found at:

http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#committeeestext

The Plan of Study should be completed by the end of the first year of study. Students are expected to enroll in research during the summer months. Any deviation must be approved by your PI. If students do not enroll in research in the summer months there may be a delay in meeting benchmarks for graduation.

2.7.1. Defense of Dissertation Proposal

In consultation with the dissertation Chair, the student chooses a dissertation topic and prepares a research proposal with formatting, content, length, and quality suitable for submission to a federal funding agency such as NSF or NIJ. Students begin preparing for the dissertation proposal within 18-months after starting their program but before the end of the second year of study (assuming completion of all required MS coursework). Unless otherwise specified, activities, procedures and requirements for the MS thesis apply to the PhD dissertation (please see section 2.6). Copies of the proposal must be made available to all members of the student's committee; the student should meet with committee members individually after the committee member has read the proposal to seek their input. Students are advised not to work on their dissertation research without approval from all members of their research committee.

With approval of the student's dissertation Chair, an oral defense of the proposed dissertation project is scheduled and open to the public. During the presentation and open-door session, any member of the faculty, student-body or general public may ask questions related to the proposed research. During the subsequent closed door-session, only committee members may ask questions.

If the defense is judged satisfactory, and the student has passed the oral qualifying examination, the student is formally admitted to candidacy. If the defense is judged inadequate, the student's research committee will provide the student with suggestions for improvement and/or alternative paths of study. If the student fails the dissertation proposal defense, he or she must reschedule it within one semester. Students may only repeat the proposal defense once. If the student fails a second time (or fails to initiate a second defense within one semester), the process of dismissing the student from the program is initiated. Note that the two-week gaps between submitting, tentative approval/voting, and scheduling a proposal defense meeting apply to the PhD as discussed for MS thesis research.

The outcome of the oral proposal defense is one of the following:

- 1) Pass with distinction: the proposal defense was exceptional.
- 2) Pass: the proposal defense was satisfactory, and no retake is warranted.
- 3) Pass with revisions: the proposal defense does not need to be repeated, but the same level of knowledge/effort would not lead to a successful dissertation defense. Thus, remediation steps are warranted. Note that this finding must be followed by a list of remediation suggestions prepared by the student's committee Chair and agreed upon by all committee members.
- 4) Fail: the proposal defense is deficient and must be repeated.

2.7.2. Oral Examination Procedure

Doctoral students must pass a comprehensive oral examination in the field of criminalistics to demonstrate his/her/their competency in the discipline.

The comprehensive oral examination is intended to assess each student's broad competency in criminalistics. It also tests the students' oral skills and their ability to think creatively and engage in intellectual discussions with senior colleagues. In forensic science, particularly because of the legal implications of "scientifically collected data," an oral examination is the preferred method of testing the students.

Students should schedule the oral examination before the second year of study ends. PhD students are expected to schedule the oral examination after completing their required coursework. The student will schedule a time and location agreeable to all student examination committee members for administering the oral qualifying examination. Scheduling of the oral examination should be set one month in advance of the proposed date. The duration of the oral examination is typically 2-3 hours but should not exceed 3 hours in total. Students should expect to be tested on material that will evaluate if they fully understand the theories, methods, scientific disciplines, fundamentals, trends, and challenges germane to the forensic profession as a whole.

The oral examination is open to all faculty and students in the Department. Only committee members may ask questions. The oral examination committee is formed from a random selection of two graduate faculty members within the Department of

Forensic and Investigative Science at WVU, and the student's doctoral research committee Chair. Faculty will be drawn from a list of all eligible members within the Department and no less than one month in advance of the proposed examination date.

The examination must be announced via email. The email should include the date, time, location, student name, and the names of the committee members that will be participating in the oral examination. This email should be addressed to the Department Chair, the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies, the Chair of the Committee, all Departmental Faculty, and all students enrolled in the Graduate Seminar (FIS 696/796), at least one week in advance of the scheduled examination date.

2.7.3. Grading

Evaluating the student's answers is the responsibility of the oral examination committee. Before scheduling the examination, the student should communicate with the members of his/her/their oral examination committee about each member's specific expectations. However, the following general evaluation standards exist:

- **Substance:** Is the student knowledgeable and fully informed about the subject in question?
- **Quality:** Are the student's answers clear, logical and well organized? Can the student explain/defend his/her/their comments and respond to questions? The student should not demonstrate any major deficit in understanding in either foundational knowledge or forensic science principles and practice.
- **Confidence:** Has the student demonstrated that he or she can engage in independent scholarship?

The student will receive one of three grades for the examination:

- 1) **Pass with distinction:** the answers and the ensuing discussion are exceptional.
- 2) **Pass:** the answers are satisfactory and no retake is warranted.
- 3) **Fail:** the answers are deficient and the examination must be retaken.

The outcome will be recorded using the Oral Examination Briefing Report. This report must be submitted to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies no more than 48 hours after completion of the examination. If the student fails the examination, the Chair of the student's research committee will provide the student with directions for preparing to retake the examination, and/or alternative paths of study. Students must retake the examination by the end of the following full semester, and the examination can be repeated only once. A student will be notified that they are being placed on academic probation in the semester they fail the examination (unless the failure is resolved before the end of the semester). If a student schedules and fails the examination in any gap-week(s) between semesters (summer/fall, fall/spring, and/or spring/summer) the failure will be considered part of the subsequent semester; he/she/they will be placed on academic probation unless the failure is resolved before the end of the upcoming semester. Please note that students

can only be on probation once (and for a single reason) before dismissal proceedings are initiated. If the student fails a second time (or fails to schedule a second examination within one semester), the process of dismissing the student from the program is initiated.

All members of the committee must play a role in the evaluation process. A majority vote by the members is considered a pass.

The successful completion of the Dissertation Proposal and the Oral Qualifying Exam is the milestone that separates a doctoral student from a doctoral candidate.

See section on doctoral candidacy in the catalog:

http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#requirementstext

See section on time limits:

http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#timelimitstext

See section on enrollment, which touches on the continuous enrollment requirement for doctoral candidates:

http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/advising_and_evaluation/#enrollmenttext

2.7.4. Dissertation

The PhD in forensic science is a research-based degree; therefore, the dissertation requirement ensures that each student has the ability to carry out an independent research project. Each student will work with his/her/their PI and form a research committee of no fewer than four members, including the Chair. The Chair must be from the FIS Department. Each member should be chosen to enhance the quality of the student's research project. At least one but no more than two members of the committee must be from another department. Additional guidelines on doctoral committees can be found in [the graduate catalog](#).

Students are encouraged to use the manuscript model for preparing the results of his/her/their research, which consists of a series of interrelated chapters/papers on a specific topic. The quality and contribution of each chapter/paper should be that of an article published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. Some chapters/papers may actually be published in advance of the final dissertation. In fact, this latter approach is generally preferable because the chapter/paper in question will already have undergone peer review by experts outside the institution. The format for the dissertation should include 1) an introductory chapter that clarifies the theme of the dissertation and objectives, 2) a number of interrelated papers, and 3) a concluding chapter that synthesizes and integrates the papers and proposes ideas for future work.

2.7.5. Oral Defense of Dissertation

When the student's committee accepts the final draft of the dissertation, the oral defense of the dissertation is scheduled and open to the public. For details regarding the timeline and planning of an oral defense of the dissertation, please refer to the steps and procedures for scheduling a thesis defense outlined in section 2.6.3.2 of this document. Reminder: the student must be enrolled in the semester they wish to defend, and the student's Chair must obtain approval of the time, place, and committee members for the defense from the college Dean or designee at least two weeks before the defense date. If the defense is judged inadequate (note that possible outcomes are pass with distinction, pass, or fail), a repeat of the defense may be scheduled only with approval from the college/school Dean or designee.

Additional information on defenses can be found in [the graduate catalog](#).

2.8. Academic Requirements for Maintenance & Graduation

Students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0, and a minimum GPA of 3.0 in coursework applied to the graduate program. A minimum grade of C must be earned in coursework applied to the graduate program.

Students who fail to maintain a 3.0 GPA in all prescribed coursework and chosen electives will be placed on academic probation. The student will have one academic semester (excluding the summer) to regain a GPA of 3.0; failure to do so will initiate the procedure for dismissal from the program.

MS and PhD students must earn a "satisfactory" grade in all research credits. If a student obtains an "unsatisfactory" grade, he/she/they may be placed on academic probation. A second "unsatisfactory" grade in research may result in dismissal from the program. A student must have a minimum of 6 credit hours of research for the MS and a minimum of 30 credit hours for the PhD that have a grade of satisfactory to graduate from the program. If an MS or PhD student withdraws from research, the research grade will be reported as "unsatisfactory," and the student will be placed on probation. This may result in dismissal from the program.

2.9. Course Repeats

Students must earn a C or better in all required courses with a maximum number of two attempts per course. This maximum includes student enrollment at the end of any semester's registration deadline (*i.e.*, grades of "W" count as an attempt if failing at the time of "W"). Any student who enrolls in a required FIS course twice and earns less than a C in the best attempt is subject to dismissal from the program, regardless of overall GPA. Dismissal for academic reasons is defined as termination of student status in the Forensic Science graduate programs, including any right or privilege to receive some benefit or recognition, or certification. A student who is dismissed from the Forensic & Investigative

Science Program for academic reasons may remain eligible to enroll in courses in other programs at the institution.

2.10. Time Limits for Meeting Degree Requirements

2.10.1. M.S. Program

The thesis proposal must be successfully defended on or before the Eberly College Deadlines for Graduation (last day to hold a defense). Failure to do so may result in academic probation, and the student may be ineligible for Departmental financial support. The student will be required to defend by their second semester and by the end of the summer (for students starting the program in the Fall). Students starting the MS program in Spring will be required to defend no later than the end of the next Fall semester.

Once completed, the proposal defense is valid for a maximum of 4 academic semesters. If the student has not defended the research described by the proposal within 4 academic semesters of the successful proposal defense date, he or she must repeat the proposal defense process, unless given written permission to continue by his/her/their research committee. Any accommodations/extensions must be filed with the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. Also, if a student remains dormant for 12 months (consecutive or not) the Graduate Studies Committee may initiate steps to dismiss the student from the program.

NOTE: A student may only be on probation once. A second probation may be grounds for dismissal. Also, a student may not be on probation for more than one reason. For example, both grades and research at the same time; this may also be grounds for dismissal.

2.10.2. PhD Program

The following information on doctoral candidacy comes from the graduate catalog: Doctoral candidates are allowed no more than five years to complete the remaining requirements of their program after being admitted to doctoral candidacy to ensure that students earning a doctoral degree have current knowledge in their field. Admission to doctoral candidacy is normally expected to precede work on the dissertation.

The five-year time limit begins with the start of the semester following the completion of a program's requirements for doctoral candidacy as specified by the Eberly College ([Degree Regulations < West Virginia University \(wvu.edu\)](#)). For example, a student defending anywhere within the spring semester of 2026 has until the end of the fall semester of 2028 to defend his/her/their dissertation.

Completion of the requirements for admission to doctoral candidacy must precede the semester of graduation. For example, a student admitting to candidacy anywhere

within the spring semester of 2026 can defend/graduate in August 2026 at the earliest.

Students become doctoral candidates once they have successfully completed his/her/their proposal defense and their oral qualifying examination.

The proposal defense should be conducted within 18-months of beginning the program, assuming completion of the core MS coursework. If the research proposal is not successfully defended, the student must reschedule the defense within one semester. Failure to successfully defend or schedule the second defense within one semester may be grounds for dismissal from the program. Once completed, the proposal is valid for a maximum of 6 academic semesters. If the student has not defended the research described by the proposal within 6 academic semesters of the successful proposal defense date, he or she must repeat the proposal defense process, unless given written permission to continue by his/her/their Chair and the Graduate Studies Committee.

Students should schedule his/her/their oral qualifying examination by the end of the fall of the second year (3 academic semesters and assuming successful completion of all core MS coursework). If unsuccessful in the first attempt of his/her/their oral examination, this examination must be repeated within one semester. Failure to successfully qualify or schedule the second oral examination within one semester may be grounds for dismissal from the program. The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies must be made aware of any oral qualifying exams taking place. The College tracks doctoral candidacy, and there is paperwork that needs to be completed by the Associate Chair and sent to the Dean's office.

If a student remains dormant for 12 months (consecutive or not) the Graduate Studies Committee will initiate steps to dismiss the student from the program.

NOTE: Any student (MS, PhD) may only be on probation once. A second probation is grounds for dismissal. Also, a student may not be on probation for more than one reason. For example, both grades and research at the same time; this may also be grounds for dismissal. For more information about academic rights, penalties and appeals please see [the graduate catalog](#).

2.10.3. Academic Dishonesty

Students in the Department of Forensic & Investigative Science are expected to maintain high academic and professional standards. If a student is found responsible for an infraction of either the College or University code of ethics or engages in conduct that is deemed detrimental to the professional forensic community, he or she will be subject to dismissal from the Forensic & Investigative Science program. Any charge of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

Dismissal is defined as the termination of student status, including any right or privilege to receive some benefit or, recognition or certification. A student who is dismissed from the Forensic & Investigative Science program because of academic or professional dishonesty will not be readmitted to the program.

3. University Tuition Waivers

Students may receive University tuition waivers with GRA and GTA positions to cover tuition costs.

Tuition waivers do not cover College tuition and fees (see Office of Graduate Education and Life at: [Graduate Education and Life | Graduate Assistant Tuition Waivers](#) and the Financial Aid Office for tuition and fee schedule [WVU Financial Aid](#)).

In extenuating circumstances, students may request a merit tuition waiver by submitting a written request to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. Merit waivers typically provide 1 CH of tuition for one semester to enable a student in good standing to graduate at the end of the semester in question.

To remain full-time and eligible for GRA and GTA positions, students must be enrolled in and complete at least 9 credit hours each semester. The maximum allowable is 16 credits per semester (unless prior permission is granted). Information on summer enrollment can be found here: [Summer Enrollment | Graduate Education and Life | West Virginia University](#).

4. Assistantships

Departmental assistantships are administered on a semester basis unless otherwise stated. Graduate Research Assistants who fail to satisfactorily meet deadlines and/or perform required duties are subject to termination from his/her/their appointment at the end of the semester. Unsatisfactory performance will be determined in the *end-of-semester-student-reviews*. Graduate Teaching Assistants appointed by the Department will be evaluated by the Chair of the Department. Continued appointment on an assistantship is a function of available funding, departmental needs, and meritorious reviews. MS students shall not receive a departmental assistantship for more than 4 total academic semesters, and PhD students shall not receive more than 10 total academic semesters of support. Full-time graduate assistantships are for a maximum of 20 hours a week in exchange for the stipend. Please refer to the offer/reappointment letter for additional information on the terms of the assistantship/employment at WVU.

There is no guarantee of reappointment beyond *a single semester*.

5. Additional Policies

5.1. Building Access

The FIS Facilities Manager supervises access to teaching and research spaces within OGH, the Crime Scene Complex, and the Ballistics Laboratory. All students are permitted access to teaching rooms. Students should contact his/her/their PI to obtain card swipe access to Oglebay Hall and the various research labs. PIs will complete requests for keycard access through the [FIS Facilities Access Request Portal](#).

5.2. Authorship Guidelines

Graduate students and faculty members will share publication and presentation credits whenever appropriate. To clarify expectations, faculty members are encouraged to discuss his/her/their authorship practices with graduate students.

Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific and intellectual contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of his/her/their relative status. Minor contributions to research or writing should be appropriately acknowledged (such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement).

5.3. Professionalism & Faculty/Graduate Student Relationships

Graduate students share joint responsibility with their advisors for the student's timely progress in the program. Thus, faculty members show a professional interest in graduate students' general well-being, progress, and accomplishments. To that end, faculty members provide appropriate reinforcement and constructive criticism of students' research ideas, papers, teaching activities, and other professional responsibilities. Faculty members also assist graduate students in obtaining resources to support their work and in solving work-related problems, as much as they would assist any other colleague.

5.4. Professional Etiquette

Considerable research has demonstrated the influence of attire on how we are perceived. As a young professional, it is particularly important to present oneself in a way that communicates an appropriate level of seriousness and respect for the workplace. Students should be cognizant of the acceptable professional attire for professional meetings, interviews, internships, teaching, etc. (different supervisors may have different expectations about dress codes/safety guidelines).

5.5. Electronic Devices

Professionalism is expected when using cell phones or texting. Students should silence their cell phones during all classes, research meetings, during supervision and meetings with mentors or mentees, while teaching, and when presenting at or attending sessions at a professional meeting or conference. Sending or responding to calls or texts during these activities is disrespectful and inappropriate. Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, all electronic devices (phones, watches, tablets, etc.) are prohibited during examinations.

5.6. Attendance & Presentation at Professional Meetings

If a student is planning to present his/her/their work conducted in his/her/their capacity as a WVU student at a conference of any kind, he/she/they must complete a Graduate Presentation Approval Form, which must be signed by his/her/their PI. Forms may be obtained from the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. If a student fails to obtain approval prior to presenting his/her/their work, the student may be placed on academic probation or dismissed from the program.

5.7. Leave of Absence

Students who wish to take a leave of absence must request the leave in writing. The request is submitted to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies for consideration. A student who is not granted a requested leave may appeal the decision to the Department Chair.

A leave of absence may not exceed one calendar year. The student must notify the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies if he/she plans to return to the program in the semester following completion of the leave. Leaves of absence do not change the maximum time limits for graduation as specified in this handbook and/or University/College stipulations. In addition, students may have to revise his/her/their Plan of Study upon returning to the Program. Additional information on leaves of absence may be found in [the graduate catalog](#).

The request form for a Leave of Absence can be obtained from the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies.

5.8. Student Evaluations

Semester evaluations are a comprehensive and systematic method of monitoring student progress that also provides the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies with feedback regarding work in the Program. The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies and the faculty evaluate the progress of every student, every semester. The evaluation process is designed in part to ensure that students complete their degrees within the planned time frame. Students whose progress appears inadequate may be placed on academic probation. In addition, unsatisfactory performance, as determined during any evaluation, may result in withdrawing the student's financial support, placing the student on probation, or dismissing the student from the graduate program. The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies relies on several sources when gathering information concerning students' academic and professional activities, including: the plan of study, progress in coursework (GPA), progress in research, adherence to deadlines, teaching evaluations (as appropriate), professional behavior, and any other relevant information.

5.9. Evaluation Outcome

The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies reviews each student's completed evaluation materials each semester. The Associate Chair also meets with faculty to discuss student progress. The Associate Chair will notify students of their evaluation outcomes in a Semester Progress Review. The review will typically be sent to students within a few days of the Graduate Studies Committee evaluation, which typically meets with a few days of when final grades are due. Students must receive their reviews before the start of each new term.

Students whose progress is satisfactory will maintain eligibility for funding/continuation in the program.

Students whose performance or progress is unsatisfactory may be given probationary status, become ineligible for funding, and/or be recommended for dismissal from the graduate program.

5.9.1. Summer Progress Reports

For students in good standing at the start of the summer and an S in research over the summer, Semester Progress Reviews will not be sent to students before the fall semester.

For students starting or ending summer with probationary status, or assessed in any way (e.g., a proposal defense or oral defense), the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies will send a Semester Progress Review to the students and their PIs and make relevant notes in DegreeWorks.

5.10. Other Grounds for Dismissal

The following conditions are grounds for dismissal of a student from the FIS program:

- Unsatisfactory performance or progress as determined by the PI or the graduate student's research committee;
- Major deviation from the approved Plan of Study including timetable for graduation;
- Inability to form a Thesis/Dissertation Committee;
- Inability to make progress on Thesis/Dissertation (see above);
- Unauthorized leave;
- Academic Misconduct (includes plagiarism and research misconduct). See the WVU Graduate/Professional Catalog for more information ([Academic and Professional Standards](#)), and course syllabi for special rules used in specific courses;
- Failure to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or minimum GPA of 3.0 in coursework applied to the graduate program;
- An overall GPA of less than 2.4;
- Failure to meet the academic and professional standards described in this Handbook;
- Two grades of "unsatisfactory" for research credit;
- Probation more than once, or for more than one reason;
- Two D's or F's in any course used to fulfill any graduation requirement;
- Failing to complete all provisional acceptance requirements (e.g., prerequisites with a C or better) within 12 months of admittance to the program (the exception is

Calculus II, which must be completed with a C or better within one semester of admission to the program);

- Extended dormancy as described in this Handbook;
- Failing to successfully defend a research proposal, a research defense, or pass a qualifying examination as described in this Handbook;
- Violation of any of the institutional, academic, or behavioral standards described in the WVU Graduate/Professional Handbook (<http://catalog.wvu.edu>);
- Violation of [Student Code of Conduct](#).

5.11.Procedures for Dismissal from the FIS Program

Recommendations for dismissal from the program may be initiated by the Graduate Studies Committee or the Research Chair. There are generally two types of dismissals. The first results from an administrative issue, and the second, is a dismissal for cause. An administrative dismissal may arise during semester productivity reviews performed by the faculty. For instance, if a student receives two unsatisfactory grades in research, he/she/they may be dismissed from the program. On the other hand, a dismissal for cause may arise from a student who cannot meet goals or benchmarks on an ongoing basis. If either of these do occur, the student has the right to appeal the decision.

Please see [Academic and Professional Standards](#) for the appeals process.

5.12. Graduation

At the beginning of the semester in which a student plans to graduate, the student must email the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies to inform him/her of his/her/their intention to graduate. The student then applies for graduation through STAR per the instructions provided by the Office of the University Registrar: <https://registrar.wvu.edu/graduation-diploma>. In addition to the application the student should provide the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies with an "Eberly College Thesis and Dissertation Defense Date Declaration Form" no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date, and before the College-wide deadline. Before the conclusion of the thesis or dissertation defense, the Chair must assure the Thesis and Dissertation Oral Defense form is signed by all committee members. If a member is not physically present, an electronic signature can be obtained for his/her/their approval attached to the form. This form must be submitted to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies as soon as possible as this needs to be delivered to the Eberly College Director of Graduate Studies by the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies within two business days.

Again, this form may be found at:

<http://eberly.wvu.edu/students/graduate/graduation-forms-and-process>

Deadlines will be shared regularly with FIS students by the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all College deadlines are followed. Any requests for exemptions or extensions must be communicated with

both the student's research advisor and the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. Graduate students MUST NOT contact the Dean's Office directly for exemptions or extensions. University and College deadlines cannot be waived; however, approvals for department extensions may be granted by a student's research committee and forward by the student's advisor to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies within 48 hours of the committee's vote. The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies will then record the extension approval in DegreeWorks.

Following the oral defense, when the student receives notice that the electronic thesis or dissertation has been accepted by the library, the student should forward this notice of acceptance to the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies. If a student is deleted from the graduation list, the student should monitor his/her/their MIX account for confirmation that his/her/their application has been re-submitted. Applications that are denied will be automatically rolled over to the next graduation cycle, for a maximum of three graduation cycles. After three graduation cycles, a new application in STAR will be necessary.

Even if a student meets all requirements for graduation, the student's transcript and diploma can be withheld by the Office of the University Registrar if the student has outstanding University monetary obligations. Students must return all keys and Departmental property before leaving campus.

The Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies is the student's point of contact in the Department for information about graduation deadlines and procedures.

5.13. Commencement

Commencement is a separate process from graduation. The university policy on participation in graduation can be found in [the graduate catalog](#). Students may request to participate in commencement before all degree requirements have been met, but permission will only be granted in very specific circumstances; for example, if the only remaining requirement is making final edits to the student's thesis or dissertation.

In cases where a graduate student wishes to participate in commencement early, if the GSC approves the request, the Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Studies will contact the Eberly College Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies with a request on behalf of the student. Requests for early participation in commencement must indicate that there is strong evidence all requirements will be completed in the term immediately following the ceremony. These requests should be submitted to the college no later than the final day of classes in the semester corresponding to the commencement ceremony.