

## SECTION 3: GRADUATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

**Graduate Committee.** The Graduate Committee has general supervisory authority over the graduate program and is responsible for recommending policy relative to the program. The committee membership includes the Associate Vice President for Academics and the Dean of Faculty, the Associate Dean of the School of Education, the Chair of the Nursing Division, the Chair of the Psychology Department, the Director of Teacher Education, one at-large representative from the School of Arts and Sciences, one at-large representative from the American Studies program, one student representative from the Master of Education program, one student representative from the Master of Counseling Psychology program, one student representative from the Master of Arts in American Studies program, and one student representative from the Doctor of Nursing Practice program. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies serves as chair of the Graduate Committee.

Functions of the Graduate Committee include:

1. the general supervision of matters pertaining to the graduate program and the formulation of policy for the program;
2. the formulation of the aims and objectives of the graduate program and the design and content of the graduate curricula;
3. the evaluation of proposed requirements for programs submitted by the respective academic schools;
4. the formulation of policies for admission to, and retention in, the graduate program;
5. the formulation of criteria and the approval of faculty membership on the graduate faculty;
6. the formulation of policies to provide quality control of courses, faculty, and physical resources relative to the graduate program;
7. the provision of systematic and periodic opportunities for graduate students and the graduate faculty to evaluate the graduate program and to make recommendations for its further development;
8. the responsibility for formulation and recommendation of policy on expanding and upgrading present programs, discontinuance of programs, introduction of new programs, or limitation on enrollment in graduate programs; and the responsibility for graduate program long-range planning.

### GRADUATE STUDENT APPEAL PROCESS

The Graduate Committee is the general supervisory body for the graduate program. Graduate students may appeal to the committee for consideration of matters affecting their degree program. The committee meets regularly during the fall and spring semesters; it does not meet during the summer term.

To be placed on the agenda for a committee meeting, the student may submit a letter of appeal to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (via email, campus mail, or U.S. mail) stating his or her request, providing as much information as is pertinent to the case. He/She may also request one or more members of his/her graduate advisory committee to submit letters of support of the request. The student and advisory committee members are welcome to attend the meeting when the case is presented and may address the committee or answer any questions that committee members may have.

Following the meeting, the student and the advisory committee members will be informed of the decision reached by the Graduate Committee, whose decision is final.

### COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Any student may file a formal complaint if he/she believes that he/she has not been treated appropriately by a student, faculty member, administrator, or staff member. The complaint should be addressed to the supervisor of that particular department or office. It is the responsibility of the appropriate supervisor to respond to the complaint. A form is available on the Northwestern website for filing a formal complaint. Formal complaints that have been addressed to the President, the Vice President for Academics, the Vice President for Administration, the Associate Vice President for Academics and the Dean of Faculty, the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, or the Associate Dean of Education will be filed in the Office of Assessment and will be available for review by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association. In accordance with privacy policies, the identity of individuals will be protected.

### CREDIT-HOUR REGULATIONS

**Level of Courses.** All work used to fulfill requirements for NWOSU's graduate programs shall be selected from the graduate courses listed by department in Section 11. Doctor of Nursing Practice students should enroll in 6000-level courses to receive graduate credit, and all master's-level students should enroll in 5000-level courses to receive graduate credit. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are registered in the graduate section of split-level courses since graduate students should experience a more rigorous academic requirement than what is expected of undergraduate students. Also note that courses taken at the undergraduate level may not be repeated for credit toward the master's degree.

**Full-Time Student Status.** Both Doctor of Nursing Practice students and master's degree students are considered full-time by enrolling in (and completing) a minimum of nine hours in a fall or spring semester or a minimum of five hours in a summer term.

**Incomplete.** A grade of *I* is given only when conditions justify extension of time for a student to complete a course. Any grade of *I* not removed within one calendar year becomes a permanent incomplete on the student's transcript. *Grades of I must be removed prior to taking the written comprehensive examination.*

**Transfer Credit.** For the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, advanced placement will be available for students who already have earned a master's degree as an Advanced Practice Nurse. Those MS courses will be transferable after a review of the transcripts and of the course learning outcomes have occurred. For other students, there will be a maximum of 9 graduate credits that will be transferable if approved by the student's graduate advisory committee. All accepted transfer hours will be counted as part of the student's graduate GPA.

For master's-degree students, a maximum of nine hours of graduate credit earned at accredited institutions of higher education may be transferred, provided the work forms an appropriate part of the student's program and is approved by the student's graduate advisory committee. If a student already holds a master's degree, a maximum of twelve hours of graduate credit earned at accredited institutions may be transferred. All accepted transfer hours are counted as part of the student's graduate grade-point average. **Note:** Before ac-

cepting a transfer course based on the description for **EDUC 5933/Classroom Research and Institutional Effectiveness**, a work sample needs to be provided by the student. This will ensure that the expectations and assignments are similar to those required by NWOSU. Currently, the expectation is a research proposal, a literature review, a plan of action for the research, and an annotated bibliography.

**Residency Requirement.** For the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, a minimum of thirty-four semester hours, including the last eight hours, must be earned at Northwestern Oklahoma State University. The remainder of the candidate's program (nine hours maximum) may be earned at other accredited institutions. These hours, or any part thereof, may be applied to the program only if, in the judgment of the student's graduate advisory committee, the DNP Program Director, and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, they contribute to the student's overall program.

For all master's degree programs, a minimum of twenty-three semester hours, including the final eight hours, must be earned in residence at Northwestern Oklahoma State University. The remainder of the candidate's program (nine hours maximum) may be earned at other accredited institutions. These hours, or any part thereof, may be applied to the program only if, in the judgment of the student's graduate advisory committee and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, they contribute to the student's overall program. **Exception: Students in the Adult Education Management and Administration program may transfer the final 18 hours of discipline-specific courses if the courses are listed on an approved plan of study.**

**Continuing Education Credit.** Continuing education credits from an approved institution will be evaluated for possible graduate credit when the request is submitted with an official transcript. Inquiries should be directed to the graduate office.

**Individual Study, Readings, Seminar, and Short Course Credit.** A maximum of six credit hours in any combination of Individual Study (5170), Seminar (5180), Readings (5190), and/or Short Courses (5300) will be applicable toward a master's degree program.

**Prerequisites.** Some courses may have prerequisites. The student should consult the course descriptions (see Section 11, Graduate Courses) or consult with the appropriate department or division chair.

## STUDY LOAD LIMITS

The maximum study load for a full-time Doctor of Nursing Practice student is nine credit hours for a sixteen-week semester and five credit hours for an eight-week summer term.

The maximum study load for a full-time graduate student enrolled in a master's degree program during a sixteen-week semester is twelve hours and for an eight-week summer term is nine hours.

Master's degree students taking the written comprehensive examination OR presenting their action research project as part of Milestone 3 must have completed all coursework OR be enrolled in final coursework not exceeding nine hours in a regular semester or six hours in a summer term.

## TIME LIMIT

All doctorate and master's degree programs must be completed within **six calendar years**. If a student has not completed the graduate degree in the **six-year limit**, the stu-

dent must then meet with his/her advisory committee and file a new plan of study reflecting current program requirements. In some cases, the student may be asked to re-apply for admission to graduate study. If course(s) exceed the six-year limit, the student may re-take the course(s) or validate the course(s) following procedures listed below.

## COURSE VALIDATION

Credit in courses older than six years will be awarded only after competency in the area has been demonstrated by examination. The examination will be prepared and evaluated by the faculty member currently responsible for teaching the course. The validation process is initiated through the Office of Graduate Studies.

### For a written validation:

1. The graduate office will notify the student, the advisory committee chair, and the instructor of the course of the need for the exam.
2. The instructor will provide the exam to the graduate office to be administered.
3. The exam will be returned to the instructor to score.
4. The instructor will return the results and the exam to the graduate office to be filed in the student's folder.

### For an oral validation:

1. The graduate office will notify the student, the advisory committee chair, and the instructor of the course of the need for the exam.
2. The instructor will administer the oral exam.
3. The instructor will provide results and a detailed synopsis of the exam to the graduate office to be filed in the student's folder.

### For a performance validation:

1. The graduate office will notify the student, the advisory committee chair, and the instructor of the course of the need for the exam.
2. The instructor will administer the performance exam.
3. The instructor will provide results and a copy of the performance (cassette, video, CD, DVD, or other appropriate media) to the graduate office to be filed in the student's folder.

**Only NWOSU courses can be validated past the six-year limit. Credit from other institutions which exceeds the six-year limit cannot be validated.**

## ARRANGED CLASSES

The following guidelines have been adopted by NWOSU concerning arranged classes:

1. Any course taught by arrangement must be approved by the instructor, department head (where applicable), and the dean of the appropriate school.
2. Only courses required for the degree or certification program will be considered for arrangement.
3. Only courses which have not been scheduled in the current year or for which there is a scheduling conflict may be considered for arrangement.
4. The student must be a graduate student needing the class for graduation or certification within the current academic year.
5. Only students who have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 will be considered for an arranged class.
6. Regular teacher education block courses will not be offered for arrangement.
7. No course being repeated may be taken by arrange-

ment.

8. Any instructor offering a course through arrangement must submit to the appropriate dean a written plan (including reason for request, course content, and student requirements) for approval.
9. Students may appeal to the Academic Affairs committee in the event of a special situation not covered by preceding guidelines.

## TECHNOLOGY POLICY

NWOSU expects all graduate students to have fundamental computer skills that include a working knowledge of such programs as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint as well as other electronic platforms utilized by the university. If a graduate student exhibits such a deficiency, s/he will be required to enroll in CMSC 1103/Microcomputer Applications at the undergraduate level either before or concurrent with his/her first semester of graduate work.

## GRADUATE PLAN OF STUDY

**Advisory Committee.** An advisory committee, consisting of three members from the graduate faculty, is formed for each student pursuing a graduate degree *as soon as possible after the student's application for graduate study*. This process is discussed for doctoral-level students in NURS 6010/Program Orientation and for master's-level students in EDUC 5010/Graduate Study Seminar, which students should enroll in during their first semester of graduate work.

For students enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, the advisory committee will consist of three members: the Chair of the Division of Nursing, the Director of the DNP Program, and the assigned faculty advisor.

For students enrolled in the Master of Arts in American Studies program, the Master of Arts in Heritage Tourism and Conservation program, the Master of Counseling Psychology program, and the Master of Science in General Psychology program, members of the advisory committee are selected by the student, contingent upon faculty members' willingness to serve and upon the approval of the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

For students enrolled in all Master of Education options, committee members will be assigned by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. The chair of advisory committees must be a member of the graduate faculty. Adjunct instructors are not allowed to serve.

Graduate Advisory Committees at the master's-degree level are responsible to assist the graduate student in developing the plan of study. Graduate advisory committees for the Master of Arts in American Studies program, the Master of Counseling Psychology program, and the Master of Education option in Adult Education Management and Administration will also administer the written comprehensive examination (and the oral follow-up exam) and its defense. Graduate Advisory Committees for the Master of Science in General Psychology program will evaluate the student's capstone project or thesis and its defense. Graduate Advisory Committees for all other Master of Education program options will evaluate the M.Ed. student's action research project and the graduate candidate file housed in ALCA. **All graduate students must form their advisory committees and schedule an appointment with its members during the first semester of graduate work. Students must be aware that some faculty members are not employed during the summer. Students should take this into consideration when putting together their graduate advisory committees and when scheduling defenses.**

**Plan of Study.** A report of the plan for the student's graduate program formulated by the student and his/her advisory committee must be filed with The DNP Program Director (for Doctor of Nursing Practice students) *prior to the student's first semester of coursework* and with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (for master's-level students) *when students apply for candidacy*. Students completing graduate work prior to approval of the plan of study should not expect all such coursework to apply toward requirements for the master's degree. *All information included on the plan of study form must be typed. The plan of study form also requires original signatures of advisory committee members.*

**Revisions to Plan of Study.** The Plan of Study for the Doctor of Nursing student is a dynamic document. Any status changes from full-time to part-time, as well as any leave of absence, is discussed with the advisory committee, and the plan of study is updated accordingly. The plan of study must be signed by the student and the members of the advisory committee. The new plan will be filed in the student file.

When a master's degree student deviates from the plan of study, **he/she must submit a new plan of study form to the Office of Graduate Studies (RH #212)**. It is the student's responsibility to inform members of the advisory committee of the changes being made, to obtain their signatures, and to submit the new form to the Office of Graduate Studies. Hence, all changes must have the approval of the student's advisory committee. The revised plan of study must be filed with the Graduate Office by the end of the enrollment period of the semester in which the student is to graduate.

## THESIS OPTION

Students enrolled in the Master of Arts in American Studies program, the Master of Counseling Psychology program, the Master of Science in General Psychology program, or the M.Ed. in Adult Education Management and Administration program option may take from three-to-six semester hours of thesis credit (Thesis 5330) as part of their field-specific subjects, related area of study, or electives if they choose to undertake a research project (thesis) as part of their graduate work. Students interested in this option must visit either the Graduate Studies website at [www.nwosu.edu/graduate-studies](http://www.nwosu.edu/graduate-studies) or the Office of Graduate Studies (FA #212) to receive the booklet "Guidelines for Thesis Preparation and Submission," a list of the "Policies and Procedures for a Master's Degree with a Thesis," and the appropriate forms. These materials discuss, in detail, the specific requirements for thesis preparation and submission.

## DNP PROJECT

### Doctor of Nursing Practice

**For Doctor of Nursing Practice candidates only.** The DNP Project for the DNP student is an integrative evidence-based practice/system/population-based initiative. The DNP Project must make a significant contribution to evidence-based nursing practice. Focus areas of the DNP Project may concern health care delivery problem solving, a quality initiative, evaluation of a new practice model, or a program evaluation. Students will begin critically analyzing and designing the DNP Project throughout the program of study, and it will be completed during the final year of the program. Oral presentations and a defense of the DNP Project is required in the final semester of DNP coursework.

The DNP Project Committee will consist of a Project Mentor and a minimum of two committee members. The student will identify a Project Mentor for their DNP Project as a NURS 6511 DNP Project course requirement. The Project Mentor

must be a member of the NWSU Graduate Faculty and must be doctorally prepared. The Project Mentor will assume the role of advising and guiding the student in each of the Project courses in concert with the Project Team and will be responsible for grading all student written assignments.

Two of the Project Team members must be doctorally prepared: The Project Mentor and the Independent Reviewer. One of the Project Team members will serve as the Content Expert. The Content Expert may complement the Project Team by being a member of another academic/professional discipline and may or may not be doctorally prepared. The Site Representative may or may not be doctorally prepared and serves as the liaison between the venue in which the project is conducted, the student, and the Project Team. The Independent Reviewer can also serve as the Project Site Representative and/or Content Expert. The Project Team Mentor must approve the selection of the Project Team Members.

## CAPSTONE PROJECT

### Master of Science in General Psychology

*For Master of Science in General Psychology candidates only.* MGP students will work on a Capstone Project in EDUC 5013/Introduction to Research that will evolve into one of two outcomes: a formal presentation of the research project at a professional conference or at either Ranger Research Day or Oklahoma Research Day, or a submission of the research manuscript for publication. Students will also defend their research to their graduate advisory committee. In lieu of the Capstone Project, students may instead write a thesis. The outcome is the submission of the thesis for publication and its defense to the student's graduate advisory committee.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

*For American Studies, MCP, and Adult Ed. candidates only.* Comprehensive examinations will be administered to graduate students who (1) have either completed all coursework or are currently enrolled in final coursework, not exceeding nine hours in a regular semester or six hours in a summer term and (2) have removed all grades of "Incomplete" from their plan of study. The comprehensive exams will be administered each semester based on the following schedule:

October 7, 2021	October 6, 2022	October 5, 2023
March 3, 2022	March 2, 2023	March 7, 2024
June 9, 2022*	June 8, 2023*	June 13, 2024*

**Note\*:** The Psychology Department will not offer comprehensive exams for the MCP program during the summer dates.

Students eligible to take the comprehensive exams should process application material in the graduate office **at least four weeks prior to the exam date.**

Candidates sitting for the American Studies and the M.Ed. Adult Ed. comprehensive examinations will complete a multi-question essay exam about the core and elective courses that the candidate has taken. Specific questions will be composed by members of the candidate's graduate advisory committee in consultation with the candidate. The exams will then be graded with a consensus vote of pass-fail by the advisory committee. Candidates must also orally defend their exam answers at a later scheduled date after the written exam.

Candidates sitting for the MCP comprehensive examination will complete a multiple choice and short essay exam. The exam is pass-fail, graded with a consensus vote of the

advisory committee and/or psychology department faculty. Candidates must also orally defend their exam answers at a later scheduled date after the written exam.

If the student does not pass the exam and the oral defense, he/she should meet with his/her advisory committee to determine the course of remediation needed (perhaps further coursework or directed study). A second unsuccessful attempt will result in another meeting and further remediation. If a third attempt is unsuccessful, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program with no degree awarded.

Students will be notified within two weeks regarding comprehensive examination results.

\*Confirm date, time, and location by calling the graduate office at (580) 327-8410. **Paperwork must be submitted by the published deadline, at least four weeks prior to the date of the exam, in order to take the examination.**

## PRACTICUM

### Master of Arts in Heritage Tourism & Conservation

*For Master of Arts in Heritage Tourism and Conservation candidates only.* The practicum is designed to allow students the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge within a selected area within heritage tourism and conservation. The practicum is completed within a community-based, commercial, or governmental organization. Students are required to observe and participate in a job-related capacity under supervision as part of their practicum experience.

## THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

### Master of Education

*For M.Ed. candidates only (except Adult Ed.).* In lieu of the thesis, capstone project, written comprehensive and oral follow-up examination, or practicum, the M.Ed. student will submit and defend an Action Research Project and will maintain a Graduate Candidate File (GCF) in ALCA. M.Ed. program options require three checkpoints: Milestone 1, Milestone 2, and Milestone 3. Below are procedures and details for M.Ed. candidates:

**Required during first semester of enrollment.** M.Ed. students will complete the course requirements for EDUC 5010/Graduate Study Seminar, will establish an ALCA account, and will contact graduate advisory committee members once they are assigned. Also during the first semester, M.Ed. students will complete **Milestone 1** by meeting with the graduate advisory committee or its chair, by completing the graduate advisory committee form, by having the appropriate credentials and required paperwork submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies (FA #212), by putting in appropriate materials to the Graduate Candidate File in ALCA, and by going over program expectations with the graduate advisory committee. *All of these elements are required before further enrollment in graduate courses are allowed.*

**Required three (3) semesters before graduation.** M.Ed. students will complete EDUC 5933/Classroom Research and Institutional Effectiveness with a passing grade and will submit the final research proposal and instructor's rubric with comments to the graduate advisory committee chair, who will then evaluate the course instructor's comments and the student's proposal to determine readiness for Milestone 2. To complete **Milestone 2**, the student will schedule a meeting with his/her graduate advisory committee and will present the Action Research Proposal to committee members. The student will also continue to put in appropriate materials to the Graduate Candidate File in ALCA. *All of these elements are required*

before further enrollment in graduate courses are allowed. At this point, students should receive a letter of candidacy from the Office of Graduate Study.

**Required two (2) semesters before graduation.** M.Ed. candidates will conduct the Action Research Project over two consecutive academic semesters and will continue to add appropriate materials to the Graduate Candidate File in ALCA. **Also, after completing sixteen hours and before completing twenty hours, the M.Ed. candidate should also apply for candidacy by completing the Admission to Degree Candidacy form as well as the appropriate Plan of Study form, both which should be turned into the Graduate Studies Office. These forms can be found on the Graduate Studies webpage.**

**Required the semester of graduation.** M.Ed. candidates will complete **Milestone 3** by presenting the completed Action Research Project to the graduate advisory committee and selected stakeholders, by adding any additional materials to complete the Graduate Candidate File in ALCA, and by completing all exit documents in order to graduate.

**What is Action Research?** Action research seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together by critical reflection. Action research practitioners reflect upon the consequences of their own questions, beliefs, assumptions, and practices with the goal of understanding, developing, and improving social practices. This action is simultaneously directed towards self-change and towards restructuring the organization or institution within which the practitioner works.

The nature of action research places the researcher in the middle of the inquiry and not on the outside as an observer and/or experimenter. Action researchers do not claim 'neutrality' but rather account for their position in the action and inquiry. A strength of action research is that the researcher studies what she or he does in concert with others. Therefore, the knowledge created through action research is inevitably dialogical in nature, and is thus always a negotiated and co-created knowledge. This knowledge is not inert, but serves to improve the quality of life by engaging participants in a quest for deeper understandings that lead to improvement.

Action researchers are often guided by questions of this kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' Action research takes time, energy, commitment, and courage because it is about changing oneself, which means changing one's thinking, and recognizing that, once changed, there is no going back. However, action researchers are also engaged in a process of authentic collaboration with participants who seek to improve their practices. The focus is on the actors (participants) within their local social contexts. These participants are often co-researchers (but not always). The four key processes of an action research cycle include planning, implementing the plan, gathering and analyzing data as the plan is implemented, and reflecting on these results. The choice of specific data collection and analysis methods (practices) occurs in alignment with the action researcher's personal and professional epistemological and ontological belief systems, while also reflecting the discourses of the larger organization and society within which the action research is being conducted. Further, the choice of research methods in action research is dependent upon the question, problem, dilemma or dissonance to be examined, and the nature of the practice situation. The cycles of action research represent iterative problem solving linked by reflection. Critical reflection on action and reflexive writing are key and central processes of action research.

Making decisions about involvement in action research carries certain risks. It involves interrogating one's thinking and deciding actively to change established self-perceptions and personal and professional habits to move into the future, recognizing that action researchers are responsible for their decisions and the consequences of these decisions. Specific action research practices are informed by researchers' values that carry hope for the future including the procedural principle of democracy and insights from the most advanced social theories of the day.

The action researcher, like all researchers, is expected to share research findings as part of the process of knowledge-creation. Action researchers also expect to have those findings scrutinized by other professionals, including professionals whose knowledge and belief systems may vary markedly from those of the action researchers.

Rowell, L. Polush, E. Riel, M., & Bruewer, A. (2015) *Action researchers' perspectives about the distinguishing characteristics of action research: a Delphi and learning circles mixed-methods study*. Access online at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09650792.2014.990987#.VPIW0IH-Oxw>

**The Graduate Candidate File (GCF).** The Graduate Candidate File (GCF) is housed in the Aurora Learning Community Association (ALCA) assessment system. All M.Ed. candidates (except Adult Ed.) will maintain this file by putting in necessary documents as they progress through their program.

## SECOND MASTER'S DEGREE

A student desiring a second master's degree will be permitted to apply a maximum of twelve hours of appropriate coursework at the master's or doctoral level toward requirements for a second master's degree, subject to the approval of the graduate advisory committee. All coursework in the approved plan of study must meet the six-year time limit, according to university policy.

## APPLICATION FOR DEGREES

Candidates who expect to complete degree requirements must file an application for the degree and submit the \$25 application fee to the graduate office by October 15 for December graduation, by February 1 for May graduation, or by March 1 for July graduation.

## CONFERRING OF DEGREES

Candidates who have fulfilled all requirements for their doctorate or master's degrees are recommended by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies to the President of the University for the conferring of their degrees. Attendance at commencement is expected but is not required.

Degrees will be conferred at regular convocations. Doctoral and master's degree candidates who apply for graduation in the fall will participate in the December commencement ceremony; candidates who apply for graduation in the spring will participate in the May commencement ceremony. Candidates will participate in the May commencement ceremony if a degree check indicates they will complete coursework for the degree by the end of the following summer session.