Graduate Program Objectives

Master's degree programs at FAU are designed to provide FAU students with the professional training necessary to pursue careers in which the master's degree is a requirement; provide advanced training that is useful for career advancement; and prepare students for entrance into doctoral programs [e.g., M.S. in Exercise Science and Health Promotion, M.A. in Psychology, M.A. in History]. Master's degree programs refine the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students through more advanced coursework, the incorporation of research and field experience, and completion of an independent research project or paper. These programs prepare students for success in meeting a variety of professional objectives beyond what is possible for a student holding only a baccalaureate degree.

Doctoral degree programs at FAU are more advanced than the University's master's programs. These programs are designed to develop independent scholars and researchers capable of conducting original research and scholarship within their discipline [see, e.g., Ph.D. in Integrative Biology, Ph.D. in Ocean Engineering]. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programs train students to read and analyze the literature of their field, identify significant problems within the discipline, ask appropriate research questions, design and construct a plan of research and scholarship capable of providing new knowledge, answer research questions, and to publish the results in peer reviewed literature. They prepare students for success in meeting a variety of professional objectives beyond what is possible for a student holding only a master's degree.

FAU hosts two professional degree programs: the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and the Doctor of Medicine (MD). The Doctor of Nursing Practice program, housed in the Christine E.
Lynn College of Nursing, prepares advanced practice nurses and nurse administrators with a doctoral degree that focuses on practice leadership. The Doctor of Medicine program within the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine is committed to producing physicians who are prepared to provide the highest quality health care. This is accomplished through an integrated, patient-focused curriculum provided in association with affiliated regional hospitals.

Graduate Admission Standards

Admission requirements to FAU's post-baccalaureate programs are higher than those of its baccalaureate programs. The FAU Policy Regarding Admission of Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Professional Students, a document developed by the FAU University Graduate Council, outlines the admission requirements each program must meet. At a minimum, applicants to all graduate programs must hold a baccalaureate degree. While graduate programs have flexibility in terms of what they require of applicants, they must identify and publish grade point average minimums and minimum test scores (GRE, GMAT, etc.) if required. Admissions standards are available to prospective students by academic degree program both on the detailed admission requirements posted on the Graduate College Website and in the University Catalog.

Graduate Faculty Credentials

FAU's Graduate College Governance Document spells out the rights and responsibilities of the four levels of graduate faculty (graduate faculty, associate graduate faculty, graduate lecturer, and graduate faculty emeritus), as well as criteria for membership and procedures for appointment and reappointment. Members of the Graduate Faculty must meet more stringent credentialing standards than those required for teaching at the undergraduate level. In addition to holding a terminal degree in their discipline or in a related discipline, members of the graduate faculty must display continuing scholarship and creative activity as evidenced and recognized through publications, presentations, performances, exhibits, awards, and competitions.

In addition, FAU's eight academic colleges have graduate faculty bylaws approved by the University Faculty Senate, many of which place more stringent rules on membership than exist at the University level [e.g., Process for Appointment and Renewal to the Graduate Faculty, College of Education].

Level of Graduate Coursework

At FAU, graduate-level coursework is defined as 5000, 6000, and 7000 level [Course Credits and Levels]. Graduate degree programs consist of graduate-level coursework.

In some cases, degree programs may request approval (with justification) to allow certain 4000-level courses to be taken as part of a student's graduate degree. In these cases, typically the 4000-level course is offered as an acceptable substitution for a specific 5000- or 6000-level class. In order to receive approval to allow students to take these courses as part of their Graduate College
Plan of Study, the degree program must garner the approval of the Graduate Programs Committee, the University Graduate Council, the University Faculty Senate, and ultimately the Provost [Graduate College Governance Document, Section II.A. Authority and Responsibilities]. The Graduate College Plan of Study audit ensures that students are taking graduate level classes, and that if substitutions are allowable by a specific graduate program, documentation is provided [e.g., M.S. Economics Degree Requirements; M.S. Economics Plan of Study].

In courses where both undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled, students taking the course for graduate credit complete a more stringent set of coursework requirements than do those completing the course for undergraduate credit. For example, the same section of the course Introduction to Biological Physics may include students completing the course as part of an undergraduate program (enrolling in PHZ 4710) and students completing the course as part of a graduate program (enrolling in PHZ 5715). As the syllabus makes clear, “Students enrolled in the graduate level (PHZ-5715) are required to do more challenging problems on each homework assignments and on the final exam, in addition to those assigned to the students who enrolled in PHZ-4710. Furthermore, students enrolled in PHZ-5715 are required to do a research project on a topic to be chosen by the student and present the results at the end of the semester” [PHZ 4710/5715 Syllabus]. Similar requirements exist for all other dual enrollment classes. If, however, undergraduate students are completing the course for graduate credit as part of an accelerated baccalaureate to master’s program, those students complete the graduate-level coursework requirements.

All coursework for the master’s degree at FAU must meet the minimum criteria of 30 total program credits at the 5000 level or above with a minimum 3.0 grade point average on all work attempted in that program [Master's Degree General Requirements]. The majority of FAU's master's programs require more than 30 credits [Credit Totals by College and Program]. At least one-half of the total program credits must be in a single field of concentration. Of the total program credits, at least one-half must be at the 6000-level or above. Specific graduate programs also outline the coursework level requirements for their students. These requirements are frequently more stringent than the University standard.

The Doctor of Philosophy program of study requires a minimum of 80 credits beyond the baccalaureate degree [Doctoral Degree General Requirements]. It is constructed of core courses, electives, and advanced research, and culminates in a dissertation focused on a particular question and area of investigation that interests the doctoral candidate and benefits the profession.

**Research Projects and Capstone Experiences**

The application of knowledge in post-baccalaureate programs at FAU exceeds that of baccalaureate degree programs. At the graduate level, the required application of knowledge usually includes the collection, analysis, and interpretation of scholarly information, and original research or scholarship. These educational outcomes result from successful completion of a well-planned, rigorous set of courses and a major capstone experience (either a thesis or practice-oriented project). Most master's programs require either a thesis or a research thesis/project as
one of the options for degree completion. Masters' students selecting the thesis option learn to conduct methodologically sound and theoretically grounded research. The thesis process can help prepare students for doctoral-level research and coursework. In fields with a research thesis/project as a requirement, such as the Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art: Graphic Design, the candidate is required to produce written documentation of research, including a detailed explanation of the thesis exhibition. Copies of thesis documentation must be presented to the committee no less than three weeks prior to the thesis exhibition. An oral examination, focusing on the candidate’s work, will take place directly following the presentation of thesis exhibition. Successful completion of this examination is required for awarding the degree.

For master's degree programs that do not require a thesis or project, a capstone course, comprehensive exam, clinical practicum, or other culminating experience is required for the degree. For example, the Master of Arts in History requires a course transitioning them from undergraduate to graduate study, HIS 5060: The Historical Experience.

Non-thesis students must complete 33 credit hours of graduate seminars, including a minimum of 12 credit hours in reading (5000-level) and a minimum of 18 credit hours in research (6000-level) seminars. To ensure proper distribution of courses by field, non-thesis students may take a maximum of 18 credit hours in any one field. Upon completion of 18 credit hours, students must complete and submit a Plan of Study (see above), and must have fulfilled their foreign language requirement prior to graduation. These requirements ensure that the student has mastered progressively more difficult academic material than that covered in his or her baccalaureate program.

Doctoral degree programs involve a longer period of scholarship or research and are more extensive in their scope and depth than master's programs. The qualifying exam and the dissertation represent capstone experiences that are more advanced than are required of master's level students [e.g., Ph.D. in Public Administration Policy Manual, p. 9-11]. The qualifying examination ensures that the student has mastered the depth of knowledge and skill necessary to conduct original research and operate as a professional at the doctoral level. In certain cases, the qualifying exams must be passed before a student has selected a dissertation topic. For example, in mathematical sciences, a student must pass two qualifying exams, one in algebra and one in analysis, within two years of admission to doctoral study [Ph.D. Mathematical Sciences Qualifying Examinations]. The dissertation then ensures that the student can apply this advanced level of knowledge to an original area of research and defend his or her theoretical framework, scholarly methods, and results before a committee of appropriately credentialed professionals.

The University Catalog describes the thesis and dissertation credits or other culminating and capstone experiences required of students in each of FAU's post-baccalaureate degree programs:

Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing

Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine

Charles E. Schmidt College of Science
Monitoring Academic Content and Level of Graduate Programs

FAU's procedures for monitoring the level and academic content of post-baccalaureate programs include periodic program review, review of proposals for new courses and programs, review of proposed changes to existing courses and programs, and a survey of graduates.

Periodic Program Review and External Accreditation

FAU monitors the content and level of its programs through periodic program review. Consistent with the State University System's program review process, all academic programs undergo extensive reviews every seven years [BOG Reg. 8.015, Academic Program Review Procedures]. FAU’s program review process is described in detail in Comprehensive Standard 3.4.10 (Responsibility for Curriculum).

Programs accredited by national credentialing organizations undergo additional reviews. At the graduate level, these FAU programs are accredited by national credentialing organizations:

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<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Accreditng Body</th>
<th>Accreditation Renewal Dates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, Business, and Taxation</td>
<td>American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business International</td>
<td>February 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Disorders</td>
<td>Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology</td>
<td>December 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor Education</td>
<td>Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs plus Council on Rehabilitation Education</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Accreditation standards at the master's level are significantly more advanced than those used to accredit programs at the baccalaureate level. Some accrediting boards spell out these differences in formal documents [e.g., Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards].

### Proposals for New Courses and Programs

Proposals for new graduate courses and degree programs are initiated by the graduate faculty in the proposing department or school. Such proposals undergo a rigorous program review, requiring approval from the Graduate Programs Committee, the University Graduate Council, the University Faculty Senate Steering Committee, and the full University Faculty Senate. At each level of this review, the proposal is examined to ensure academic rigor beyond what is required of undergraduate students. See Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1 (Academic Program Approval) for a full description of new-program approval at FAU.

Prior to approval by the UFS Steering Committee, all graduate-level programs and courses are reviewed and approved by a separate body, the Graduate Programs Committee. Members of the GPC must be approved as members of FAU's Graduate Faculty. The procedures for submitting proposals for new courses, changes to existing courses, new degree programs, and new tracks to existing degree programs are outlined in the Graduate Programs Committee Guidelines, Policies, and Procedures.
Survey Information

The results of FAU's Graduate Student Exit Survey 2010-11 show that graduates have an overall positive perception of their programs, the faculty, and the University. The sections on learning outcomes (sections 14 and 15) demonstrate that graduate students believe that FAU has developed their skills well in areas of great significance to graduate education, such as applying research skills, applying the ethical standards of their disciplines, having confidence when they present their work at conferences or submit it for publication, write a research proposal, prepare for a qualifying examination, and complete a doctoral dissertation.

Participating Units

Graduate College

Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis