

University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Policy on Credit Hour Requirements for Master's Degrees

Effective Date: November 27, 2025

I. Policy Statement

This policy establishes the minimum credit hour requirements and structural expectations for the attainment of a **Master's Degree** at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). It applies to students entering with a Bachelor's degree, or as sub-matriculant undergraduates. The policy ensures consistency, transparency, and academic rigor across doctoral programs at UMES.

II. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and consistent guidelines for credit hour completion, transfer credit evaluation, and academic requirements for Master's degree programs at UMES. The policy ensures academic quality and alignment with University System of Maryland and accrediting body standards.

III. Definitions

A. Master's Degree:

An advanced academic qualification awarded after successful completion of a graduate program that typically follows a Bachelor's degree, demonstrating mastery in a specific field of study.

B. Credit Hours:

Units of academic credit that measure progress toward a degree, typically based on the number of instructional contact hours per week during a semester.

D. Sub-Matriculant Undergraduates - typically refers to undergraduate students who have been **admitted to take graduate-level courses or participate in a graduate program** before officially completing their undergraduate degree.

E. Undergraduate: The student is still enrolled in an **undergraduate program** and has **not yet earned a bachelor's degree**.

F. Stackable degree programs allow students to earn a sequence of related credentials—such as certificates or associate degrees that build toward higher-level qualifications like a bachelor's or master's degree. These programs offer flexible pathways for career advancement and continued education.

IV. Policy Language

A. Option 1: For Students Entering with a Bachelor's Degree

Students entering a Master's program with a Bachelor's Degree must complete a minimum of **30 to 60 credit hours** beyond the Bachelor's, depending on the program structure.

B. Coursework Level:

All courses applied toward a Master's degree must be at the **400–700 level** or higher and directly related to the student's field of study.

C. Program Requirements:

Each Master's program shall specify the distribution of required and elective courses, which may include:

- **Core Courses** (foundational knowledge)
- **Specialization or Concentration Courses**
- **Research Methods**
- **Thesis or Non-Thesis Options:** Programs may offer a thesis or non-thesis option.
 - Thesis programs typically require 6 credit hours of thesis research.
 - Non-thesis programs require completion of a capstone project, comprehensive exam, or equivalent applied research experience.

D. Transfer Credits:

1. All transfer credits must be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Program's Departmental Committee.
2. Required documentation includes course syllabi, official transcripts, and proof of grade (minimum B or better, or C if approved by exception).
3. Generally, students may transfer up to 9 credit hours; programs offering stackable courses may permit up to 18 transfer credit hours upon review and approval.
4. All transfer credits must originate from nationally or regionally accredited granting institutions.

Option II. Sub-Matriculant or Dual Enrollment:

UMES undergraduate students approved as sub-matriculants may apply up to 9 graduate-level credits toward their Master's degree, pending approval by the Graduate Program's Departmental Committee.

V. Additional Provisions

A. Accreditation Requirement:

All transfer credits must originate from **nationally or regionally accredited Master's or Doctoral-granting institutions.**

B. Continuous Enrollment:

Students must maintain continuous enrollment or obtain approved leave of absence to remain in good standing.

C. Minimum Grade Requirement:

All courses counted toward the Master's degree must be completed with a **grade of B or better** unless otherwise approved by the program.

D. Evaluation of Transfer Credits:

The Graduate Program Committee and Graduate School will make the final determination on the acceptance and applicability of transfer credits.

VI. Responsible Office

School of Graduate Studies

University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Princess Anne, MD 21853

University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Policy on Credit Hour Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

Effective Date: November 27, 2025

I. Policy Statement

This policy establishes the minimum credit hour requirements and structural expectations for the attainment of a **Doctoral Degree** at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). It applies to students entering with a Master's degree, a Bachelor's degree, or as sub-matriculant undergraduates. The policy ensures consistency, transparency, and academic rigor across doctoral programs at UMES.

II. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and consistent guidelines for credit hour completion, transfer credit evaluation, and academic requirements for doctoral degree programs at UMES. The policy ensures academic quality and alignment with University System of Maryland and accrediting body standards.

III. Definitions

A. **Doctoral Degree:**

An advanced academic degree awarded after completing a prescribed number of credit hours beyond a Bachelor's or Master's degree, including original research and a dissertation.

B. **Master's Degree:**

An advanced academic qualification awarded after successful completion of a graduate program that typically follows a Bachelor's degree, demonstrating mastery in a specific field of study.

C. **Stackable degree programs** allow students to earn a sequence of related credentials—such as certificates or associate degrees that build toward higher-level qualifications like a bachelor's or master's degree. These programs offer flexible pathways for career advancement and continued education.

C. **Credit Hours:**

Units of academic credit that measure progress toward a degree, typically based on the number of instructional contact hours per week during a semester.

D. Sub-Matriculant Undergraduates - typically refers to undergraduate students who have been admitted to take graduate-level courses or participate in a graduate program before officially completing their undergraduate degree.

E. Undergraduate: The student is still enrolled in an undergraduate program and has not yet earned a bachelor's degree.

IV. Policy Language

Option 1: For Students Entering with a Master's Degree

Students entering a Doctoral program with a Master's Degree must complete a minimum of **30 to 60 credit hours** beyond the Master's, depending on the program structure.

B. Coursework Level:

All courses applied toward a doctoral degree must be at the **500–700 level** or higher and directly related to the student's field of study.

C. Program Requirements:

Each doctoral program shall specify the distribution of required and elective courses, which may include:

- **12 dissertation credits**, and
- **18 graduate-level course credits** (500–700 level or higher).

D. Transfer Credits:

1. All transfer credits must be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Program's Departmental Committee.
2. Required documentation includes course syllabi, official transcripts, and proof of grade (minimum B or better, or C if approved by exception).
3. Generally, students may transfer up to 9 credit hours; programs offering stackable courses may permit up to 18 transfer credit hours upon review and approval.
4. All transfer credits must originate from nationally or regionally accredited Ph.D.-granting institutions.
5. Dissertation or thesis credits will not be transferred.
6. Free electives in the doctoral pathway may be replaced by methodological preparation, research seminars, or qualifying exam preparation, with Graduate School approval.

B. Option 2: For Students Entering with a Bachelor's Degree

Students entering with a Bachelor's Degree must complete **60 credit hours beyond their undergraduate degree**, excluding dissertation credits.

Credit Distribution:

- **Core Courses:** 12 credit hours
- **Concentration Courses:** 24 credit hours
- **(Free Electives) Methodological Preparation / Research Seminars / Qualifying Exam Prep:** 12 credit hours
- **Dissertation Hours:** 12 credit hours

Note: Free electives are excluded to ensure academic rigor and advanced methodological preparation.

Transfer Credits:

1. Graduate credits (500–700 level or higher) may be considered for transfer or waiver only from **nationally or regionally accredited Ph.D. granting institutions**.
2. Transfer credits are subject to **Graduate Program Committee review** and **Graduate School approval**.
3. Generally, students may transfer up to 9 credit hours; programs offering stackable courses may permit up to 30 transfer credit hours upon review and approval.
4. Free electives may be replaced by **research seminars or qualifying exam preparation** upon approval.

C. Option 3: For Sub-Matriculant Undergraduates (Maximum 6–9 Credits)

Undergraduate coursework does **not** count toward a Doctoral degree. However, graduate-level courses completed as a **sub-matriculant** in a UMES graduate program may be applied toward degree requirements after vetting and auditing by the Graduate Program Committee and approval by the Graduate School.

Sub-matriculants may transfer a maximum of **9 graduate credits**, depending on program requirements.

V. Additional Provisions

A. Dissertation Credits:

Dissertation hours are counted only once toward the doctoral degree and **cannot be transferred** from another institution.

B. Evaluation of Transfer Credits:

The Graduate Program Committee and Graduate School will make the final determination on the acceptance and applicability of transfer credits.

C. Continuous Enrollment:

Students must maintain continuous enrollment or obtain approved leave of absence to remain in good standing.

D. Minimum Grade Requirement:

All courses counted toward the Master's degree must be completed with a **grade of B or better** unless otherwise approved by the program.

E. Accreditation Requirement:

All transfer credits must originate from **nationally or regionally accredited Master's or Doctoral-granting institutions.**

VI. Responsible Office

School of Graduate Studies

University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Princess Anne, MD 21853