Title: Continuous Enrollment (Graduate)
Category: Academic Affairs
Responsible Cabinet Member: Provost

Purpose
To establish institutional requirements governing continuous enrollment, approved leaves of absence and the maintenance of academic status for graduate students. The policy supports timely academic progress, protects the integrity of graduate degree requirements and establishes expectations for enrollment throughout a student's graduate education.

Scope
Applies to all graduate students enrolled in graduate programs at the University of Kentucky.

Definitions

- **Continuous Enrollment:** The required maintenance of enrollment appropriate to a student's academic program and stage of study during each required academic term unless an approved Leave of Absence or other authorized exception applies.
- **Qualifying Examination (QE):** The doctoral candidacy examination as defined by the student's program.
- **Post-Qualifying Doctoral Student:** A doctoral student who has successfully completed the Qualifying Examination but has not yet completed all requirements for the doctoral degree.
- **Dissertation Residency Credit (XXX-767):** The institutional dissertation residency course required for doctoral students following advancement to candidacy, as prescribed by the Doctoral Research Degree Programs Policy.
- **Leave of Absence (LOA):** An approved period during which a student is not enrolled and is not required to reapply for admission.

Policy: Graduate students shall maintain continuous enrollment as required by their academic program and applicable University policy, unless granted an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) or otherwise exempted. Students pursuing a Plan B (non-thesis) master's degree are not required to maintain continuous enrollment. Doctoral and Plan A (thesis) master's students remain subject to the continuous enrollment requirements applicable to their respective degree programs. Doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy shall satisfy the University's dissertation residency requirements through enrollment in XXX-767 Dissertation Residency Credit each required fall and spring semester until degree completion. Failure to maintain required enrollment may result in loss of academic status, readmission requirements, retroactive enrollment and applicable tuition and fee obligations.

Continuous Enrollment — General: The required maintenance of enrollment appropriate to a student's academic program and stage of study during each required academic term unless an approved Leave of Absence or other authorized exception applies.

Continuous Enrollment – Master's Students

- **Plan A**: Students pursuing Plan A (thesis) master's degrees must maintain continuous enrollment as prescribed by the Graduate Master's Degree Programs Policy.
- **Plan B**: Students pursuing Plan B (non-thesis) master's degrees are expected to maintain continuous enrollment during the coursework phase of their degree program, consistent with program requirements and approved academic progression expectations.

Upon completion of all required coursework, students are not required to maintain continuous enrollment solely while independently preparing for a culminating academic requirement, such as a comprehensive examination, capstone project, or final portfolio.

Students must be enrolled during any academic term in which an academic action occurs, including the completion, submission, evaluation, or defense of a culminating requirement, or a final examination. This exception does not alter applicable enrollment requirements, degree-completion time limits, or readmission requirements.

Continuous Enrollment – Doctoral Students (Post-Qualifying)

- Requirement: Upon successful completion of the qualifying examination (QE), doctoral students must enroll in XXX-767 (Dissertation Residency Credit) each required fall and spring semester until all degree requirements have been completed.
- Summer Enrollment**:** Summer enrollment is not required to maintain continuous enrollment. However, doctoral students must enroll during the summer term if they:
    - Challenge the QE;
    - Defend the dissertation; or
    - Are otherwise required to enroll by policy, program requirements, assistantship obligations, financial aid regulations, immigration requirements or to meet the two (2) semester requirement for 767.
- When summer enrollment is required after successful completion of the QE, enrollment shall be in XXX-767 unless otherwise authorized by policy.
- Minimum Enrollment: Students must complete a minimum of two semesters of XXX-767 prior to degree conferral.
- QE Semester Enrollment: Students may not enroll in XXX-767 during the same semester in which the QE is taken. The course XXX-757 is to be used for students who have completed coursework but have not successfully passed their QE. Failure of any program requirements or coursework, even if the QE is passed, will require students to complete requirements, as well as successfully pass any required coursework before they may register for 767 and advance to candidacy. If a student has passed the QE, but still needs to complete other program requirements which do not include coursework, the DGS may petition to the Graduate School for the student to be enrolled in 757 while completing additional requirements.
  *Students registered in 757 who pass their QE prior to the University drop/add deadline may drop 757 and add 767 to count toward the minimum two (2) required semesters. Once the drop/add period ends, students may not change from 757 to 767.
- Required Course Registration**:** Following successful completion of the qualifying examination, XXX-767 is the required course for maintaining doctoral dissertation residency and continuous enrollment. Practicum, fieldwork, internship, independent study, research or other courses may not be substituted for XXX-767 unless expressly authorized by Graduate School policy.

<u>Leave of Absence (LOA)</u>

Standard LOA (All Graduate Students)

The leave of absence process applies to students requesting an authorized interruption of studies under this policy. Because Plan B (non-thesis) master's students are not subject to continuous enrollment requirements,

periods of non-enrollment do not, by themselves, require an approved leave of absence. Plan B students may request an approved leave of absence when appropriate under this policy.

- LOAs must be requested prior to the start of term for which the leave is requested and approved through the Graduate School with endorsement from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).
- A student may be granted no more than two (2) consecutive semesters and four (4) total semesters of LOA.
- During an approved LOA, the student shall not be enrolled and is not required to maintain continuous enrollment.
- International students must consult appropriate immigration advising prior to requesting an LOA to ensure their visa status is not impacted.
- A leave of absence is intended to provide temporary relief from academic enrollment for specific, documented circumstances (e.g., medical, family, military or other significant personal reasons). A leave of absence is not intended to be used for continued academic progress, research activity or completion of degree requirements.
    - Students on an approved leave of absence are not considered actively enrolled, may not receive faculty supervision, utilize university academic resources or make substantive progress toward degree requirements, and will have their time-to-degree extended by the duration of the approved leave.
    - Students may not challenge their QE or dissertation defense while on an approved LOA.

Post-Qualifying Doctoral Students: Limited LOA Exception
Post-qualifying doctoral students are generally expected to maintain continuous enrollment in XXX-767.

A limited exception is permitted for the following circumstances:

- Medical Leave of Absence*
- Military Leave of Absence

Conditions:

- Requests must be submitted and approved prior to the start of the leave period.
- Appropriate documentation is required.
- When approved, enrollment in XXX-767 is not required for the approved leave term(s).
- Approved post-qualifying LOA periods may pause applicable time-to-degree limits, consistent with graduate policy guidance.

*Students needing to request a leave of absence because of pregnancy or parental status should submit a request to the Office of Equal Opportunity. The Office of Equal Opportunity will work with the student to see if Title IX-related pregnancy and parenting accommodations are appropriate, which may include a leave of absence.

Breaks in Continuous Enrollment (Post-Qualifying Doctoral Students)

- Noncompliance: Failure to enroll in XXX-767 for any required fall or spring semester without an approved LOA constitutes a break in continuous enrollment.
- Required Remedy: Prior to scheduling the final dissertation defense or degree conferral, the student must:
    - Retroactively enroll in XXX-767 for each missed required semester (as administratively feasible), and
    - Students readmitted after a break in continuous enrollment are responsible for the tuition and fees associated with the missed semester(s) to be retroactively enrolled (no more than three [3] semesters of charges will be assessed if the student breaks continuous enrollment for longer).

    - If the student broke continuous enrollment but falls into the criteria for LOA (see above), the student may pursue a retroactive withdrawal (see Retroactive Withdrawal policy) for the required 767 retroactive enrollment.
- Readmission
    - A break in continuous enrollment without an approved LOA may also require readmission to the Graduate School in accordance with graduate policies.

Responsibilities

- Student: Maintains continuous enrollment, submits LOA requests to the DGS prior to the start of the term for which the LOA is requested, and understands enrollment implications.
- Director of Graduate Studies (DGS): Advises students, endorses and submits the LOA requests and monitors compliance.
- Office of the Provost: Reviews and approves LOAs, enforces continuous enrollment requirements and applies remedies for noncompliance.
- Registrar: Processes LOA, enrollments, withdrawals and retroactive registrations consistent with policy.

Documentation and Records

All LOA approvals, continuous enrollment determinations and retroactive enrollment remedies must be documented in the student's official academic record.