

Chemistry Graduate Student Handbook

Requirements and guidelines for earning a PhD or MS in the
Department of Chemistry at the University of Georgia

Version: August 2026

Contributions from:

Dr. Amanda A. Frossard, co-Director of Graduate Studies – Advising

Dr. Kelly M. Hines, co-Director of Graduate Studies – Admissions

Dr. Jeffrey Urbauer, Chair of the Graduate Curriculum Committee



Graduate School
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Department of Chemistry
Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Overview

This document should serve as a reference and guide for the requirements for earning a PhD or MS in Chemistry at the University of Georgia (UGA).

This document includes the requirements set by the Graduate School and the additional requirements that are specific to Chemistry. Where relevant, links are provided to specific Graduate School policies. This document will be updated as policies change.

This document applies to all current and future PhD and MS students in the Department of Chemistry at UGA. This version was updated in August 2026. This document will be reviewed and updated yearly and posted publicly on the Department of Chemistry website. In the case of any discrepancies between the website and this Handbook, the information provided herein will be considered the correct, updated version.

Contact Information

Department Head:	Dr. Aaron Aponick
co-Director of Graduate Studies – Advising:	Dr. Amanda A. Frossard, afrossard@uga.edu
co-Director of Graduate Studies – Admissions:	Dr. Kelly M. Hines, Kelly.Hines@uga.edu
Graduate Program Administrator:	Amanda L. Cross, amandalc@uga.edu

Graduate School Links

Policies: <https://grad.uga.edu/graduate-policies/>

Forms: <https://grad.uga.edu/current-students/forms/>

Important Dates: <https://grad.uga.edu/current-students/important-dates-deadlines/>

Department of Chemistry Links

Website: <https://www.chem.uga.edu/>

Handbook: <https://chem.franklin.uga.edu/sites/default/files/handbook.pdf>

Seminars: <https://www.chem.uga.edu/events/all>

Table of Contents

List of Terminology and Acronyms	4
Global Expectations of All Students	5
List of Degree Requirements for PhD in Chemistry	6
List of Degree Requirements for MS in Chemistry	7
Details of Degree Requirements	
Major Advisor	8
Advisory Committee	9
Program of Study	10
Example Partial Plan of Study	11
Example Full Plan of Study	12
Enrollment	14
Coursework	15
Comprehensive Exam	17
Advancement to Candidacy	19
Seminars	20
Application for Graduation	22
Dissertation and Defense	23
Timeline for PhD Students	24
Additional Information	
Academic Probation	25
Assistantships	26
Awards	28
Conflicts and Mentoring	29
Leave of Absence	30
No Clear Path to Degree Objective	31
Program Dismissal	32
Research Grades	33
Transfer Credits	34

List of Terminology and Acronyms

Athena	Online portal to view transcripts and register
CHEM	Course designation for Chemistry
DegreeWorks	Online portal to view degree progress and make Plan of Study
DGS	Director of Graduate Studies
ELC	Electronic Learning Commons
GradFIRST	Course for first semester PhD/MS students
GradStatus	Online portal to submit some forms
GradSlate	Online portal to submit some forms and applications
GPA	Graduate Program Administrator
GRA	Graduate Research Assistant
GRSC	Course designation for the Graduate School
GTA/GLA	Graduate Teaching Assistant or Graduate Laboratory Assistant
SCO	Student Care and Outreach

Global Expectations of All Students

Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior while enrolled in the graduate program in Chemistry and to act in a manner that demonstrates integrity and respect for others, the campus environment, and their field of research.

Students must adhere to university policies governing research and academic conduct, non-discrimination and anti-harassment, workplace violence, and laboratory safety.

Students must adhere to the expectations and requirements outlined in this Chemistry Graduate Student Handbook.

Policy Links:

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy](#)

[Workplace Violence Policy](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Chemistry

This degree will be granted in recognition of proficiency in research, breadth and soundness of scholarship, and thorough acquaintance with a specific field of knowledge, not upon completion of any definite amount of work prescribed in advance.

<https://policy.uga.edu/policies#/programs/Hycl4UoKa>

Requirements

1. Major Advisor
2. Advisory Committee
3. Partial Plan of Study
4. Enrollment
5. Coursework
6. Final Program of Study
7. Comprehensive Exam
8. Admission to Candidacy
9. Two Seminar Presentations
10. Application for Graduation
11. Dissertation
12. Defense

Master of Science (MS) in Chemistry

<https://policy.uga.edu/policies#/programs/By-h7LoKp>

Requirements

1. Major Advisor
2. Advisory Committee
3. Plan of Study
4. Enrollment
5. Coursework
6. Final Program of Study
7. Seminar Presentation
8. Application for graduation
9. Thesis
10. Defense

Major Advisor

All MS and PhD students are admitted to the Department of Chemistry and then must select a major advisor. Students should select a major advisor based on research opportunities and interests, as well as fit with the advisor and the group.

Selection. PhD and MS students in the Department of Chemistry must meet with at least three potential advisors and discuss research projects and opportunities. The students must fill out a [Major Advisor Request form](#), including signatures of the three interviewed faculty members. Once the student and selected faculty member agree that the student may request to join that group, the selected major advisor will sign the form. **Students must submit forms by email to the DGS by October 1 of their first semester.**

The DGS will compile the requests and meet with the Department Head for approval. Each student will receive a confirmation by email that their request was confirmed. If a request is denied, the DGS will explain the next steps.

If a student does not find a Major Advisor in Chemistry, they may request a Major Advisor from another department, if the faculty member has affiliate status in Chemistry or if the student chooses a co-Major Advisor in Chemistry.

Role of the Major Advisor. In Chemistry, the Major Advisor serves as both the student's research advisor and the chair of their thesis or dissertation committee. They provide funding through Research Assistantships or requests for Teaching Assistantships. Students should enroll in Group Meeting (CHEM 6000) and research (CHEM 9000 for PhD; CHEM 7000 for MS) with their Major Advisor each semester. Major Advisors also serve as mentors for research and career development, and students should meet regularly with their advisors. Students are also encouraged to fill out yearly Individual Development Plans and discuss them with their major advisor. Major Advisors are encouraged to provide students with written expectations when they join the group. If these expectations change, they need to be communicated to the student in writing, with an explanation and justification of the changes.

Major professors are officially communicated to the Graduate School through the Advisory Committee form, discussed later.

Changing Major Advisors. If a student needs to leave a group or find a new advisor, they must meet with the DGS to discuss the next steps. In most cases, students will have the remaining time in the semester, but no more than one full semester, to find a new research advisor.

Advisory Committee

All MS and PhD students are required to have an advisory committee, consisting of a minimum of three UGA graduate program faculty.

Selection. The committee must include a minimum of three UGA graduate program faculty, including the student's major advisor, who serves as the chair of the committee. Students should select faculty with background and/or expertise relevant to the student's research. The Department of Chemistry encourages students to have at least two of the three committee members in Chemistry or affiliated with Chemistry. Students should reach out to potential committee members directly. Once a full committee has agreed, students will fill out the Advisory Committee form (for [MS](#) or [PhD](#), specifically). **This must be submitted and approved by May 1 of the student's second semester.**

The Advisory Committee is responsible for advising the student officially and unofficially in all matters related to their degree. The Advisory Committee must officially approve the Program of Study, attend and approve the written and oral components of the Comprehensive Exam, approve the final Dissertation or Thesis, and attend and approve the final Defense.

If a student completes a Change of Degree Objective (see later section) after submitting an Advisory Committee form, they will need to submit the Advisory Committee form for the new degree objective.

Contact the GPA or DGS if:

- One of your chosen committee members does not have Graduate Faculty Status
- You would like to add a committee member from another institution
- Your committee member retires or leaves UGA

Committee Meetings:

The Department of Chemistry suggests that students hold at least one committee meeting per year. The Comprehensive Exam, as well as the Research Seminar, can be used in place of a Committee Meeting. However, the role of the Advisory Committee is to advise the student on their project and progress throughout their time as a student.

Program of Study

The official document or form containing all the coursework that a student will take or has completed for the MS or PhD degree is referred to as the Program of Study. In some cases, the coursework itself can also be referred to as the Program of Study.

Students should use the “Plans tool” in [DegreeWorks](#) to create a Plan of Study. **All students must have either a Partial Plan of Study or a Full Plan of Study completed in DegreeWorks.**

Incoming students will submit a Partial Plan of Study through DegreeWorks during Advising at the Chemistry Orientation. Partial Plans are approved by the DGS.

PhD students are required to submit a Final Program of Study prior to Advancing to Candidacy, and all students are required to have a Final Program of Study prior to Applying for Graduation. This is submitted by the student as a Full Plan of Study in DegreeWorks. That is sent to the student’s advisory committee and the DGS for approval and is renamed Final Program of Study during that process. If necessary, updates to the Final Program of Study can be made by submitting a Revised Full Plan of Study in DegreeWorks.

The Final Program of Study must have all courses that the student has taken throughout their time at UGA and all courses they plan to take through the semester they graduate. This includes lectures, seminars, and research. The only exceptions are GRSC 7770, GRSC 7001, and CHEM 9005/7005. These courses must be completed but *cannot* be included on the Final Program of Study.

When Applying for Graduation, the approved Final Program of Study must match exactly the student’s transcript in DegreeWorks. If it is different, a Revised Full Plan of Study must be submitted in DegreeWorks and then approved by the Advisory Committee and DGS.

No courses with grades of below a C (i.e., C-, D, F) or U (unsatisfactory) or I (incomplete) can be included in the Final Program of Study or count towards degree requirements.

Descriptions:

Partial Plan of Study – submitted during advising and includes some of the planned courses

Revised Partial Plan of Study – submitted to change the Partial Plan of Study (not common)

Full Plan of Study – submitted prior to Advancement to Candidacy; must include ALL courses

Revised Full Plan of Study – submitted prior to graduation, if changes to Full Plan are required

Program of Study – same as the Full Plan of Study, once it is submitted and in approval stage

Final Program of Study – the approved version of the Full Plan of Study; must match transcript

Example Partial Plan of Study

Major	Chemistry	Objective	Doctoral	Degree	PhD
Department	Chemistry				
DW Scope	Partial Plan: Pending Approval			DW Code	PPN
DW Degree	PHD - Chemistry				

Course Information

Subject / Course #	Hours	Term	Year	Grad Level Only?	Validated? <i>Grad School Only</i>
CHEM 8390	3	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 8340	3	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 8100	1	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 8310	3	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 8130	1	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 8320	3	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 8300	3	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 9000	6	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 8390	3	Spring 2027	2027	No	No

Figure 1. Example Partial Plan of Study for a student that started the PhD program in Fall 2026. This student included 3 lecture courses and 1 seminar in Fall and 3 lecture courses, 1 seminar, and research in Spring. Note that GRSC 7770, GRSC 7001, and CHEM 9005/7005 are *not* included.

Example Full Plan of Study

Major	Chemistry	Objective	Doctoral	Degree	PhD
Department	Chemistry				
DW Scope	Full Plan: Pending Approval			DW Code	FPN
DW Degree	PHD - Chemistry				

Course Information

Subject / Course #	Hours	Term	Year	Grad Level Only?	Validated? <i>Grad School Only</i>
CHEM 8930	3	Fall 2023	2023	No	No
CHEM 8100	1	Fall 2023	2023	No	No
CHEM 8210	3	Fall 2023	2023	No	No
BCMB 8211E	3	Spring 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 8330	3	Spring 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Spring 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Spring 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 9000	4	Spring 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Summer 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Summer 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 8210	3	Fall 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 9000	10	Fall 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Fall 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Fall 2024	2024	No	No
CHEM 8110	3	Spring 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 9000	13	Spring 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Spring 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Spring 2025	2025	No	No

Continues to next page

CHEM 6000	1	Summer 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Summer 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 8189	3	Fall 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 9000	13	Fall 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Fall 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Fall 2025	2025	No	No
CHEM 8190	3	Spring 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 9000	13	Spring 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Spring 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Spring 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Summer 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Summer 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Fall 2026	2026	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Spring 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Summer 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Summer 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Fall 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Fall 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 9000	15	Fall 2027	2027	No	No
CHEM 9300	3	Spring 2028	2028	No	No
CHEM 6000	1	Spring 2028	2028	No	No
CHEM 8150	1	Spring 2028	2028	No	No
CHEM 9000	12	Spring 2028	2028	No	No

Other Information

Total Hours	220
-------------	-----

Figure 2. Example Full Plan of Study for a student that started the PhD program in Fall 2023. This student includes planned courses through graduation in the semester of Spring 2028, including 3 credit hours of CHEM 9300. Note that GRSC 7770, GRSC 7001, and CHEM 9005/7005 are *not* included.

Enrollment

All enrolled students pursuing a graduate degree at UGA must register for a *minimum* of 3 credit hours in any semester in which they use UGA facilities and/or time. This includes any semester that students complete milestones, defend, and/or submit final dissertations and graduation paperwork (including submitting final graduation documents).

All students on assistantships (see Assistantships section) must register for a *minimum* of 12 credit hours in the Fall and Spring and 9 credit hours in the Summer.

In the Department of Chemistry, all students are expected to enroll in 17 credit hours in the Fall and Spring and 16 credit hours in the Summer, every semester, excluding their very first semester. As listed in the Coursework section, this includes 15 credit hours of Research, 1 credit hour of Seminar (excluding Summer), and 1 credit hour of Group Meeting. Students taking lecture courses or in their final semester are expected to reach 18 credit hours.

All enrolled graduate students must maintain continuous enrollment from matriculation to completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registering for a minimum of 3 credits in at least two semesters (Fall, Spring, Summer) per academic year until the degree is attained or status as a student is terminated. If a student fails to enroll in at least two semesters in one academic year, without a formal Leave of Absence they will be dismissed by the Graduate School. See Leave of Absence section for more information.

MS students must finish all requirements and graduate within 6 years. PhD students must be admitted to candidacy within 6 years and must graduate within the 5 years following admission to candidacy. A special request for extension of the 6 year coursework expiration can be made to the dean of the Graduate School, after working with the DGS and the student's major advisor. The petition must include a timeline for degree completion, an approved Advisory Committee form, an approved Program of Study, and a letter of support from the DGS and the major advisor.

Coursework

PhD students are required to complete at least six graduate level courses, two of which can be outside of Chemistry (i.e., six CHEM 8000 level courses). MS students are required to complete at least four graduate level courses, one of which can be outside of Chemistry (i.e., four CHEM 8000 level courses).

In their first semester, students are required to take a GradFIRST course (GRSC 7001). Any section can be taken, but the content varies by instructor. Generally, two are offered in Chemistry and are targeted to Chemistry students. Any students that will be a graduate teaching/laboratory assistant (GTA/GLA) must also take GRSC 7770 before or during their first semester as a GTA/GLA. One section is usually offered in Chemistry and is focused on teaching in General and Organic Chemistry. In their first semester, students are also required to take an introductory seminar (CHEM 8100), where they attend weekly divisional seminars. First semester students are also required to enroll in CHEM 9005 (“research”).

All students, after their first semester, are required to enroll in a one credit hour divisional seminar in Chemistry (excluding Summer), as well as a one credit hour group meeting course (CHEM 6000) and research of variable credit hours (CHEM 9000 for PhD and CHEM 7000 for MS) listed with their major advisor, every semester.

In their final semester, all students are required to enroll in three credit hours of dissertation writing (CHEM 9300 for PhD) or thesis writing (CHEM 7300 for MS).

Note that in Chemistry, some courses are listed as “Special Topics”. These courses can be taken multiple times, with different instructors and topics.

Note that no courses with grades below a C (i.e., C-, D, F) or U (unsatisfactory) or I (incomplete) can be included in the Final Program of Study or count towards degree requirements (see Program of Study section). Students must maintain an average GPA of 3.0 throughout their time at UGA (see Academic Probation section). If a student receives a grade below a C in one of the required 6 lecture courses, that course will need to be retaken or another course will need to be taken in its place.

If a student forgets to register for courses in any semester in which they have an Assistantship, they must first email the GPA. Then, they will be provided a Late Add form to fill out, which must be returned to the GPA and signed by the Department Head. These are only approved with a clear explanation on why the student forgot to enroll.

Explanation: The Graduate School requires a minimum of 30 credit hours in residence.

A PhD requires a minimum of 16 credit hours of 8000 level courses; four more credit hours of courses open only to graduate students (this can include a 6000 level course, as long as it is not cross-listed with a 4000 level course); and three credit hours of dissertation writing.

A MS requires a minimum of 12 credit hours of courses open only to graduate students (this can include a 6000 level course, as long as it is not cross-listed with a 4000 level course). No more than six hours of 7000 and 3 hours of 7300 can be counted.

Comprehensive Exam

A student must pass formal, comprehensive written and oral examinations before being admitted to candidacy for the degree. These examinations are administered by the student's advisory committee.

The goal of the Comprehensive Exam should be to determine if a student is capable to advance to candidacy and continue on their track to earn a PhD.

When a student is ready to take the Comprehensive Exam, they should discuss the details with their Major Advisor. They should then email their Advisory Committee members to schedule the date of the oral component. Students must email the GPA more than *three weeks* prior to their scheduled Comprehensive Exam and include the date, time, and location of the exam. The GPA is required to announce this to the Graduate School *two weeks* in advance. Otherwise, the exam cannot take place.

The Comprehensive Exam consists of three parts, that are combined into one written and one oral component: (i) a written proposal of the student's research and an update on research progress; and (ii) a presentation and defense of this proposal. The written component must be sent to the Advisory Committee at least *two weeks* before the oral component presentation.

The Advisory Committee will determine if the student has met the requirements to successfully pass the Comprehensive Exam. In order to pass, there can be no more than one dissenting vote of members of the Advisory Committee. If a student does not pass, the committee can determine that the student should: (i) change degree objectives and finish with an MS degree; or (ii) make corrections to the written and/or oral components of the exam. If corrections are required, the student must send an email to the GPA, DGS, their Major Advisor, and their Advisory Committee outlining the next steps and the deadline for completion. If the student still does not pass, the student will be switched to the MS degree program instead.

Guidelines for written component:

The written component of the Comprehensive Exam should be 20 pages of text, double spaced. This includes an update on research progress (no more than 10 pages). This does not include figures, tables, appendices, or reference lists. Because this is one written document, the students should use their research progress as preliminary data to justify their proposals.

The proposal should follow NIH and/or NSF guidelines and include the following sections:

Abstract or Project Summary

A brief, one page summary stating the main goals and experimental approach

Project Aims/Goals and/or Associated Hypotheses

There should be 2-3 main aims or goals with associated hypotheses, where relevant

Background and Significance

Description of current research in the field, including gaps in current understanding

Background information to understand the research problem

Significance and motivation of the proposed work

Proposed Experiments and Methods

Detailed description of experimental protocol used to address each goal

Description on methods, instrumentation, and data analyses

Expected Outcomes

Describe expected results and how they will be used to test the hypotheses

Chance of Success and Limitations

Evaluate the chance of success and identify possible limitations

Guidelines for oral component:

Presentations should be around 40 minutes and include the sections listed above. This is a defense of your proposal, so most of the time should be spent discussing the proposed project (with no more than 10 minutes on previous work or preliminary results). During or after the presentation, the Advisory Committee will question the student about the written and oral components. After the questions, the student will wait outside while the committee discusses and determines the outcome.

Note that all members of the Advisory Committee must be present during the oral component. If necessary, an Advisory Committee member can be on Zoom or attending remotely, but they need to be able to interact with the student and ask questions.

Students that started prior to Fall 2025:

Students that started before Fall 2025 that have already completed a Prospectus must still do a Comprehensive Exam. The Prospectus, which is no longer a requirement in Chemistry, was not an exam and could not be passed or failed. Students that have already completed a Prospectus can proceed with a Comprehensive Exam on an outside topic, like the previous requirement, or on their own research, similar to the topic of the Prospectus. These students are welcome to use content from their Prospectus in the Comprehensive Exam, but it must still follow the guidelines listed above.

Advancement to Candidacy

Students must Advance to Candidacy by the end of their second year in residence. Graduate School policy is that students Advance to Candidacy at least one full semester before graduation. Students can submit the [form](#) to apply to Advance to Candidacy after they have:

1. An approved Final Program of Study
2. Completed all required chemistry coursework, with at least a 3.0 Grade Point Average
3. Passed the Comprehensive Exam
4. Met the residency requirement

Seminars

There are two parts to the seminar requirements. Part 1 is enrolling in seminar as a course, and Part 2 is presenting in seminar. The number of required seminar presentations varies between MS and PhD programs (see below).

Part 1: Seminar Courses

It is required that PhD and MS students enroll in and attend a divisional seminar every semester. These are 1 credit hour and graded on a letter grade scale. The number of seminars and requirements are different in each division and may vary between semesters. Refer to the syllabus posted on ELC for the course in which you are enrolled.

In the fall semester of their first year, students will enroll in CHEM 8100, which is a general seminar course and students can attend seminars across divisions. The divisional seminars are: CHEM 8120 – Inorganic; CHEM 8130 – Organic; CHEM 8140 – Physical; CHEM 8150 – Analytical; and CHEM 8170 – Materials Chemistry and Nanoscience.

Part 2: Presenting Seminars

PhD students are required to present two seminars: one Literature Seminar and one Research Seminar. MS students are required to present one seminar: Literature Seminar or Research Seminar. PhD students must complete a Literature Seminar prior to presenting a Research Seminar.

These presentations must be during the allotted time of the divisional seminar in which the student is enrolled. Before the semester starts the instructor will ask students to sign up for seminar dates. Students must have their seminar topics and abstracts approved by the instructor at least two weeks before the presentation. Once the abstract is approved, it must be sent to Terri Tillman to be posted on the department website. Other requirements and specific expectations vary across divisions.

Seminars are assessed by the faculty in attendance, including the student's major advisor. If the major advisor cannot be present, the seminar should be rescheduled. If the seminar receives a "pass", the instructor will report that to the GPA. If a seminar is not adequate to pass, the student will be instructed to make corrections and repeat the seminar the following semester.

General Expectations

- Write a 200 word ACS style abstract
- Prepare early and practice to ensure the presentation is the correct length
- Create slides that are clearly laid out and visually engaging

- Use peer-reviewed sources for presentation content
- Include appropriate citations for all content (data, figures, etc.) that is not your own
- Prepare the presentation for the audience (students and faculty in the division)
- Provide adequate background and introduction to motivate the work
- Explain all figures and images on each slide
- Answer audience questions on the research topic
- Include a critical analysis of the presented work

Application for Graduation

In the semester that students plan to defend (PhD and MS) and submit their dissertation (PhD) or thesis (MS), they must [apply for graduation](#). Students need to follow the [Graduate School list of Important Dates and Deadlines](#) for that semester and submit required documents and forms.

To graduate with a PhD or MS, all requirements must be met, as outlined in the PhD and MS sections. Specific dates are set throughout the semester for some of the final milestones.

Example final date deadlines for Fall 2026, with first day of classes on August 17:

September 4	To apply for degree for Fall 2026 graduation To have Final Program of Study and Advisory Committee approved
October 1	To Advance to Candidacy (PhD students)
October 16	To submit information for Commencement Program
October 26	To submit Dissertation for online Format Check
November 18	To submit final corrected Dissertation or Thesis To submit Final Defense Approval Forms To submit ETD Submission Approval Form
December 4	To complete classes

Dissertation and Defense

The Dissertation and Defense for a PhD student and the Thesis and Defense for a MS student are the culmination of years of research and work. The Dissertation and Thesis are the written dissemination of the research, with multiple research chapters, and the Defense is the presentation describing and defending this work.

The date, time, and location of the Defense must be emailed to the GPA at least three weeks in advance, to meet the Graduate School announcement deadline of two weeks in advance.

The Dissertation or Thesis must be sent to the Advisory Committee in its final form for review at least two weeks prior to the Defense. Advisory Committee members can ask a student to push back their Defense if the Dissertation or Thesis is not sent on time.

The Defense consists of a formal presentation to an audience consisting of the Advisory Committee and other invitees. After the presentation and questions from the general audience, the public will leave. The Advisory Committee will then ask questions about the Dissertation or Thesis and the presentation. After the questions, the student will wait outside while the Advisory Committee discusses and determines the outcome.

Note that the Defense is open to the public. Also, all members of the Advisory Committee must be present during the Defense. If necessary, an Advisory Committee member can be on Zoom or attending remotely, but they need to be able to interact with the student and ask questions during the closed-door session.

Timeline for PhD Students

Below is a table with the year and semester that milestones need to be completed. Milestones must be completed by the end of the semesters listed below, but students are welcome to complete milestones earlier. An extension of one semester will be granted to each milestone before a Departmental Warning is issued. Flexibility in milestone timelines can also be granted the Major Advisor and DGS, in some circumstances.

Year	Fall	Spring	Summer
1	- Identify Major Advisor - Partial Plan of Study 2-3 Courses	- Select Advisory Committee 2-3 Courses	
2	Remaining Coursework	- Complete Coursework - Final Program of Study - Comprehensive Exam - Advance to Candidacy	
3		Literature Seminar	
4		Research Seminar	
5		- Apply to Graduate - Defend and Submit Dissertation	

Academic Probation

All graduate students must maintain a 3.0 Grade Point Average in graduate level courses. A grade of C in an individual class is allowed on the Program of Study. However, the average Grade Point Average must be 3.0 or higher.

If a student's cumulative Grade Point Average drops below a 3.0 at the end of a semester, the student and DGS will receive an email from the Graduate School stating that the student is now on Academic Warning. The student must discuss this with their Major Advisor and fill out a plan to bring their Grade Point Average above a 3.0. The plan must be submitted to the Graduate School through the form linked in the email and then approved by their Major Advisor, the DGS, and the Graduate School before the student can register for classes for the following semester.

Students on Academic Warning have one semester to bring their cumulative Grade Point Average above a 3.0. If a student has a cumulative Grade Point Average of less than 3.0 for two semesters in a row, they will be placed on Academic Probation at the end of the second semester. The student and DGS will receive an email from the Graduate School stating that the student is on Academic Probation. A new plan must be submitted and approved before the student can register for the following semester.

While on Academic Probation, the student must maintain a semester Grade Point Average of greater than a 3.0 for each semester, until the cumulative Grade Point Average is greater than a 3.0 and they are removed from Academic Probation. If the student receives a semester Grade Point Average of less than 3.0 while on Academic Probation, they will be dismissed by the Graduate School immediately.

Students can repeat courses to increase their cumulative Grade Point Averages, in some cases. If a course is repeated, the newest grade will be used to calculate the cumulative Grade Point Average. However, this does not apply to courses that are listed as "Special Topics". Because these courses are variable and can be taught by different instructors, the grades will not be replaced in these courses.

Assistantships

All graduate students in the Department of Chemistry receive an assistantship, as long as they adhere to the expectations listed herein. Assistantships fall broadly into the categories of Teaching/Laboratory Assistantship (GTA/GLA; Graduate Teaching or Laboratory Assistant) or Research Assistantship (GRA; Graduate Research Assistantship). These assistantships are requested by the Major Advisors every semester. Students should discuss this with their Major Advisor, if they have a preference. The DGS and lab instructors do not select students to receive GTA/GLAs.

Both GRAs and GTA/GLAs are paid positions meant to support students as they complete their dissertation research. It is expected that GTAs/GLAs complete their teaching responsibilities and use the remaining time on their research project. Stipend information is outlined in the offer letters that students receive each May from the GPA. These letters must be signed and returned every year.

Students receiving assistantships are required to enroll in at least 12 credit hours in the Fall and Spring and 9 credit hours in the Summer. Most students should enroll in 17 credit hours every semester (see Program of Study and Coursework section).

All students with assistantships will receive a tuition waiver that reduces the tuition to a small amount. This does not include fees. The GPA inputs tuition waivers a couple weeks before the semester start, so students should email the GPA if they still have large tuition bills on the first day of classes.

Assistantships are paid positions with expectations, like any job. Assistantship offers can be rescinded if students *fail to*:

- complete their assigned duties
- show up to perform the assigned duties without appropriate advanced notice
- communicate with supervisors in a timely manner
- complete departmental milestones
- enroll in credit hours
- receive an “S” in research for two semesters in a row
- “meet expectations” for two semesters in a row (GTA/GLA specific)

Research Assistantships:

Often, GRAs are paid to work on their dissertation research, but that is not a requirement. Students can be paid from one project and be expected to work on two projects at the same time. If the student is concerned about this, they should meet with their Major Advisor.

Teaching/Laboratory Assistantships:

Students that are GTA/GLAs in a given semester will be informed by their Major Advisor. Students are expected to work no more than 20 hours per week as GTA/GLAs. Specific teaching assignments are communicated to the students a couple weeks before the start of the new semester.

GTAs are required to take GRSC 7770 in the first semester that they teach. They are also required to take the online GTA training given by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). If either of these are not completed, the position can be revoked by the Graduate School.

GTAs should receive specific written instructions for their responsibilities from the supervisor or course instructor. These responsibilities should not exceed an average of 18 hours per week during the semester, for a “full TA” position. (Multiply 18 hours by your fraction of a TA to get your specific hours; i.e., a 1/3 TA should work 6 hours per week). Some weeks may require more grading or exam proctoring, and those extra hours should even out with the late laboratory start date and early laboratory end date. If GTAs do not receive written instructions (usually via email) or if they feel their hours are exceeding the required hours, they should first contact their TA supervisor (Dr. Norton for General Chemistry; Dr. Hubbard for Organic Chemistry; and other instructors for other assignments). If the issue is not resolved, students should contact the DGS and explain the situation.

Additionally, GTAs will be evaluated at the end of each semester. The evaluations are: Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Does Not Meet Expectations. Students who Exceed Expectations may be nominated for teaching awards. Students who receive Does Not Meet Expectations for two or more semesters may be ineligible for future GTA/GLA positions.

Awards

The Graduate School, the Department of Chemistry, the American Chemical Society, and other institutions give out awards to graduate students throughout the year.

For Graduate School, UGA, and Chemistry Department awards, the DGS or GPA will send an email to all eligible students seeking nominations. Students must follow all instructions from the email, including meeting the deadlines and submitting necessary materials. Those that do not follow the instructions will not be nominated.

If students want to be nominated for other awards and need a letter of recommendation or nomination from the Chemistry Department, they must contact the DGS at least two weeks prior to the deadline and include the application materials. Students are welcome to email the GPA or DGS to ask about eligibility or ask if they can be nominated.

The GPA and DGS will do their best to seek nominations for any Chemistry related awards, but there are always new opportunities that they may not be aware of.

If a student receives an award, they should contact the DGS so that it can be added to their profile.

Conference Travel Awards. The Graduate School awards [conference travel grants](#) to graduate students multiple times per year. These awards are intended to help graduate students attend conferences and present their dissertation research. Each PhD student can only have a total of two travel grants, and each MS student can have one. Only one grant per student per fiscal year can be awarded, and only one travel grant can be used internationally. While the Graduate School makes an effort to fund all eligible students, priority is given to those that have advanced to candidacy. See website for more information. The GPA will email the students for each period and submit the application for the students that request.

To be eligible, students must:

- be the primary/first author on the presentation/poster, as shown in the abstract
- have completed five semesters of full-time graduate studies (PhD students) or be in their second year (MS students)
- be registered when the application is submitted and in the semester of the conference (i.e., students cannot be funded to present after they graduate)
- have a GPA of 3.5 or higher in graduate courses, with no grades of “I” or “U”

Conflicts and Mentoring

Conflicts between graduate students should first be resolved by the students. If the conflict remains, the Major Advisor(s) can become involved. If it still does not resolve, the students may contact the DGS for a meeting.

Conflicts between students and Major Advisors may occur. Most conflicts can be resolved with a meeting between the student and Major Advisor. If that does not work, the student should hold a meeting of their Advisory Committee or ask the individual members for advice. Students are welcome to meet with the DGS to go over strategies to resolve conflicts with their Major Advisor. Students should note that if they leave a group or are asked to leave a group, they are still members of the Department of Chemistry and will be supported as TAs for one semester, while they look for a new group or while the conflict is resolved.

Leave of Absence

A Leave of Absence provides a mechanism for students experiencing unusual circumstance to be exempt temporarily from the continuous enrollment policy (see Enrollment section). A Leave of Absence requires approval of the student's major advisor, the DGS, and the dean of Graduate School. A leave of absence will be granted only for good cause such as serious medical and health-related issues, major financial and employment issues; pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, elder care, and other significant family issues; and other major personal circumstances that interfere with the ability to undertake graduate study. An approved leave of absence does not stop the clock unless the leave is granted for pregnancy, childbirth or adoption. Time on a Leave of Absence counts toward any University, Graduate School, and/or program time limits pertaining to the degree being sought.

All students experiencing circumstances that warrant a Leave of Absence have the right and ability to take a Leave of Absence. Contact the DGS if you have concerns or would like to discuss your options. A formal Leave of Absence is not required for Summer.

Students are ineligible for Assistantships while they are on a Leave of Absence. The Leave of Absence is only granted on a full semester basis, for the following semester.

If a leave is necessary in the middle of the semester, students must work with their major advisor, the DGS, Student Care and Outreach (SCO), and the Graduate School to process a hardship withdrawal from coursework and an early termination from Assistantship responsibilities.

Requests for Leave of Absence should be submitted through GradSlate under the Actions tab of your Enrolled Student Progress Portal.

No Clear Path to Degree Objective

A student may be placed on the status of “No Clear Path to Degree Objective” if they do not have a Major Advisor or an Advisory Committee. The student will be notified of this status with a formal letter from the DGS. This letter will be sent to the Graduate School. If the student does not complete the steps required before the deadline set by the DGS, the student will be dismissed from the Chemistry Graduate Program at the end of the specified semester.

Some reasons that a student is placed on this status:

- First year students that do not request an advisor by the October 1 deadline
- First year students that do not have their requested advisors approved
- Students who choose to leave or are asked to leave a group

Program Dismissal

In extreme cases, students may be dismissed from the Department of Chemistry and the Graduate School. This Handbook lists expectations for PhD and MS students, and failure to abide by these expectations may result in dismissal from the program, as outlined below.

PhD and MS students that are behind on major milestones (i.e., finishing coursework, giving seminars, etc.) may be given a Departmental Warning. They will then be given one semester to finish major milestones. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program.

Students that receive a U in research credits for one semester will be given a Departmental Warning. They may be asked to find another Major Advisor. If the student receives a second U in research credits, they will be dismissed from the program.

Any student found to be in violation of ethical or professional standards may be dismissed from the program. This includes plagiarism of any form in coursework or laboratory research. The student will first be given a Departmental Warning with the chance to correct the violation in a given timeframe (no more than 1 semester). The Major Advisor, Advisory Committee, and DGS will determine if the violation has been corrected or if the student should be dismissed from the program.

Students may appeal dismissals from the Graduate School or from the Department of Chemistry. These appeals are reviewed by the Graduate Council after all other avenues of appeal have been exhausted.

Research Grades

Students must be enrolled in research credits (CHEM 9000 for PHD and CHEM 7000 for MS) every semester after their first semester. These credit hours are treated as a course and graded as S/U (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory) by the Major Advisor. Grades of U cannot go on the Program of Study, so they will not count towards degree progress. Additionally, a U grade in research will result in a Departmental Warning and may result in the Major Advisor asking the student to leave the group. If the student receives two U grades in a row, they may be dismissed from the department.

Transfer Credits

Students that took graduate courses at other universities prior to starting at UGA must still take the required 6 graduate level (8000 level) courses.

If students transferred from another university and were specifically recruited by a Major Advisor in Chemistry, they can contact the DGS to ask for an exception to the department rule stated above. According to Graduate School policy, “transfer courses may not be included in the 16 hours of 8000- and 9000- level credit on the program of study”. Transferred credit hours can only count for 4 of the 20 required credit hours. That roughly equals a maximum of 1 course, out of the required 6 courses. Transfer credit must be requested through a Graduate School [form](#) and approved by the Major Professor, DGS, and Graduate School.

Students that transferred to UGA with their Major Professor can have all their previous courses counted. They will still need to meet the residency requirement of 30 credit hours before graduating, which will be easily completed within one year. These students will be contacted by the DGS prior to starting at UGA.